GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE STANDING SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

January 22, 2026

STANDING SSC VOTING MEMBERS

Trevor Moncrief.....
Luiz Barbieri.....
Harry Blanchet.....
Dave Chagaris.....
Tom Frazer.....
David Griffith.....
Tiffany Hopper.....
Jack Isaacs.....
John Mareska.....
Paul Mickle.....
Jim Nance.....
Daniel Petrolia.....
Sean Powers.....
Andrew Ropicki.....
Steven Scyphers.....
Ralph Townsend.....
Will Patterson.....

STAFF

Matt Freeman.....Economist Analyst
John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
Jessica Matos.....Administrative and Accounting Technician
Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
Verena Wang.....Ecosystem Analyst

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Lisa Ailloud.....SEFSC
Mike Allen.....GMFMC
Heather Christiansen.....
Francesca Forrestal.....SEFSC
Ted Switzer.....

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INDEX OF MOTIONS

PAGE 18: Motion that the SSC considers the 2026 lane snapper interim analysis using the G-FISHER index with reference frame of 2009-2018 as consistent with BSIA. The motion carried on page 30.

PAGE 30: Motion that the SSC recommends an OFL of 1,336,445 pounds whole weight and ABC of 1,304,917 pounds whole weight for the Gulf lane snapper fishery for 2026-2028, based on the 2026 lane snapper analysis. The motion carried on page 32.

The Meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Standing Scientific and Statistical Committee convened via webinar on Friday, January 22, 2026, and was called to order by Mr. Trevor Moncrief.

INTRODUCTIONS
ADOPTION OF AGENDA
REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND SUMMARY FROM THE OCTOBER 2025 SSC MEETING
SCOPE OF WORK

MR. TREVOR MONCRIEF: I will say the statement. Good morning, my name is Trevor Moncrief. I'm the chair of the Scientific and Statistical Committee of the Gulf Council. We appreciate everyone's attendance and input in this meeting. Representing the Gulf Council is Mike Allen. Gulf Council staff in attendance include Carrie Simmons, John Froeschke, Ryan Rindone, Lisa Hollensead, Matt Freeman, Verena Wang, Sarah Gardiner, Emily Muehlstein, and Jessica Matos.

Notice of this meeting was provided to the Federal Register, sent via email to subscribers of the Gulf Council's press release email list, and was posted on the council's website. Topics to be covered during this modified meeting include Gulf Lane Snapper and Gag Grouper Interim Analysis and Catch Advice, Gulf Red Grouper Interim Analysis Health Check, and we'll have section of public comment, and, if anyone has any other business, we will cover that as well.

This webinar is open to the public and is being streamed live and recorded. A summary of the meeting and verbatim minutes will be produced and made available to the public via our website.

For the purpose of voice identification, and to assure you are able to mute and unmute your line, please identify yourself by stating your full name when Jess calls your name for attendance. Once you have identified yourself, please re-mute your line. We will be using the raise-hand function to help everyone recognize you to speak. Jess will type up the names up on the memo pad on the screen as you have your questions. Take it away.

MS. JESSICA MATOS: Okay. Luiz Barbieri.

DR. LUIZ BARBIERI: Luiz Barbieri.

MS. MATOS: Harry Blanchet.

MR. HARRY BLANCHET: Harry Blanchet.

MS. MATOS: Dave Chagaris.

DR. DAVID CHAGARIS: David Chagaris.

MS. MATOS: Tom Frazer.

DR. TOM FRAZER: Tom Frazer.

MS. MATOS: David Griffith.

DR. DAVID GRIFFITH: David Griffith.

MS. MATOS: Tiffany Hopper.

DR. TIFFANY HOPPER: Tiffany Hopper.

MS. MATOS: Jack Isaacs. John Mareska.

MR. JOHN MARESKA: John Mareska.

MS. MATOS: Paul Mickle.

DR. PAUL MICKLE: Paul Mickle.

MS. MATOS: Trevor Moncrief.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Trevor Moncrief.

MS. MATOS: Jim Nance.

DR. JIM NANCE: Jim Nance.

MS. MATOS: Will Patterson. Dan Petrolia.

DR. DAN PETROLIA: Dan Petrolia.

MS. MATOS: Sean Powers.

DR. SEAN POWERS: Sean Powers.

MS. MATOS: Andrew Ropicki.

DR. ANDREW ROPICKI: Andrew Ropicki.

MS. MATOS: Steven Scyphers.

DR. STEVEN SCYPHERS: Steven Scyphers.

MS. MATOS: Ralph Townsend. Mike Allen.

DR. MIKE ALLEN: Mike Allen.

MS. MATOS: Okay. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Most everyone is here and accounted for. The first thing I see on our to-do list is the Adoption of the Agenda. Does anyone have any changes to the agenda, or any other business they would like to put on at this time? Hearing none, and seeing no hands, I'm going to say we're good on that. All right.

Next up is the Review and Approval of Minutes and Summary from the October 2025 Meeting. Those were all linked and available for you all to review. Does anyone have any changes on those two things? Seeing none, just a little bit -- Ryan, do we need a motion to approve those?

MR. RYAN RINDONE: For the agenda and the minutes, yes, and so they can be by acclamation, you know, without opposition.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Okay. No opposition to the approval of the agenda and the minutes and the summary? Hearing no opposition, they are approved. All right. Mr. Rindone is going to go over our scope of work today, and we'll try to move straight into that first item.

GULF LANE SNAPPER INTERIM ANALYSIS AND CATCH ADVICE

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, sir, and so first on the list is going to be the Gulf Lane Snapper Interim Analysis and Catch Advice, and Dr. Forrestal is with us today from the Science Center to present an updated interim analysis for Gulf lane snapper, and this uses the Itarget model that was initially used in SEDAR 49, and it's been updated along the way over the years.

This one uses the Gulf Fishery Independent Survey of Habitat and Ecosystem Resources, or G-FISHER, which is a composite video index of three major video indices, and it is the representative index of relative abundance that's being used for lane snapper.

The last interim used the recreational headboat catch per unit effort data, and it's provided as background, along the SSC's evaluation of that interim analysis, and that's on the council website under this agenda item, if anybody wanted to look at that.

You guys should consider the information presented, ask questions

of the Science Center staff, and make any recommendations regarding the OFL and ABC for lane snapper to the council, as appropriate. Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Thanks, Ryan, and so, up on this one, we've got Dr. Forrestal. I will say we've got a few scenarios to look through as she goes through here. We've got a look at the fishery, of how it's been operating as of late, and so I think there's a few things for us to consider and have discussion on. Go ahead.

DR. FRANCESCA FORRESTAL: Thank you very much, Chair. I am Francesca Forrestal. I'm from the Science Center in Miami, and I'll be presenting the interim analysis for Gulf lane snapper, and so, just to give a bit of a background about how the stock has been assessed, and also the interim analyses that have been conducted, initially -- The OFL and ABC have been updated using the Itarget data-limited method, and this method was initially presented to the Gulf SSC in September of 2019, and so, in 2023, the last time this was -- The stock had an interim analysis, we updated the OFL and ABC with the Itarget data-limited method, using the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey.

In March of 2020, the OFL and ABC were updated just with landings, and this is in contrast to what was done in January of 2020, and this was total removals, and so not -- It included discards. The lane snapper as a stock was last assessed in SEDAR 49, and it was the Gulf data-limited stock evaluation, with a terminal year of 2014.

This approach, just to give everyone a background of how it is done, it is the Itarget method, and this is the version we're currently using. The total allowable catch is calculated using two different approaches, and so, if the recent index is less than 0.7 of the average index, then the equation on the top is applied. If it's greater than, then the equation on the bottom is used.

The major things to take away from this is that you need the average catch over a reference time series, and what was recommended for lane snapper was from 1999 to 2008. You also need a corresponding index over that same reference time series, and then you also need the recent average. This can either be five years or three years, depending on where you are.

The Itarget is defined as the average index by a multiplier, and this was set during SEDAR 49, based on the assumption that the stock was near MSY during this reference time period, and so 1999 to 2008. There's also a smoothing parameter that's used if the -- That’s used for catch advice when Irecent matches the average

index.

As I discussed before, the previous interim for lane was the headboat CPUE, and the G-FISHER index was not available for lane snapper at the time. G-FISHER, obviously, came online recently, in its current iteration, but these indices were not available back in SEDAR 49.

The headboat CPUE abundance index has been updated from the last interim analysis of the terminal year of 2022. We do now have it available through 2024, and so, on the left-hand figure, you can see the orange box, and that corresponds with the reference timeframe that was recommended. It got shifted around a little bit with editing the slide, but the orange box should correspond from 1999 to 2008, and then the blue box is the recent time period.

When this index was being put together, some questions were raised about the suitability of this index for this exercise, if it is truly showing the change in abundance, especially now that we compare it to the G-FISHER index.

The G-FISHER index is now available for lane snapper, and it is available from 2006 to 2023, and so you see the reference time period is not the same as what it was in SEDAR 49.

Comparing the headboat index and the G-FISHER index for use within the interim analysis, there are some big differences, and so, obviously, the headboat index is derived from fishery-dependent data, and, as such, that's susceptible to other factors, such as changing fishing behavior, due to multispecies management, or just changes in vessel technology, and this can affect changes that will -- It affects how these changes don't necessarily reflect what's happening in the stock abundance, because you're violating one of those main assumptions when you do CPUE standardization, and, when you account for any changes in catchability, what you're left with is changes in stock abundance.

Another factor is that, during this index development, the different model configurations resulted in pretty different representations of the abundance, and so, depending on how the data was subset, looking at the standard species filters, or if we estimated the Stephens and MacCall coefficients by different regions, we got quite a different answer, and so that gave us pause.

The fishery-independent index is not subject to the changes in fishing behavior, and, also, the survey design controls were the influence of other factors, and, with this case, G-FISHER is a

well-designed fishery-independent survey that has captured enough lane snapper to produce an index of abundance that has relatively low CVs, without the need for extensive model assumptions and standardization, and so where does that leave us?

The G-FISHER index for lane snapper is only available for from 2006 to 2023. This, obviously, does not overlap with the recommended reference timeframe, which we've used for the IA approach in the past for lane snapper, and, for this methodology, both the caches and index reference frame need to match up.

Also, the estimation of landings have changed since SEDAR 49. As we went back in the data, in QA/QC, the landings have changed, and I can show that in the next slide.

What we need to decide today is that this reference frame needs to be updated to cover the years when the index and the catch data overlap, and prior to any major changes in regulations, and so what years should we use as the reference frame?

We have some proposed reference frames here. First, I just wanted to highlight the catches, and so these catches in the green line end in 2017, and then, these updated catches, there's a slight shift in the time series as the data was updated in our database.

This initial reference timeframe was a ten-year timeframe, and it was chosen as it was a period of relatively stable catches, and you can see that in the figure. The average for this time period was 445,000 pounds. Of course, this does not overlap with the available CPUE, and so we could use the reference timeframe of 2006 to 2015, as that is when the CPUE becomes available, and this also corresponds to a time of relative catch stability. The caveat here is that the average catch for this time period is 300,000 pounds.

The next option we have is to use the most recent five years available for the CPUE, which is 2019 through 2023. This is what was originally discussed in the literature. If you go back and look at the original data-limited paper, this is their recommended approach.

The average catches for this timeframe are 840,000 pounds, and then the other option we're looking at for the reference frame is 2009 to 2018, and so this is a similar average catch as what was seen in the initial reference frame, and it is relatively close to when the CPUE index is available, and so, looking at the first reference -- Should I pause here for questions?

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: If you're comfortable taking questions now, that's fine.

DR. FORRESTAL: Yes, I'm comfortable now.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Go ahead, Harry.

MR. BLANCHET: Can we go back to that last slide, please?

DR. FORRESTAL: Yes. Definitely.

MR. BLANCHET: If we're using four of the most recent years as a reference period, what does that really give us? I mean, I see that this is what was recommended in this approach, in the data-limited paper, but I thought that data-limited paper was years old. I'm not quite sure I understand that statement. Thank you.

DR. FORRESTAL: Thank you. That is correct. The original paper is not recent, but their approach just said to use the most recent five years, and there wasn't any particular -- It's also to reflect the most recent management and stock changes, and then the recent frame was in the three years, and so it gives you a snapshot of what's happening then. Then you had another question, or was that the only one?

MR. BLANCHET: The main question was basically, if you take that 2019 to 2023 average, and you use that as your standard, how does that give you -- You then use part of that also as your most recent -- The three most recent years?

DR. FORRESTAL: That's correct, and so you would use the most recent five years as the reference, and then the most recent three years as the recent timeframe.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Harry, if you don’t have a follow-up to that, we’ll move on to Sean.

MR. BLANCHET: Please.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Go ahead, Sean.

DR. POWERS: So, on the G-FISHER, is that Gulf-wide or is that mainly just Florida?

DR. FORRESTAL: It is Gulf-wide. They have it split between natural and artificial reefs, and they provided a background presentation, I believe, and that shows exactly where the different components of the different video surveys are located, but it is

-- I do believe it's Gulf-wide, but it is concentrated in the eastern Gulf.

DR. POWERS: Yes, and I guess I thought it was only Florida for a while, and then it kind of expanded out, but I'll guess I'll look at that background document, and, in talking about that, you know what the sample sizes were? I mean, I'm just looking at that index, if you want to show it back, and just trying to reconcile -- Have lane snapper really essentially tripled in abundance?

I mean, I just -- Over that time period, I mean, given how incidental lane snapper are, I just -- I don't know. I'm just wondering what else -- Is there some other sampling, and I know it was standardized to an index, but I'm just wondering what else could be going on there.

I mean, just locally, I would say that we are seeing more lane snapper, from fishermen, mainly basing this on the fishing rodeo, where we dropped lane snapper as a category altogether, and more and more are now bringing them in, but, you know, just that big of an increase, over that short of a time period -- I don't know, and I'm just looking for things like sampling size, and change in area, that could affect it.

DR. FORRESTAL: That is a good point. It does increase. I do believe that Ted might be on today, and he would be the best person to answer the questions, because I do think they account for that when they designed the survey and did the standardization.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. If we can get Ted on there to comment to that, and then we'll move to John after that.

DR. POWERS: I have one more question, and I'm sorry.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Go ahead, Sean.

DR. POWERS: While we wait on that, what were the CVs on the landings, given that this is relatively incidental?

DR. FORRESTAL: Unfortunately, I do not have those right now, but they are from the MRIP database.

DR. POWERS: I got you. I just -- That's it, Trevor.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Okay. Appreciate you, Sean. Let's see if we can get Ted to respond to that sample size question, and then we'll move to John.

MR. TED SWITZER: Got you. I just got my mic on here, and so thanks. There has been increasing effort in the G-FISHER survey, and increasing spatial coverage. The approach we implement does, in most cases, account for that. In this case, yes, and that's something we do take into account when we look at these indices, is whether that is influencing what's going on.

In this case, all three of the historical surveys, Panama City, Pascagoula, and FWRI, were in place by 2010, and so there's been increases in sampling efforts since 2010, but, since then, there hasn't been a massive expansion into new areas, and so just filling in some gaps, and so I think this is probably real, at least the dramatic increase in time.

I believe this index, and, again, you know, Francesca mentioned this, the index we provided for the final interim only included naturals, I believe, and Heather Christensen is on as well, who did this analysis, but, even if it did include artificials, it's a minor component, based on the habitat weighting that we apply.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right, and so it seems like the representativeness is there. I think we referenced one other person to comment back a direct question, and was that Heather?

DR. SWITZER: Yes, it was. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Let's go ahead and get Heather to respond directly to that, and then we'll move on.

DR. HEATHER CHRISTIANSEN: Hi, and this is Heather. Yes, this was just including the natural habitat, and I think, if you look on the website, you have a background presentation, and it does include the sample sizes, and so, if you want to look at that, it has each individual survey sample size throughout the time and how it was combined with the CART methodology.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Perfect. Thank you. All right, and so, John, go ahead and then we'll move to Tom.

MR. MARESKA: Yes, and I had similar questions that Sean had, and I went back and looked at the SEDAR 88 paper, and, in 2016, the FWRI survey basically went shelf-wide at that point. I still think there were some subtle gear differences between the Panama City survey versus what they went Gulf-wide with, and so I think -- Ted can answer this, but I think, in 2016, the FWRI survey was pretty much standardized across the entire shelf, and so I think that may be contributing to that increase in 2016.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. I hate to put you back on the spot, Ted, but go ahead.

DR. SWITZER: That's no worries. That's why we're here, and so the gear differences were not an issue. We've always maintained the exact same video gear among all three labs, and so that wasn't the case.

You are right, and so, in 2016, we did extend shelf-wide, including overlap with both the Panama City and Pasadena surveys, and so the only potential there, in terms of adding some new areas, would have been maybe the south Florida, and, again, I'm looking at the presentation, and it doesn't look like our densities were that much different in south Florida, in terms of percentages of positive sets, and so, yes, it did extend full coverage, but it really wasn't extending into new areas, except, again, that southern Florida expansion.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. I've got one more hand. Sean, are you going for a round two, or is that just a ghost hand?

DR. POWERS: Round two, and so I understand, Ted, how you control for sampling effort, and how that can be standardized sample size and all that, but how does this control for that exact last point when you go to an area that you haven't gone to before, and is that really -- Is that the only example, that you all just moved to south Florida, and everything else was just more sampling effort within areas you already had covered?

DR. SWITZER: With the Florida expansion, and G-FISHER, and the NFWF expansion, that's correct. When it comes to dealing with spatial expansion through time, essentially what we apply is -- Again, there's a -- We can provide the paper Kevin Thompson wrote a few years ago.

Essentially, we apply an area weighting and habitat weighting approach to account for that, and so we estimate how much area the individual surveys cover, and then we partition that to various habitat qualities, based on some classification regression tree analyses, and, again, nuts and bolts, either Heather or Justin or Kate Overly, who are on the line, could talk about the actual analytical methods that they used, but we do apply a weighting approach to account for that.

DR. POWERS: Thanks, Ted.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: I forgot that I whiffed on Tom. Tom, do you still have a comment?

DR. FRAZER: I do, but I think John Froeschke had a comment first, and I'll follow up.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Sounds good. Go ahead.

DR. JOHN FROESCHKE: Thanks, and so I looked at the report that was provided in the postponed section, and it has a table in there of the index values at that time, and the sample size, and I plotted them, and they overlay almost exactly. If you take a correlation coefficient of those two values, it's 0.87, almost. I mean, the sample size, when it triples, the index triples, and, to me, that's concerning.

I understand there was standardization in there. I'm just concerned that something was not fully accounting for that increase, whether it was differences in the location, the geography, or the suite of habitats or something, but, to me, it looks like it's not a linear increase.

There's a period early in the time series where it's flat, and then there's an essentially tripling, and then it's flat again at an elevated level, and it's just having a hard time seeing that that would be consistent with the stock, what it could do.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Very good point. Any questions directed toward anybody there, or are we good to move to Tom? Go ahead, Tom.

DR. FRAZER: Okay, and I think John's point is a good one, and I think we need to think about that a little bit, and my question, my original question, might have been answered. I think Ted allayed some of my fears, I mean, but the question is does the G-FISHER sampling kind of design fully capture the exploited population, and it sounds to me like people are fairly confident that it does.

Assuming everybody is good with that, then my next question though is are there any biological data that were considered here, and what I'm particularly interested in is lengths. I doubt that we have enough weights, and, if we have the biological data, did you guys look at any length-based assessments that might provide a little insight into these patterns?

DR. FORRESTAL: I believe the lengths are in the presentation, but, for the specific internal analysis, we've never used length-based interim analyses.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. I hope that covers your question. Dave Chagaris, go ahead.

DR. CHAGARIS: I recall in a previous snapper assessment, and I think it was either mutton or yellowtail, where a G-FISHER index was used in the assessment model, but, to account for the expansion in 2016, it was modeled with a catchability block, to account for that, and I'm assuming that's in addition to whatever, you know, habitat adjustments are made during the standardization process.

Here, I guess my question would be does the distribution life history of lane snapper make it immune from this need to have sort of an alternative catchability assumption during the more recent time period where you expanded into south Florida?

This has come up before, but it was handled differently within an assessment model, and so lane snapper -- I don't know a whole lot about their distribution, but, if they are more subtly distributed along the shelf, then that's potentially what could be happening here, where there's a catchability increase as you move into higher habitat that inflates the CPUE over the period since 2016.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: It looks like we've got Heather raising her hand, maybe to respond to that directly.

DR. CHRISTIANSEN: Yes, and so I think you're referring to the mutton snapper assessment, and I think we determined to use the catchability because that assessment was limited basically just to south Florida, and the amount of sampling was much less between the three surveys, but here -- I don't have a solid answer, but I don't know if it would be as appropriate, because this is a Gulf-wide assessment, and so we do have that data through the entire time period. I think it was more predominant in the mutton assessment, because we were looking at just the south Florida data, but we did use catchability to kind of account for that.

DR. CHAGARIS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Thank you for that, Dave. We are going to move a little bit after this last one. John, go ahead. I've got one comment to add after that, and then we'll finish the presentation and continue our discussion.

MS. MATOS: John Froeschke does not have his hand up anymore.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. John Froeschke doesn't have his hand up. The one thing I was going to say is so, as we go through this, obviously, landings are a part of this analysis. I was just

going to have Ryan go through, just to detail for everybody, and I know we haven't had too much management action associated with this species that would, you know, affect catches or anything else like that that we would be looking at.

We had a couple of seasonal closures there a couple years, but do you mind just kind of going through that and saying whether there is or is not any management bias to take into account in our discussions?

MR. RINDONE: Not until like 2018, and so 2018 is when we had the first catch limit change go into effect, and we've had an update in that since that point, and we recently submitted an increase in the minimum size limit, but that has not been implemented yet.

What we're hearing from fishermen is that they're catching lane snapper more frequently, and the lane snapper that they're catching are trending, or, you know, they're getting larger, and so I know that, last year, there were a few IGFA submissions for different categories for lane snapper, and I think, Sean, off of Alabama last year, somebody caught a veritable monster. It was like nine pounds, or something like that. It was pretty big, at least for a lane snapper.

The fishermen are reporting seeing more larger fish and, you know, whether that lines up with the increase that's being observed in the index, as far as the CPUE -- I mean, it kind of does. I don't know that the magnitude would match up, but it does, in the anecdotal sense that we're getting a lot more feedback from the folks on the water that they're seeing more of these fish.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Good deal. Tracking the fishery is always a good thing to have, and so go ahead and, Dr. Forrestal, I'll finish up the presentation for us, and then we'll go through the rest of our discussion afterwards. Thank you all for that robust discussion.

DR. FORRESTAL: Great. Thank you, all. All right, and so, moving into the first reference time period using G-FISHER, it's 2006 to 2015, and this lines up to when the G-FISHER index is available for lane snapper.

We have the G-FISHER index on the top figure on the left, and then the catches on the right, with the corresponding reference frame. This yields an OFL of over two million pounds, compared to the current one of 1.1 million pounds that were reached in 2023. If you look at the most recent three or four years of the G-FISHER index, it is relatively flat, and so it doesn't really signify

such a large increase in abundance from 2023.

Looking at the next reference frame, we have 2019 through 2023, and so this is using the approach from the literature, and this yields an OFL of 846,000 lane snapper. Again, the index years are relatively flat, and the catches are pretty variable for lane snapper.

Then the final reference frame we have to look at is 2009 to 2018, and this yields an OFL of 1.3 million pounds. The use of this reference timeframe is relatively in the beginning of the time series that we have available for G-FISHER, and it is the longer time period that does help to account for this annual variability you see in both the CPUE and the catches, to a certain extent. Then, also, as Ryan just noted, 2018 is when we had the first management for lane snapper.

All right, and so, putting this all together, we have the various reference frames available to us, and the two indices, and so we're recommending to use the G-FISHER index. One of the reference time frames we have for the headboat that can be compared to the G-FISHER yields an OFL of 426,000 lane snapper, and we're also recommending using the reference time frame of 2009 to 2018, which yields an OFL of 1.3 million lane snapper.

Again, this longer time series can better account for the annual variability, and can better represent this fishery over time, and so it's not just taking into account these wild swings, and, looking at the most recent available landings for lane snapper -- For 2025, we don't have all the landings in yet, but, looking at 2024 through 2022, it has gone over the ACL, and it comes in around anywhere from 1.1 million pounds to 1.3 million pounds, and that is all I have for you, and I'll leave it up to the group to discuss what the best option is.

Obviously, we struggled putting this presentation together, and it's not really a clear-cut decision, but we wanted to give all the options, and kind of look at first principles about what the index is showing us, and also what the catches are showing us, and then how to capture how the fishery is doing, and so thank you.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: I appreciate that, Dr. Forrestal. That was a great sum-up of what you provided. Plenty of pros and cons for each one, fishery-independent and fishery-dependent, everything we need to discuss going forward.

I will say this is going to have to end with a motion, if I'm correct, Ryan, for OFL and ABC. First up, I got a question here,

and we'll start the discussion with -- I think Dave is a ghost hand. We'll go to Jim Nance, please.

DR. NANCE: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think, to get it started, I would like to make a motion, just so we can kind of -- We'll see what happens with this one, and we can discuss this, but motion is the SSC considers the G-FISHER index -- I'll wait for Jess here. **The SSC considers the G-FISHER index as best available science and recommends using it to estimate the OFL and ABC for the Gulf lane snapper fishery.**

I think, once we discuss this, and make a determination on this, I think that will give us the opportunity to then see what years and those types of things we can use, and so I would like to make that motion, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Thank you. We'll look for a second, and then we'll let our head semantics expert, Ryan --

MR. RINDONE: Mr. Chair, I'm going to interfere upfront.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Okay. Mr. Semantics, go ahead.

MR. RINDONE: So, per guidance that we have from NOAA Fisheries, the SSC shouldn't consider an index, or a survey by itself, as consistent with BSIA, because it's just that. It's just a survey. It may do a good job of surveying some things well, and other things not so well, and so what the SSC has been compelled to recommend as being consistent with BSIA is the analysis.

So, just to get in front of this, and I think this is where Dr. Nance was going, but it would instead read something like the SSC considers the 2026 interim analysis for lane snapper using the G-FISHER index as consistent with the best scientific information available, period.

Then, from there, you guys could talk about whatever it is that you want to talk about with regard to the catch limits, using the G-FISHER index as consistent with the best scientific information available.

DR. NANCE: Okay. We don't have to have anything on the end that we consider it usable for OFL and ABC?

MR. RINDONE: If you use it to set the OFL and ABC, then that will kind of be evident.

DR. NANCE: Okay.

MR. RINDONE: But, no, you don't have to have that on there.

DR. NANCE: Okay.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right, Ryan. That's why we keep you around, buddy.

MR. RINDONE: After "BSIA", you could delete everything else, and so with BSIA --

DR. NANCE: I think that reads well, Ryan. **I accept that.**

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right, and so we've got an amendment to the motion that was made by Jim. Have we got anybody to second? I've got a raised hand by Sean.

DR. POWERS: Yes, and I'll second it. I think that G-FISHER -- This approach isn't -- I'll have a different view on the years, but I second this motion.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Thank you, Sean, and so, with that, we'll have any discussion. Anything else around this motion itself, before we move forward on it? Anybody got any questions?

DR. FROESCHKE: I've got a question, and I can't figure out how to raise my hand fast enough.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: You got it. Go ahead.

DR. FROESCHKE: I guess, just if we were to pass this -- If you pass this motion, in the summary, what rationale would we say? I mean, the sample size and the index correlation seems very strong, but we don't -- Are we going to provide some rationale, or do we think that's sufficiently accounted for, and it's just there, or something else?

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: I think that might come into play when we talk about the different scenarios, because some have more of that impact than others, but I'll let other folks speak to it. Sean, is that a re-raised hand here?

DR. POWERS: Yes, that is. I just wanted to say that, John, I share your concern, but, you know, my -- I think we should set based on 2016 to some date, because that's when the big sampling expansion occurred, is what I was thinking.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. I've got Luiz, and then Tom. Go

ahead, Luiz.

DR. BARBIERI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to offer a friendly amendment there to that motion from Jim and Sean, right, that would add -- Let me see if I can see this. **The 2016 interim analysis using the G-FISHER index, and I would add there with a reference frame of 2009 to 2018, and I can explain that in a second.**

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Let's check on that friendly amendment. Are both motioners good with it? If they are, you can go and explain.

DR. NANCE: I'm fine with that, once I hear what Luiz has to say what the explanation is.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Sean.

DR. POWERS: I would like to hear what Luiz has to say, because I was thinking, you know, 2016 to some date, just because of the sampling effort, and the area issue, but I'll --

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Let's hear it, Luiz.

DR. NANCE: Let me just say what I tried to do with the original motion was keep dates out of it, but just the -- To have the G-FISHER index itself, and then we could have the dates, because I think the dates are going to be important for our OFL and ABC discussions, but, Luiz, I would certainly like to hear your discussion though.

DR. BARBIERI: Thank you, Jim. Thank you, Sean as well. The rationale here is I think that this reference frame is a little bit of a compromise, sort of like the middle-of-the-road approach, as you look at the two other values, right, the two other reference periods.

Yes, Sean, this does include 2016, but, because it extends into 2018, and that includes also a decrease in the index, that helps somewhat compensate, so to speak, you know, the large increase in 2016, and then, when we compare the values, right, between the two, because we're going to have to choose a reference period, either 2006 to 2015, which gives us a massive increase, and the OFL kind of sort of doubles.

If we look at -- If we use the 2019 to 2023, there is not just no increase, really significant, but this would cause a decrease in ABC, right, of about a little bit less than 200,000 pounds, and,

considering that this fishery has been expanding, as everyone has pointed out, I mean, this might require the council to take action on things that may not be really, really consistent with the condition of the stock, and it just reflects -- I mean, any variation, inter-annual variations, in recruitment, et cetera, would cause the council to have to take some kind of a management action.

Accepting how much more uncertain we have this determination, based on the data-poor, data-limited approach, my recommendation would be to go with a middle-of-the-road reference period that would give us a number that is reasonable.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Hearing the explanation, I'll go ahead and let you all reconsider that friendly amendment, whether you like it or not.

DR. POWERS: You know, I'm good with it. I like Luiz's rationale. I guess I never thought about if we only use -- Like, if I was going to advocate 2016 to 2020, that would really be during the high part of the series, and that would reflect that, you know, we would like to watch what the G-FISHER index does for a few more years, and whether it stays this high or not, and so I'm fine with it, your rationale, Luiz.

DR. NANCE: I would accept that, too. This is Jim.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Perfect. Now that we've got a friendly amendment to that motion, go ahead, Tom, and then we'll move to Ralph.

DR. FRAZER: Thanks, Trevor, and so I think -- Again, I appreciate the discussion that we just had on this. I think it's a good compromise, and I was a little concerned about using the longer reference time period, because, again, that kind of strong correlation with sampling effort, but I think this captures where I would like to be, and so I'm good.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: I would agree. All right. We've got Ralph. Go ahead, bud.

DR. TOWNSEND: Obviously, my background is not in this kind of modeling, but I feel pretty confused on two points. The first one is it seems like the G-FISHER index is implicitly preferred because it's fishery-independent, but there is information in fishery-dependent data as well, and that normally one would find a way to use all of the available information in a data-limited situation. It looks to me like the information from the headboat CPUE is not

at all consistent with what G-FISHER is getting.

My second point of confusion is it seems, to me, that the choice of the timeframe, 2009 to 2018, is based on that we like the answer, which doesn't seem like the right criteria. I think I'm going to abstain on this, ultimately, because I feel fairly confused about what's going on. Perhaps somebody can address those points for me.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Certainly, Ralph. I understand that abstention, if it comes. Dr. Forrestal, do you mind -- Do you want to tackle that headboat versus fishery-independent, since you had it covered a little bit, and anybody else who wants to weigh-in?

DR. FORRESTAL: Yes. Completely, and so there is information in fishery-dependent indices. Unfortunately, with some recreational fishery-dependent indices, the data does not capture any changes to let's say fishing power through time, or the management regulations that can have an impact on the abundance over time, and so maybe the fishermen aren't going out because gas prices are so high, and so you're seeing fluctuations that might not represent what is actually happening to the stock. If that's the only data input you have, then yes, that is a great source.

Then the other side for the headboat index is that it also only reflects landings, and so it does not reflect the discards, and so it's not getting the full picture of the stock. Then, when it is standardized to try to account for some of these changes, how it is standardized has a really large impact on the time series, and so you're not getting the same answer, or the same trend, depending on how you treat the data, and so that's also quite a big red flag. Then, for the other point, I think maybe someone else could discuss that.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. I'll go ahead and weigh-in on that headboat side of it, too. That's, obviously, a small portion of the fleet, which I get that, if it's consistent, or representative, it's fine, but that fleet can undergo changes in how they're targeting, and what they're targeting, which could lead to some reflection in the time series that might not be representative of what we truly want to see out of it. I'll stop jabbering, and it looks like we've got Luiz up next. Go ahead, Luiz.

DR. BARBIERI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Ralph, I think you're absolutely right about the point of us kind of picking and choosing an answer we like, right, and, in this case, I would say we like it for several reasons, I mean, expressing it like this.

It’s because, one, with this being a data-limited analysis, I mean, we can say whatever we want to say, but it's so much more uncertain, and a lot of the uncertainty in it is not so clearly apparent right, and so it kind of forces to make a little bit more of a qualitative -- I mean, first of all, we're going to have to choose the reference frame, right, that we feel is best -- Best represents the trends in the population, but even that, at this point, is somewhat subjective.

That statement, for me, of the middle ground is that I feel, in a way, that, if we acknowledge that this is the case, we're just being more transparent about the fact that, even though this is a quantitative modeling approach, it is not as without some qualitative expert judgment input as we would like perhaps to have. Your point is well taken, but that would be my justification for that.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Well put, Luiz. I got Ryan's hand up, real quick. Go ahead and go over to that.

MR. RINDONE: So I think I was just going to add a little bit as far as with, you know, G-FISHER versus the headboat CPUE for Dr. Townsend, and I think most of what I wanted to say about the headboat CPUE has been covered.

As far as G-FISHER is concerned, Ralph, these are video arrays that are placed on the bottom, and are in an unbiased way, aside from weather and time of day and things like that, and they're just sitting there watching fish, and they're not going to be affected by anything that happens from a management standpoint. They're just passive observers of the environment down there at those specific sampling stations.

The fishery-independent data are often going to be viewed a little bit more favorably, in that regard, than the fishery-dependent data, and that is not uncommon for the SSC, in its history anyway, to favor a fishery-independent index over a fishery-dependent one, if only for the avoidance of management bias.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Thank you, Ryan. I’ll go back to my hands. I’ve got Harry, and then we're going to go to Tom.

MR. BLANCHET: We talk about the headboat index. I know that the council has its Fisherman Feedback tool, but the headboat index is based upon a relatively small subset of the recreational fishery. Has anyone ever asked the headboat captains about changes in their fishing behavior over time with regard to any species such as this?

I mean, that may or may not explain some of this difference, but it might also give me a little bit more comfort.

The problem that I have is I looked at that red grouper piece, and, if you take the G-FISHER out of it, you get a very different perspective, and not necessarily positive, about the status of that stock, and so I'm looking for something to help support our preferences beyond this is fishery-dependent and this is fishery-independent. We've got other fishery-independent indices. We've got a trawl index, and has anyone looked at that?

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: To that point, Ryan?

MR. RINDONE: So. as far as talking to the fishermen, I've talked to some of the headboat guys, and what I've got from them is that, over time, like beginning in mid-2010s, they started to catch more lane snapper, and, especially in the 2020s, they've caught a lot more lane snapper.

They've started to recognize areas where they know that they can do a little bit better at catching them than others, but it's still not like a directly targeted thing, where it's like, oh, we're going out today explicitly for lane snapper. It's usually we're going out to catch mangos, and red grouper, and what have you else, and we were probably going to catch a fair amount of lane snapper with them, and so it's a co-occurrence thing, but they are seeing more of these fish than they have in the past, and they are seeing an increase in the length and weight composition.

MR. BLANCHET: So that tells me that we should be seeing an increase in that index then. What you didn't say was we're actively trying to avoid them, or we are able to fill our box without using lane snapper, those things that might affect the fishery-dependent index.

MR. RINDONE: Well, they’re not -- There's not any active avoidance of lane snapper. They just happen to be more common in the places where these headboats are taking passengers, and I don't have any like formal data or anything to differentiate on like trip duration, or anything like that, or distance from shore, and that would certainly prove an interesting discussion, but there's no active avoidance of lane snapper, but there's also a healthy bag limit on them. Are they part of the ten-snapper, or are they part of the twenty-snapper aggregate? Who did that last?

UNIDENTIFIED: Twenty snapper.

MR. RINDONE: So, I mean, technically, you could keep twenty of

them, if that's all you caught and kept, and so there's no real reason to be tossing them back, and, if you're on a headboat, and there's thirty or forty or fifty of you, however many on the headboat, it's a group effort, at the end of the day, and what was the other side of your question, Harry? There was a second part.

MR. BLANCHET: The other part was we have other fishery-independent indices. Has anyone looked at something like a trawl index of abundance, or anything like that?

MR. RINDONE: So, once upon a time, when we did SEDAR 49, all the available indices of abundance at that time, and it was like 2016 when that was completed, those were all looked at.

At the time, the most representative index considered for lane snapper was the headboat CPUE, which in and of itself is telling, right, because the headboat CPUE is a microcosm, if you will, of the broader recreational fleet, and it's subject to its own biases, and it's a fishery-dependent index, and it was considered to be the most representative for lane snapper, above any other fishery-independent indices, which were inherently given priority as part of that larger data-poor modeling effort.

Priority was stressed at like let's try to find a fishery-independent index first, and, if we can't, and there's a fishery-dependent one that's just going to be better, then we'll, you know, move to that one, but the goal, to avoid the effects of management bias, was to focus on the fishery-independent indices, and so there wasn't a good one for lane snapper at the time.

Now we have G-FISHER, which covers a large swath of the occupied habitat used by the animal in the region, and, importantly, it also covers where the majority of the fishing effort on the species occurs, and so the changes that we would ultimately see from G-FISHER, with respect to things like general abundance and length composition, should also be reflected in what the fisheries are experiencing, because there's overlap there.

MR. BLANCHET: So, again, that was, what, almost twelve years ago now.

MR. RINDONE: Sure.

MR. BLANCHET: We did not have, at that point, the eastern Gulf length of sampling that we have for the trawl fishery, or, I'm sorry, the trawl index of abundance, the SEAMAP trawl index of abundance, that we do today. Has it been looked at?

MR. RINDONE: No, and it lends more support for the idea of, you know, it might be time for us to step away from Itarget and consider a different assessment approach for lane snapper, because inherent to the interim analysis process is to focus on a single index of abundance, and to use that as being representative of what's happening to the animal at large, and, if we were going to be doing a reconsideration of multiple indices, and, like Dr. Townsend had mentioned, like why don't we use more than just one, and why don't we use both, well, now we're getting into a more -- A different type of analysis, as opposed to what was done here.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Are we ready to --

MR. BLANCHET: I agree.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: We're going to go back and forth. Thank you, Harry. I am going to be cognizant of our time a little bit. We are stretching a little bit, I think, beyond this one. We're going to try to move forward on it. Ralph, I hate to skip over you again. Is your hand still up for another comment, or is it a ghost hand?

DR. TOWNSEND: Ghost hand.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Okay. Ghost hand. All right. Tiffany, go ahead.

DR. HOPPER: All right. I wanted to just echo some things some other folks have said with regard to the time period. Using that 2009 to 2018 certainly increases my comfortability with that, that it does sort of give a long enough period to account for some inner year variability. and that it does cover that sort of jump period in 2016 with the G-FISHER index.

I may have missed this earlier, but the question I had was why 2009 to 2018 was the exact period, whether that was simply because, if you pick those ten years, you get 440,209 pounds as the average catch, as compared to, you know, perhaps 2010 to 2019, that would be kind of similar, and that it would cover that same jump period, cover that longer period of time, and I just wanted to get a little bit of clarification on why we are at 2009 to 2018, versus something that might be very similar, but might be slightly different, in terms of a start date.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Go ahead, Dr. Forrestal.

DR. FORRESTAL: Thank you. Yes, and we were kind of -- As we don't have a reference period for G-FISHER, we just went to what is the

best starting point, looking at when the CPUE is available, when there are major changes in regulations, and so 2018 did have that change in fishing regulations, and we did want it to be closer to the average catch from the initial reference time period, but it wasn't arbitrarily selected, but there are other -- We could look at other time series, but it's still just kind of -- At that point, it's picking and choosing. Also, I do believe the fishery did close down in 2019, and so that would have an impact on these results.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: It was scattered with a couple of December closures in there, I think twice, maybe. Tiffany, if that satisfied your question, we'll move on to John.

DR. HOPPER: That does indeed. I appreciate that clarification, just kind of putting that all in one place there for us.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Perfect. Thank you. Go ahead, John.

MR. MARESKA: Yes, and so, following up on John Froeschke's concern, and Tiffany's question as well, so the current reference period, 2009 to 2018, I'm just worried about the increase in spatial coverage and sample size with this time period.

Going back again and looking at working papers from previous SEDARs, the FWRI survey really kicked off in 2010, and so I don't know, if that increase in spatial coverage there on the West Florida Shelf, if that caused that decrease there.

Then, just looking at the previous SEDAR 88, the red grouper paper actually, I'm kind of proposing maybe 2014 would be a better starting period, rather than 2009, but I know you probably don't want discussion to go on much longer, but I'll get my thoughts out there. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: I appreciate all the thoughts. I think it's a valid thing to raise, and I think we're at a point now -- We've got a couple of ghost hands left, and so, Ralph, do you actually have one, or do you still got a ghost hand up?

DR. TOWNSEND: Yes, and I guess I do have a question.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Go ahead.

DR. TOWNSEND: We're saying this is consistent with best available science when there's discussions about whether using the trawl surveys, combining the information from the three surveys, would be better.

I guess, how are we reaching the decision that this -- I mean, somehow we're saying it's the best available science within the constraints of the index approach, and is that really what we're saying? I guess it seems to me like the discussion is not -- People aren't really saying it's the best available science. They're saying there could be something better, and we're not really sure we've looked at it, and so, again, I find myself, I guess, confused about what this means. I'll leave it there.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. I think we've got a Tom hand. Ryan, the consistency versus is kind of comment, all that kind of stuff, if you want to address that, feel free, but go ahead, Tom.

DR. FRAZER: A couple of things, and I'll try to be quick, Trevor, and so, with regard to the best scientific information available, I think, you know, it's always tempting to say there's something better out there, right, but this is the tools that we had at hand for this particular interim analysis, and so I get that. I think that's where we are. I think that statement holds.

There was a lot of discussion about the relative importance, or the difference, between the fishery-dependent and the fishery\-independent index, and, with regard to the headboat survey, it's my opinion that that survey has already been compromised.

We're not going to do dockside sampling, or we're going to have a reduction of that, in the western Gulf, I think, and we're probably -- That index will not be maintained, and so, if we're going to move away from it, now is probably the time to move away from it.

Then, again, by using this particular reference period, it still allows the analyst some time to address John's pretty important point that, you know, the index value scales with sampling efforts, and so I think the analyst should take some time -- You know, when we're done with this, you know, they shouldn't be satisfied. I think they should go back and look at that a little bit and figure out why there's such a strong correlation. 0.84 is pretty high, and so that's it, Trevor. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Thank you, and so, being that we've had a robust discussion, and we've had a lot of opinions on it, and I think it's been a good one for this one. All the areas we wanted touched will certainly be reflected, I think, as we go through the conversations, with whatever comes out of here. I think it's time for us to go ahead and take a vote on this motion. I know we've heard a little bit of dissent, and some abstain, and so I'll leave it to the folks in the room, but this might be

worthwhile just to run down the list and roll call it.

MR. RINDONE: I mean, you could just do it by roll call. Let's just do that. It's faster.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right.

MS. MATOS: John Mareska.

MR. MARESKA: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Luiz Barbieri.

DR. BARBIERI: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Ralph Townsend.

DR. TOWNSEND: Abstain.

MS. MATOS: David Griffith.

DR. GRIFFITH: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Paul Mickle.

DR. MICKLE: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Trevor Moncrief.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Jim Nance.

DR. NANCE: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Tiffany Hopper.

DR. HOPPER: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Sean Powers.

DR. POWERS: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Steven Scyphers.

DR. SCYPHERS: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Jack Isaacs. I see you're unmuted Jack, but I cannot

hear you.

DR. JACK ISAACS: Yes.

MS. MATOS: We hear you now. Harry Blanchet.

MR. BLANCHET: No.

MS. MATOS: Andrew Ropicki.

DR. ROPICKI: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Will Patterson.

DR. WILL PATTERSON: Yes.

MS. MATOS: David Chagaris.

DR. CHAGARIS: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Dan Petrolia.

DR. PETROLIA: Yes.

MS. MATOS: Tom Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Yes.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right, and so I probably could have asked for that one, but I figured, given the conversation, we might as well go down the list on it. It does make the next step a little bit easier, I think, because we have identified the years. We have identified kind of the direction we're going, and so I'm not sure if anybody has typed up a motion, or wants to field one, to give values to fill in that OFL and ABC blank.

DR. POWERS: I'm happy to do it, Trevor, if we can get just the number from the presentation.

MS. MATOS: Sounds great. Jess, you mind helping him out there?

MR. RINDONE: The OFL is 1,336,445 pounds. That's for lane, and not for red grouper. There would be a lot of really disappointed people if that -- Then you guys need to decide to what degree you want to buffer the ABC from the OFL.

It might be useful to bring up that slide from Francesca's presentation, which showed, I think, a P* of 30 or 40 percent.

There you go, and so, for that 2025 line there on the lower-right, at 30 percent, the ABC is 1,304,917 pounds, and, at 40 percent, it's 1,321,276 pounds.

DR. POWERS: I'll use the 30 percent, just because so many things seem to be positive about this stock, and we know that it's one that's going to probably do better in the warmer temperatures, and so we'll start -- I'll at least propose the 30 percent.

MR. RINDONE: So the whole motion would read something like the SSC recommends an OFL of 1,336,445 pounds whole weight and an acceptable biological catch of 1,304,917 pounds whole weight, and that's for 2026 and subsequent years.

DR. NANCE: We need to also put that this is for the Gulf lane snapper fishery, and I'll second that, Mr. Chair.

DR. POWERS: For the Gulf lane fishery. I guess we'll also put "based on the 2026 lane snapper interim analysis". Can you go back to that table? Is that an SPR of 30 percent and SPR of 40 percent?

MR. RINDONE: No, and it's P*.

DR. POWERS: P*. Okay. Now I understand. Gotcha. 30 percent.

MR. RINDONE: So, Jess, I can read it out for you.

DR. POWERS: I'm good with the motion, if Jim is.

MR. RINDONE: So it's the SSC recommends an OFL for Gulf lane snapper of 1,336,445 pounds whole weight and an acceptable biological catch of 1,304,917 pounds whole weight for 2026 and subsequent years, based on the 2026 lane snapper interim analysis.

DR. POWERS: Why are we saying subsequent years? Don't we usually set it for three years?

MR. RINDONE: You can set it for three years, but, in effect, it will be in place until the council takes management action to do something different, and so that's why I said for 2026 and subsequent years, because, what Francesca has listed in the interim, and the way that the OFL and ABC recommendations from the interim come, it's for that point until changed.

DR. POWERS: Yes, but I would rather --

MR. RINDONE: Okay.

DR. POWERS: Because that gives the impression we have more trust in this than we have. **Just put 2026 to 2028.**

MR. RINDONE: Okay.

DR. POWERS: Jim, are you all right with that?

DR. NANCE: I'm fine with that. I think this needs to be changed, because lane snapper was up in the front and everything else, and so --

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right, and so we've got a motion on the board. We've got some changes there. Do we have any discussion around it? Let's see if we've got hands up here. Ralph, ghost hand or new hand?

DR. TOWNSEND: Ghost hand.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Ghost hand. All right, and so I'll ask, since we went through this last one, Ralph, do you still want to abstain from this?

DR. TOWNSEND: No, and I'll support this.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Okay. Harry, still want to be a no?

MR. BLANCHET: I'll support it. The first one passed.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right, and so if anyone else -- If anyone else wants to say no, say it. If not, we're going to say it passed with full support. **Seeing no comment, or no raised hands, motion carries with no opposition.**

All right. Appreciate that one. That certainly was one that we had to look at pretty closely there, and so I appreciate that we took a little bit of extra time to go through it. This next one is informative. It looks like we're moving on to red grouper. Ryan, if you want to cover the scope of work for it.

GULF RED GROUPER INTERIM ANALYIS HEALTH CHECK

MR. RINDONE: Got it, and so Francesca is back for an encore to present the interim analysis for Gulf red grouper, which also uses G-FISHER. The last stock assessment for red grouper was SEDAR 88, and it used G-FISHER as well, and it's provided as background for you guys.

The council is currently considering an amendment to the Reef Fish FMP, which is Amendment 62, that would incorporate the new catchment recommendations that you guys made in response to SEDAR 88, and, because that is in development, and hasn't been implemented yet, that's why this red grouper interim analysis is being done as a health check, and so you guys should consider the information presented, ask questions, and make any recommendations to the council, as appropriate, but catch limit recommendations are not part of this one, and so Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Thank you. Then, Ryan, given what the council is working on, isn't there something in there about reviewing this one pretty regularly?

MR. RINDONE: Yes, and this is one of the ones that you all see annually.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. All right, and so we're going to see it this time, and we'll be seeing it in perpetuity, and so, Dr. Forrestal, go ahead.

DR. FORRESTAL: Thank you very much, and I just need to share my screen. Okay. It's me again. Before I get started on red grouper, I just wanted to note that the headboat data is still valuable, but just, in the case of the lane snapper, it was not as representative, when we compared it to the G-FISHER, and so I don't want to totally -- You know, headboat is still useful, but, moving into Gulf red grouper. As noted, this is just the health check for 2026. It's not a full interim analysis.

How the species in the Gulf has been -- How the interim analyses have been done in the past, and so, in 2021, the catch advice was adjusted using an index-based harvest control rule and a three-year moving average of the NMFS bottom longline survey index of abundance. In 2022, this interim analysis was just used as a health check, and so it was not used to adjust catch advice. The same for 2023, and, in 2024, the health check was requested using updating the available fishery-independent indices, and, again, the catch advice was not adjusted. In 2025, we had SEDAR 88, and the terminal year of that was 2022.

A health check for this stock was requested by updating the available G-FISHER index. The previous health check on this was done with the bottom longline survey, as well with the groundfish survey.

From the last assessment, the groundfish survey was selecting younger age classes, and so it was not fully representative of the

entire stock, and I just wanted to revisit this slide.

One of the reasons why the G-FISHER was selected as a health check is that it is very closely tied to the overall time series of the assessment, and so this is the jackknife, where an index is removed, and to see which has an influence on the derived quantities.

The blue line is when the combined video index, which is the G-FISHER index, has a very strong effect on the time series, particularly if you look at the spawning output and fraction of unfished.

These are the ABC projections that were presented in February of 2025. Since then, the council requested this management begin in 2025, as opposed to 2027, and so that changed the ABC from 8.78 million pounds gutted weight to 8.28, and so this is what was in effect for the emergency rule, and the emergency rule went into effect from August of 2025 through the end of December, and so it just ended.

Then, once Amendment 62 comes into force, I believe this will be the ABC, but, looking at the G-FISHER combined video survey, the red is what was used in the assessment, and the blue is the index updated through 2024.

There are some differences between the trends. There is a lower abundance than was observed in SEDAR 88 in 2018 and 2019, and this is due to the fact that there was some QA/QC, and there were some missing stations that were not used in the assessment, and adding those stations back in changed how the CART model was standardized, and so it changed the time series slightly, and that's why you see those differences.

Most importantly, we do see an increasing abundance trend from 2019 through 2024. The model did include red tide years, and these are highlighted. The important thing to note is that this time period does not cover when the emergency rule went into effect from August through December, and so we won't be seeing any impacts of that increase in catch limits.

Then, looking also at the bottom longline survey, there are very similar trends between the two indices. There are slightly lower abundance observed in 2022 to 2023, when looking at the time series as a whole, but the abundance does increase from 2023 onwards, and, again, we have the red tide years in here.

This is all I have for you, just to give you the health check of

red grouper. I think next year will be much more informative, because we will have data from 2025, when the emergency rule went into effect, but I will open it up to questions.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. That's perfect. Figuring next year might be -- That will be a good one to be able to see. I mean, we are seeing some positive movement here, and so I think that's a good thing to note. Ryan, have you got any comments on what's been seen, you know, on the water as of late, or anything else like that? I know we like to hear that, every now and then when we go through these kind of discussions.

MR. RINDONE: Well, I actually have personal experience to share on this particular animal, and there are quite a few red grouper out there, it seems, in like the eighteen to twenty-two-inch range, and so lots of, you know, three to four-year-olds, is what a lot of the fishermen are reporting seeing.

Generally positive things, and so, once you get out into the deeper waters though, it's finding those larger fire trucks, if you will, those larger red grouper. You know, some folks are saying that they're a little bit harder to come by, but the large preponderance of, you know, three to four-year-olds, in waters, you know, between say, sixty feet out to 150 or 180 feet, has been something fishermen have found to be encouraging.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Good deal. Anybody have any comments on the presentation? I would also say I appreciate the comment on the headboat to start with. We certainly don't want anybody to get the idea that fishery-dependent data is invaluable, and so, if that question comes up next week, I'll do my best to comment to it, but does anybody have any questions on this presentation? All right. Going once, going twice, done. All right. With that, we move into our final agenda item, and that's going to be on gag. Ryan, do you mind walking us through it?

GULF GAG GROUPER INTERIM ANALYSES AND HEALTH CHECK

MR. RINDONE: Not at all, and Dr. Lisa Allioud is on the line to present the interim for gag, and this one also uses G-FISHER. It’s the index of the hour, and the last stock assessment conducted for gag separately considered the three video surveys which combine to make the G-FISHER index, and that stock assessment report, and the SSC's review, are included in your background info.

Because the rebuilding plan for gag started just recently, which is Amendment 56, and because the catchments for gag are projected to increase annually, and so we have increasing yield stream there.

This interim analysis is provided as a health check only, and I'll let the Science center speak more to the rules, if you will, for the conduction of interim analysis, and then why that decision was made, but, generally, you guys should consider the information presented, ask questions of the staff, and make recommendations, as appropriate.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Sounds good. Go ahead and take it away, Dr. Ailloud.

DR. LISA AILLOUD: Hi. Can everyone hear me?

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: We got you.

DR. AILLOUD: Excellent. Thank you, and so hi, everybody. Today I'll be presenting the Gulf gag grouper interim analysis, or health check, and so the last assessment for gag grouper was in 2021/2022. The terminal year of the assessment was 2019, and, as Ryan mentioned, since gag grouper is in a rebuilding plan, this interim analysis serves as a simple health check on the condition of the stock, rather than a recommendation for catch adjustment.

The reason is, if you think about our approach for adjusting catch advice, it really was built for stocks that are in a healthy spot at the end of the previous assessment, the idea being that, if you're at a healthy level at the end of an assessment, and then you look at an index update later in time, you should be able to relate the change in the index to the change in the stock size in a pretty straightforward way.

If you think about your -- If you have an increasing index, it gives you a good idea that the stock is growing, and perhaps you are able to increase your ACL. A stable index would indicate that you're fully utilizing the resource, and you can continue to do so for a number of years, but a declining index would, you know, suggest that perhaps the catch advice was set a bit too high, and the stock size cannot take that much catch anymore.

Now, if you think about this in the context of a stock that is not in a healthy place at the end of an assessment, like gag grouper, and that's undergoing a rebuilding plan, the idea of the rebuilding plan is to slowly increase the ACL from year to year as the stock is allowed, you know, some space to grow back to a level where it consists of high catches.

You cannot look at the index and simply translate, you know, an increasing index with the idea that you can increase catches,

because, you know, your objective here is to rebuild the stock to a different place than it was when you last assessed it.

That being the case, since it's not a straightforward translation, a one-to-one translation like it would be in a stock that is not undergoing a real rebuilding plan, we recommend doing a health check.

It is also very difficult to completely understand whether or not the stock is on track with the rebuilding plan just by looking at the index, because there's other variables that need to be looked at. For example, you know, what were catches in recent years? Was the ACL followed, or was it exceeded, which I'll show you in the next slide what that looked like in recent years for gag grouper, and so we would feel more confident in giving you a more complete picture of what is going on during the next assessment for gag, and thankfully that's happening this year.

I think, if we can wait a few more months and see, we'll have a lot more information to look at to get a more complete picture of whether or not gag seems to be tracking on that rebuilding plan.

These are the trends in commercial, on the left-hand side, and recreational, on the right-hand side, catches, and so the solid black line is the quota, or the ACT, for the recreational sector. The dashed line is the landings.

In the case of recreational landings, we did have the landings exceed the ACL in two different years, and so the ACT was adjusted downwards, and that's the red line that you see there. I don't have data for 2025.

I actually checked just a couple of days ago, and the Wave 5 data are not in, and so we don't really know where we stand with the rec data this year, but I did provide all other years, so you can see, you know, what has happened since 2019, which was the terminal year of the last assessment.

In terms of the commercial landings, the quota was exceeded in 2023, but it stayed below the ACL, and so the fishery was closed early, but the landings were near the quota in 2024 and 2025, around 90 or 95 percent. The rec ACL, like I mentioned, did exceed -- It was exceeded in 2023 and 2024, by a large margin, and so the ACT was adjusted downward in years that followed.

This health check is based on the combined video index, and, if you recall, at the SEDAR 72 assessment, that index at the time was looked at, but there were concerns that, particularly for gag,

because gag grouper had such a strong ontogenetic migration to deeper reefs as they grow older, there was a concern that there was a shift in selectivity of the survey when you combined everything from 1993 to 2019, even when you start doing some habitat-weighted approach.

At the time for SEDAR 72, we kept the -- We essentially didn't change what was done in the past. We just kept the SEAMAP and the Panama City video surveys as separate indices in the assessment, and we did not include FWRI, which, at the time, the only data available were up to -- The assessment was up to 2019, and so it was not a lot of data, and it was quite flat, but, since then, the team has re-evaluated the data.

There's a lot more years now where we have overlap between the three surveys, and so that team recommends going forward with looking at the combined index to get a more complete picture of the stock's trajectory in recent years, but they do recommend that it be truncated starting in 2010 to alleviate concerns over shifting selectivity through time and, you know, stark differences in proportion present between say the Panama City index and the other two surveys during the early 2000s, which were due to some of the stronger year classes showing up in the Panama City survey, but not quite yet on the offshore reefs.

On the right-hand side is the data that are -- The red box shows all the data that are used for constructing that index, and the numbers in color are the proportion positives across the surveys, and then, on the bottom there, you see the overlap of the size frequency between the surveys, with SEAMAP having slightly larger fish, but a better overlap with FWRI and the Panama City survey, compared with back in time.

Here is -- Sorry, and this is an older version of the presentation, and so the only change here is the confidence interval should be a little bit wider on that index on the top right-hand side, but everything else is correct, and so, here, this is to show the combined video index survey index trend, on the right-hand side, against the nominal. You can see that there's a decline from 2010 to about 2015, and then it's quite stable since 2015.

The bottom left-hand side shows you the spatial footprint from 2010 to 2019 and 2020 to 2024, and so the two bottom panels would be what is represented in this index, and then the density plots, I guess, of the length frequency shows you how the lengths -- These are weighted length frequencies, by the way, weighted by the habitat, in the same way the index is weighted, and so that is what the index is tracking.

You can see there are some differences through time, maybe a few year classes that seem to pop up, but then don't quite show up later in time. Again, you know, if you look on the right-hand side, those numbers -- They're a little bit small, but it shows you the number of fish that were measured, and then, in parentheses, the number of sites. Did I get this backwards? It might be the opposite. Sorry. The number of sites would be the first number and in parentheses is the number of fish that were measured.

You know, relatively small sample sizes, and gag is not a fish that has high proportion positive for these surveys, but it should give us a fairly good idea of the range of sizes that are being covered by this survey.

On the left-hand side, you can see the comparison between the two surveys that were used in SEDAR 72. In yellow is the SEAMAP survey, and in red is the Panama City survey, and then overlaid on top in blue is this combined index, and then you can see we have additional years beyond 2019, up to 2024.

In general, the trends between the separate indices of Panama City and SEAMAP and the combined index are relatively similar. There's a bit of a flatter trend in Panama City, with a little more of an uptick, and then a bit steeper of a decline in the SEAMAP survey, but, you know, nothing drastically different, and then, in recent years, it's quite flat, and so there was an uptick from 2018 to 2019, which we saw at the end of our last assessment. That seems to have taken a drop in 2020, but after that, it's quite stable.

On the right-hand side -- Even though this is a health check, I went ahead and just applied a similar approach that we would in an interim analysis, just to give us some sense of, you know, percentage change in the index through time, compared to a reference period, which is three or five years surrounding that terminal year of your assessment, and you can see the three-year reference period, in the red on the top, and then the blue is a five-year reference period. You can see that, in recent years, there's a slight decrease in that index, but it's quite minor. I think it's less than 10 percent.

The conclusion from this health check is that the combined video index has remained largely stable in recent years, showing a slight decline in relative abundance since the previous assessment was completed.

Like we mentioned, we can't really offer reassurance, just looking

at the index in isolation, that we are adhering to the rebuilding plan, especially given some of the overages in the fishery. It is difficult to assess what the impact was on the population, because, you know, having an overage in one year really has a compounded effect through time.

With a rebuilding plan and ACLs that are increasing quite a bit from year to year, to track a theoretical rebuilding of the stock -- If that's not being followed in reality, it's difficult to say if we are being successful or not.

We're excited that a new assessment is underway for gag. We'll have a more complete picture of what is going on with the stock. We'll have some trends in discarding. We'll have some information from the age composition, to see what happened to the stock when there were overages, which size classes or age classes were affected, and were they able to still make it through, and survive through time, and, you know, better understand why this index is flat, really. A lot to think about, but I hope this was helpful. I believe that is the last slide, and so, with that, I'll take any questions.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Thank you. I've got a couple, just to start out with. I see Jim's hand there. I appreciate the presentation. I was kind of hoping -- If we could go up to the recent landings slide, real quick.

All right, and I'm going to need a little bit of help here from Ryan as well, and so I'm trying to think. You know, I definitely see the overages there. We've seen some patterns in the past, when it comes to kind of a negative feedback loop, when we start to constrain seasons.

I was wondering, when I looked at the landings, and it looks like they decreased by a third, or maybe a little more than that, but I'm trying to think through the management side, because it seemed like this fishery really got ratcheted down when it came to the imposed management of it. Do you mind helping me out with that, Ryan? How many days was this one actually --

MR. RINDONE: Yes, and the fishery got aggressively ratcheted down on, as far as the catch limits are concerned, for both the commercial and the recreational sector. The recreational fishing season was reduced to a couple of weeks, starting out, and it's had a couple of years' worth of overages, and we're still waiting on the finalized landings data, to see where gag stand for how they did in -- How the recreational fishery did in 2025. If there was not an overage, then the 2026 ACT I think is 399,000 pounds.

The commercial sector though is under an IFQ program, and so we've seen the share price for leasing gag go up considerably, and the availability of gag to lease go down quite a bit, since the folks that are catching it -- You know, they're catching everything that they have, and there's not often much left to lease to anyone else.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Right. Right. Yes, we certainly see that, and the main premise of that question is it seems like, even with the large-scale decrease in the season length, it seems like the landings are still there, and so I think a consideration in the future, as we go through this is, is there that small sample size negative feedback loop that kind of happens as seasons are constrained, and how those landings respond, because it seems like, yes, the landings decreased by, you know, 25 to -- You know, landings decreased to a third of what they once were, or maybe a fourth of what they once were, but the season certainly got constrained a lot more than that, which points to maybe some derby fishing, or increased pressure, which is usually pretty easy to pick up, at least when it comes down to observing the fishery, but I'll digress off of that point for now, and we'll move into it.

MR. RINDONE: Yes, for sure, and, I mean, it's definitely an issue, and we've had issues with it in past. I think in 2023 -- John, was it 2023 or 2024 when there was like one sample from the Sunshine Skyway Bridge that translated into, at one point, like 110,000 pounds of gag being estimated from shore, and the council balked at the idea of relying on a sample size of one to extrapolate out the landings for that mode that way, and there were some corrections that were applied after the fact to we'll say smooth that out.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Gotcha. All right. Jim, go ahead.

DR. NANCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Lisa, thanks for that presentation. A quick question. Is the combined video survey the same as G-FISHER?

DR. AILLOUD: Yes, and so it's called G-FISHER only in recent years when --

DR. NANCE: Okay.

DR. AILLOUD: You know, yes, but correct. It's G-FISHER, and it's the same analysis that is used -- It's the CART habitat-based weighing analysis that's, you know, for standardizing the index, which takes into account the habitat type, and quality, and kind of re-levels all the surveys to be on the same level, based on how

much high quality, low quality, medium quality habitat is covered by those surveys and what the total survey area is.

DR. NANCE: Okay.

DR. AILLOUD: So it tries to level everything on the same scale.

DR. NANCE: So it's really the same now. I know before we called it that, but so, for consistency, I guess we should call it G-FISHER, and is that -- Would that be right?

DR. AILLOUD: Probably. Yes, and that might be my error, because we called it combined index at the last assessment, but, yes, I think G-FISHER index is probably more appropriate.

DR. NANCE: Thank you.

MR. RINDONE: I'm calling it G-FISHER in the summary, and so --

DR. NANCE: Thanks, Ryan.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Good catch there. Thanks for that, Jim. Mike, I was going to point you at the end of this anyways, but go ahead.

DR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Lisa, for the presentation. You know, I'm looking at this relative to what I've been hearing from the fishery, and it seemed like, last year, from both spear fishermen and hook-and-line recreational anglers, I was hearing of lots of female fish that hadn't transitioned yet, and lots of fish that are, you know, under and just over legal size on shallow inshore reefs.

I'm trying to balance that with, you know, seeing a flat trajectory in the G-FISHER, and I'm just wondering about the thought that maybe the G-FISHER index is not going to do a good job of catching the increased abundance of those smaller fish inshore.

When I say inshore, I'm thinking like sixty feet and less, and I just wondered if you any thoughts about that, about whether maybe this index is not going to do a good job of catching those relatively new recruits inshore.

DR. AILLOUD: Yes, and so that's a good point. It's more so that there's going to be a delayed response, right, because the -- For example, the Panama City videos are more inshore. You're seeing a few -- A little bit more of the early recruits, but, really, they don't hit the other offshore reefs until a few years later, and so it could be just there's a delayed response, right, and so

maybe there have been some successful recruitments, but we're not seeing the full extent of it in the index, and maybe we'll see it in the next couple of years.

It's also possible that they were impacted by the fishery, and so some of those big year classes were very successful of, you know, creating those high yields we're seeing, but perhaps were not left to survive and grow to the bigger sizes to be seen in the survey.

I can't really say, without having seen all the other pieces of the picture, and I think looking at say the age composition, during the assessment phase, will be really helpful to see what's happening to these cohorts through time, but, yes, it's a combination of delayed response and what is the fate of these fish that we're seeing inshore.

DR. ALLEN: Thank you for that, Lisa, and so it's going to be really interesting to see how this assessment comes out, and I agree that adding the age data, and the other data that are going to come into that assessment, are also going to be insightful.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Thank you, Mike. I would agree there. I had a question about the whole cryptic side of that species too, whether that, you know, potentially impacts representativeness, but I will wait on that one. Andrew, go ahead.

DR. ROPICKI: Yes, and I don't really have a question. I just wanted to throw out there kind of what Ryan was talking about, the, you know, allocation price, or the quota lease price. You know, historically, red snapper was the most expensive in the IFQ fishery, but that's not the case anymore.

I mean, you can look at the numbers that NOAA Fisheries puts out, and they put out a quarterly average. I do a survey. In both of them now, you're looking at gag being about seventy-cents a pound more, and I can tell you, on my surveys, I have a comment section for the commercial fishermen, and I get a lot of comments saying, you know, we have to try and avoid gag grouper. There's not enough quota for what we can catch, and so I just wanted to provide that information, and let everyone know that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Appreciate that, Andrew. It’s always good to see the whole supply and demand thing show up, be proven once again. All right. Harry, go ahead.

MR. BLANCHET: Could you go two pages forward, to page 5? This is to Mike Allen's comment, and something that I had earlier. If you squint really hard at that length frequency for 2024, you do see

what seems to be a bunch of small fish is what makes that index in 2024, and I'm not seeing very much at all in the upper ranges of that, but only -- Now all the caveats. This is fifty-six fish, one index, one year.

We don't -- If you look back over time, that index is noisy, in terms of the length frequencies. The one note I would make is that, unless those colors have some meaning, other than being light to dark, maybe make them all one color, so they're equally visible, just for the next iteration.

DR. AILLOUD: Yes.

MR. BLANCHET: If you do something like this again. The other part that I had a question on -- This is all based on basically Florida. Gag is a Gulf-wide stock. Was there any looking at any of the information from the western Gulf?

DR. AILLOUD: So, yes, this index is restricted to the eastern Gulf. 98, I think, percent of landings are Florida-based, and so that's why we only focus on the east, and even in -- Even in the east, those proportion positives are, you know, quite low for that survey, and so it probably would be really low in the west, I would assume, but, yes, the assessment is really built around Florida, because we think that's where most of the dynamics are happening.

MR. BLANCHET: Well, it's a Gulf-wide stock, and they are pretty widely distributed on the outer shelf in the western Gulf. I'll leave it at that.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: I'll concur with that one, Harry. We certainly have them here. Unfortunately, we usually see one a year on our surveys, if that, and so certainly they're not always seen. Anybody else have any questions? I'm going to kick it over to Mike, real quick, and we've got other council members, I think, in the audience, but is there anything on the council side -- Given the species, you know, regulatory history, it's kind of -- The amount of questions it's got and everything else, is there anything you feel like we haven't touched on in this discussion that we might need to go through, or do you think we've hit it pretty well?

DR. ALLEN: I mean, I think we've hit it pretty well with the information we have available to us. I think we're all waiting to see the finalized landings from last year, and, of course, the assessment coming up, but, at this stage, it's good to see this G-FISHER index, and think about what that means, but we're going to be waiting on this other information, it seems to me.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Thank you for that, and I'll end it by saying stability isn't always a bad thing. At least it's stable. I think that wraps up what we need. We didn't have a motion for this one. We can move on into the public comment portion, I believe, is what we have next. Harry, go ahead.

MR. BLANCHET: Mr. Chairman, I did have one more comment in general. All three of these reviews were on the G-FISHER index. G-FISHER has had some review in its development. I have seen one published paper, from Thompson 2022, this reference right here, and there's a SEDAR working paper that I've seen.

However, I don't know that we, as an SSC, have ever been provided a more extensive evaluation looking into the nuts and bolts than those two papers. Is that something that we should have for a future meeting, if we're going to be using this as an index of abundance? I think we need to be sure we know what we're talking about.

You know, my reading of those papers, I was a little concerned about how some of the -- In terms of putting things into bins, how some of that binning varied from index to index, or from survey to survey, within the overall index, and they could probably be very easily allayed by someone who actually knew what they were talking about, instead of me trying to read it in a vacuum, but I don't know if anybody else feels the same way, and whether it's worth the committee's time to do that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: I certainly don't see any negatives on it, but, Luiz, you got a response to that? Go ahead.

DR. BARBIERI: Well, yes, and, I mean, I think that Harry brings up a good point, and, if Ted Switzer is still on, he can probably expand on this. You know, there has been a formal review, and correct me if I'm wrong, Ted.

I think that this was either CIE, or a panel of other independent experts, that were involved in that review, and this had to do with the NOAA RESTORE Science Program, but there were all sorts of issues discussed, Harry, that I agree with you.

Perhaps a presentation to that effect, involving Ted, and perhaps Heather and other folks that Ted may pick to come and give presentations to the SSC, might be helpful to understand all the different bells and whistles, all the different limitations and characteristics of the survey.

MR. BLANCHET Thank you, Luiz. I agree, and I think that, just

seeing that CIE review, whatever their output, might answer a lot of my questions. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Let's start with that, I think. If somebody has that there, feel free to send it to Meetings, and they can send it out to everybody and go with that CIE. I don't dislike the thought of, as this thing continues to be used, and as we continue to go down that road, kind of having that knowledge, just like an informational presentation about it, just so there's a little bit more detail there.

Let's start with that CIE review, and then go from there, and Ryan will look through the schedule and see kind of where we are with all that. Ted, I see your hands raised. Go ahead.

DR. SWITZER: Thanks. Just to clarify, it was not a formal CIE review. There's been two kind of processes. One, our G-FISHER program had a peer review, that Luiz alluded to. We also had a SEDAR best practices workshop, that took place a number of years ago, where we had all the regional index survey experts as a panel to discuss this, and other approaches.

Unfortunately, we've never finalized the report for that. I've been working with Kevin Thompson. He took a position with NOAA, and, again, didn't have the bandwidth to wrap that up, and so there are a couple of different sources there that we could talk about.

We've also talked about, at some point, having a mini-symposium for the SSC, because we have a couple of other things coming out of the pipeline, in terms of the survey, that we need your input on. Maybe that's something we do as a longer session later this year, or early next.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: Thank you, Ted. I'll lean on Ryan for all that. I'm sure we'll be in discussion on that as time progresses on. Does anybody have any other comments, questions, suggestions on that or this presentation?

All right. Seeing no hands, our Item Number 7 is Public Comment. Do we have anybody from the public who wishes to comment? If they do, the directions are right there, and I'll let staff handle that side of it. All right. Have we got anybody so far, or we clear on public comment?

MS. MATOS: No, we don't have any hands.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. Well, that brings us down to Other Business. I know no one pre-declared it when we were going through

the agenda, but now would be the time. Does anybody have any other business to bring up? Going once, going twice.

That looks like no other business, and so it looks like we have some time to adjourn. I think we caught up on our time pretty well. I appreciate the conversation around a lot of these. I think it's going to help a lot for next week, when we go through this stuff, and so I appreciate everybody's time. Ryan, do I need a motion to end the meeting, or are we just rolling out?

MR. RINDONE: No. Chair's privilege.

CHAIRMAN MONCRIEF: All right. I will take my privilege. This meeting has now concluded. See you all very soon in-person. All right. Thank you, everybody.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on January 22, 2026.)

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