

GULF COUNCIL

OUTREACH & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Hyatt Centric

New Orleans, Louisiana

January 26, 2026

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 11 Mike Allen.....Florida
- 12 Brenda Ballard.....Texas
- 13 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 14 Troy Frady.....Alabama
- 15 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 16 John Marquez.....Louisiana
- 17 Jason Osborne.....Louisiana
- 18 Ed Walker.....Florida

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- 21 Kevin Anson.....Alabama
- 22 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 23 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 24 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- 25 LT Jackson Morton.....USCG
- 26 John Sanchez.....Florida
- 27 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- 28 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 29 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 30 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida

STAFF

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

1 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

2 Frank Helies.....NOAA

3 Dylan Hubbard.....FL

4 John Walter.....SEFSC

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1 The Outreach & Education Committee of the Gulf Council convened at
2 the Hyatt Centric in New Orleans, Louisiana on Monday afternoon,
3 January 26, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Anthony
4 Overton.

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

10 **CHAIRMAN ANTHONY OVERTON:** I am going to call to order the Outreach
11 and Education Committee, and I'm going to introduce the members of
12 myself, Ballard, Allen, Broussard, Frady, Marquez, Osborne,
13 Geeslin, and Walker.

14
15 The agenda has been sent to you, and hopefully you had a chance to
16 look at it. Is there any question, or any amendments, that need
17 to be made to the agenda? If not, I'll accept a motion to accept
18 the agenda as presented. Anyone? All right. I need a second?
19 All right. So moved. Thank you, Jason. It's been properly moved
20 and seconded. If there's any opposition to it, just raise your
21 hand. None at all.

22
23 Likewise, you have also received the minutes from our previous
24 meeting. You hopefully had a chance to look at that. Are there
25 any edits that need to be made to the minutes, or any additions?
26 Seeing none, I will accept a motion to accept the minutes as
27 presented. All right. A second? All right. Thank you. Is there
28 any opposition? None at all, and we'll move forward, and I'll
29 turn the floor over to Emily.

30
31 **MANAGEMENT AREAS AND BOUNDARY MAPPING**
32

33 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
34 we'll go ahead and jump right into Item IV, which is Management
35 Areas and Boundary Mapping.

36
37 So just starting with the action guide here, what I'll first do is
38 provide you with an update on our efforts to replace the static
39 images that we use to host the areas on our regulations, and then
40 I'm going to move into a presentation on trying to get management
41 areas and boundaries added to commercially-available mapping
42 tools.

43
44 Once we get into that, I would like you all to consider the
45 recommendations of the O&E Technical Committee and decide whether
46 the council should move forward with its own effort, should
47 encourage NOAA to work on it, or to wait for potential legislation
48 to move forward.

1
2 Starting with the first piece of this, I just wanted to give you
3 guys an update. You might remember, and I think it was two years
4 ago we pulled them, but, formerly, we hosted all of our management
5 areas as sort of a static list of PDFs, and it wasn't arranged
6 very well, and it wasn't super useful, and, you know, I think
7 fishermen got pretty confused pretty frequently.

8
9 I will say we pulled those down as we decided that we wanted to
10 create a more dynamic mapping tool where fishermen can kind of
11 query things and see things across the Gulf. They are hosted right
12 now on the NOAA GIS portal, and so they do exist. They're just
13 not in a format, you know, that the council is sharing, and that
14 we think is probably the most user-friendly.

15
16 With that, I just wanted to give you an update that we did bring
17 a draft of that tool to the O&E. They made a number of
18 recommendations to increase sort of the effectiveness of the tool.
19 Based on that feedback, staff sort of rallied again and thought
20 that maybe the platform that we're using, which is currently
21 ArcGIS, to build that tool, it might not be the most flexible and
22 functional of the possible tools that we could be using.

23
24 Staff is going to sort of -- I don't want to say go back to the
25 drawing board, because we're not going to start over, but we're
26 going to sort of look at the functionality of the tool, based on
27 the feedback we got, and see if we need to change the platform.

28
29 Once we do that this year, our plan is to then beta test the new
30 dynamic mapping tool with members of our advisory panels. What
31 we'll probably do is give them some pre-programmed like queries
32 that we want to ask them, like, hey, what can you do in this area,
33 and see if they can sort of navigate the tool easily, and then
34 we'll also ask them what kind of uses they anticipate for that
35 tool, like what would drive them to open up that tool and go and
36 use it.

37
38 Hopefully that will help us sort of hone it in, and then the plan,
39 as you'll see in a later item, is to have not only sort of the
40 redo, and the beta testing, but to launch that tool by the end of
41 this year, and so hopefully we'll have a dynamic mapping tool ready
42 to go by the end of next year. Any questions or thoughts about
43 that before we move on to the next piece of this agenda item?

44
45 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Ed.

46
47 **MR. ED WALKER:** So have you had discussions with the CMOR map guy,
48 and Garmin and stuff, about this, and what was their take on it?

1
2 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So that's our next agenda item.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Anyone else? Okay. Move on.

5
6 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay, and so, Bernie, if you can pull up Tab O,
7 Number 4, and it is a presentation, and if you can pull it up in
8 PowerPoint, because there is an animated slide on this one. All
9 right, and so thank you for the segue, Ed.

10
11 Essentially, what I want to do is sort of remind you, you know,
12 where we've been with this, and so December of 2024, and so it
13 wasn't our last O&E, but the O&E before that, the technical
14 committee supported staff in exploring a pathway to add management
15 areas and boundaries to commercially-available mapping tools.

16
17 When I say that, I mean things like CMOR maps. I also mean things
18 like your Simrad, your Garmin, you know, just sort of as part of
19 your base maps, or an add-on that you can use, right, and they did
20 caution us that closed areas don't sell devices, and so that might
21 not be something that the industry is interested in.

22
23 They also sort of cautioned that hosting regulatory areas could
24 prove to be a liability for those companies, right, and so, if
25 those regulatory areas are not hosted accurately, and in a timely
26 manner, then I think the industry could fear that that would put
27 them in the place of being sort of a purveyor of bad information
28 that gets people in trouble.

29
30 **MR. WALKER:** To that, when you turn on your Garmin unit, a
31 disclaimer comes up before they it even opens the unit, and it
32 says, you know, this app, or the maps on this, may or may not --
33 Something to the effect of it's a disclaimer that says we can't be
34 liable for anything that happens once you start using this machine,
35 and so, just, you know, maybe that figures in here somewhere.

36
37 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Ed, in response to that, I would tell you that
38 Fish Rules, and our regulations, also have a disclaimer. However,
39 if there ever is a mistake in one of the regulations that we host,
40 it is not only an embarrassment to us, but it reflects poorly on
41 us as well.

42
43 I suspect that, even though there is no legal binding reason that,
44 you know, maybe Garmin could get in trouble, it's not a good look,
45 and so the industry probably is a little bit hesitant to host the
46 regulations unless they have kind of a guarantee that they're
47 accurate, and they don't get into that situation, if that makes
48 sense.

1
2 After the O&E discussed this in 2024, last time this committee
3 met, you all warned us that we should have low expectations for
4 success here. I think C.J. mentioned that FWC had previously tried
5 to accomplish the same goal, and that they were unsuccessful, and
6 so I don't know if you guys know my personality, but, when I'm
7 told that I can't do something, I tend to try and find out how I
8 can get it done.

9
10 You are missing a slide of me with like my conspiracy theory maps,
11 because it was hilarious, but I've worked through this. It took
12 a very long time, and it proves to be very complicated, the way
13 this works, and so let me just sort of see if I can talk us through
14 this.

15
16 If you look at the fisherman on the bottom-right here, fishermen
17 basically have four ways right now that they can find the area and
18 the regulations that are associated, right? We have this council
19 mapping tool that we're working on, hopefully. We have Fish Rules.
20 Both of those products are to be sort of based on the codified
21 federal regulations, right, and so those are the fisheries
22 regulations that are informing those products.

23
24 We also have this NOAA Fisheries GIS portal. I have to tell you
25 I don't know that a lot of fishermen are aware of this portal. It
26 does exist. However, it's not easy to sort of like download from
27 that portal, put it on your chip, and then put it on your machine,
28 right? It's sort of a whole process to get the fishermen to have
29 it, especially if they want it on the water.

30
31 The fourth sort of pathway, at the bottom, which is probably what
32 fishermen are taking for granted as the most popular way to do
33 this, or the most sort of obvious, is those marine positioning and
34 mapping units do have NOAA maps on them, but they are NOAA
35 Cartography maps, and so those are based on not -- They're on
36 navigational boundaries.

37
38 I guess the most important used, or the most frequently used,
39 pathway is those base maps that we get from NOAA cartography, and
40 they do not have the fishing regulations on them.

41
42 A couple of things that are important. As I mentioned, the
43 codified federal regulations, and so the fishing regulations, do
44 not inform the map products that are produced by NOAA Cartography
45 and then make their way onto the units themselves. NOAA Fisheries
46 GIS portal, which is informed by the CFRs, also does not inform
47 NOAA Cartography, and so that's very important to know, right?
48 There is no linkage between the fishing regulations and NOAA

1 Cartography as it relates to, you know, what goes on the vessels.
2
3 The Codified Federal Regulations do inform that portal, and they
4 do inform these other tools. However, it's a little bit
5 complicated, because fishermen are getting those things on their
6 mapping devices from the other pathway, and so that's the reality
7 that we're facing right now.
8
9 We went through a case study, and we had a fisherman, David Walker,
10 who was actually a council member. He asked us, in about June of
11 this year, for the nine-mile boundary off of Alabama, or last year,
12 and so I was like, oh, easy. No problem, and I'll get it for you,
13 David, right, and it should be easy.
14
15 So I went to the CFRs, and it wasn't in the CFRs. We found out
16 that, as you guys now know, based on our law enforcement
17 presentation, in 2028, Congress shifted the reef fish boundary so
18 that it's based on the territorial sea baseline. Formally, it was
19 not, right, and it was it was based on the Submerged Land Acts,
20 and so what you're seeing through NOAA Cartography, that's on the
21 machines, is the nine mile line based on Submerged Land Acts,
22 because that is a navigational boundary, and so that would not
23 work, right?
24
25 That doesn't work for us, and it's wrong, and it's -- I think it's
26 probably misleading, in a lot of ways, because it's not the reef
27 fish boundary.
28
29 As you know, what that does, shifting that sort of baseline that
30 we're using, it slightly changes what nine miles is that we
31 previously were using to define this off of Texas and Florida, and
32 then it defines a new boundary for Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama,
33 and so we figured all that out and sort of went on to think, okay,
34 this shouldn't be that hard, and let's go see if we can track this
35 nine-mile boundary down.
36
37 Well, unfortunately, in this past year, the woman at NOAA
38 Fisheries, Amanda Frick, who was in charge, or the keeper of all
39 the GIS files, she took the early retirement package. She was
40 replaced. However, her replacement was let go during the
41 reductions in force. The replacement was RIF'd, and so there is
42 no sort of point person right now doing NOAA maps.
43
44 We couldn't find where this nine-mile boundary was, and so we
45 worked with -- We contacted the states, and we contacted NOAA Law
46 Enforcement, and we worked with Mara and GC and SERO, and suffice
47 it to say that it took us until this meeting, so six to nine months
48 after the fishermen gave us what should be a simple inquiry, to

1 get a map that we had all, you know, sort of made sure was based
2 on the right baseline.

3
4 I share this case study to tell you that it's been a journey, and,
5 if this is a prelude to what it's going to look like for us to do
6 this moving forward for all of our boundaries, we're kind of in a
7 sticky spot, right, and so, as I see it, the ideal scenario, just
8 to get -- You know, sort of backing up from the case study, but,
9 in general, the ideal scenario to getting our fisheries regulatory
10 areas on these marine positioning units is to find a pathway that
11 the CFRs go directly to a REST API, and so, you know, an API
12 service that will then be updated in real time, and that not only
13 does Fish Rules and our mapping tool, but also the marine
14 positioning folks, and those companies rely on the REST API to
15 automatically update their tools, so that it's sort of an automatic
16 thing.

17
18 When I say automatic though, it is going to require a human being
19 to make sure that the Codified Federal Regulations are put into
20 the REST API accurately, and in a timely fashion, so that those
21 other sort of deliverables are updated.

22
23 The other thing that it's going to take is it's going to require
24 us, or somebody, to network with the marine positioning
25 manufacturers and companies, in order to make sure that they're
26 aware of the REST API and that they have confidence that the data
27 that they are getting from the API is accurate. This is sort of
28 the simple ideal scenario, but it does take some work in the
29 background, and so how do we get there?

30
31 First, we need to make sure that we have sanctioned map products,
32 right, and so we need to make sure that the maps that we have, the
33 boundaries that we have, that the associated regulations that we
34 have, are sanctioned and approved by NOAA Fisheries and are
35 codified and are proper.

36
37 As I mentioned with our little nine-mile case study, that is
38 something that is very hard for us at the council to do outwardly,
39 because it's kind of an internal NOAA process to make sure that
40 that's all there.

41
42 The second thing is we need to make sure that we are gauging
43 industry appetite. When we talked about it with -- There's a woman
44 who does the right whale stuff up in NOAA, and she sort of talked
45 about her process of working with these marine manufacturers, and
46 one of the things that she indicated was she didn't think that
47 they would be super excited about adding this to their devices if
48 it's only going to be representative of the Gulf region, and she

1 suggested that potentially the industry is going to be more excited
2 if, A, they believe it's accurate and timely, but, B, that it is
3 a national product, right, so that it is all of the regions, and
4 it is just a fisheries layer, period.

5
6 You know, some people think about our Gulf and South Atlantic, and
7 some people are going to want both, and so they suggested that we
8 don't do this piecewise, that we don't just go region-by-region,
9 that we have to do it nationally.

10
11 What that means is that we need to develop some cooperative
12 workflow in order to host and maintain regulations on a national
13 scale. Simple, right?

14
15 A couple of steps for you to consider. There is legislation that
16 has not yet been moved forward, but it's called MAPOceans, and the
17 idea is it's going to require NOAA to consolidate, standardize,
18 and digitize public data on marine waters. Now, it was unanimously
19 passed by the Senate, but the House has yet to vote on it, and so
20 that is pending. It could take a year. It could take more years.
21 Hopefully there will be funding associated with this, so there
22 would be a point person, and so we could wait for that to happen,
23 and hope that it does.

24
25 The second thing that we could do is we could take action. We
26 could simply write a letter and encourage NOAA to put resources
27 towards this effort. We could ask the CCC to write a letter, on
28 behalf of all councils, to encourage this on a national level, if
29 we didn't want to do it on a regional scope, or we could decide to
30 embark on this on our own as a council tool.

31
32 However, as I mentioned, that would require that NOAA has some
33 sanctioned map products, and that it would also require national
34 coordination, potentially, right, and so, instead of just the Gulf
35 Council doing the Gulf, maybe we would have to work with the CCC
36 to get this done on a council level, and I'm not sure if they want
37 to do that.

38
39 With that, I will say that the O&E Technical Committee did make a
40 motion about this. I'm going to call up Dylan, really quick, to
41 sort of share the motion with you, and also to share some of the
42 rationale, or the direction, that the O&E gave us.

43
44 **MR. DYLAN HUBBARD:** Thank you. The O&E asked the council to draft
45 a letter to NOAA Fisheries Southeast, or consider asking the CCC
46 to draft a letter to NOAA Fisheries, in support of NOAA, putting
47 effort towards providing appropriate marine regulatory areas and
48 boundary lines that reflect current regulations, with the end goal

1 of serving them to commercially-available mapping tools.

2
3 The motion carried without opposition, and the discussion was a
4 lot of what Emily already outlined of trying to make it a national
5 tool will potentially increase the appetite for some of these
6 mapping companies like Garmin, Simrad, Lowrance, to potentially
7 ingest this information onto their devices.

8
9 If it is solely Gulf focused, even if it's Southeast focused, it
10 might entice them, but, if it's something more national, I think
11 there's a lot of potential here to move it forward more quickly,
12 and so that was definitely a bulk of the conversation, and where
13 we would like to see it go if possible. Thank you.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Any questions for Emily? Thank
16 you, Dylan. Ed.

17
18 **MR. WALKER:** So trying to get a nationwide ocean mapping thing
19 sounds like a big undertaking to me, especially the way things are
20 working currently in the system. If us, as the Gulf Council, is
21 concerned about getting our boundaries into Gulf fishermen's
22 hands, could we just put together a little file that you can email
23 to somebody, and they can load it on their card, and you can drop
24 it in your machine, and just the boundaries will come up? I mean,
25 I load things like that from my laptop onto my boat all the time.
26 I mean, you could email it to everybody, or whatever group you
27 decide.

28
29 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So, internally, we have discussed this new mapping
30 tool, this dynamic mapping tool. There will be, or there could
31 be, a part of it where we serve it, you know, like you're talking
32 about, in a file, and have it associated with either the launch of
33 that tool.

34
35 I would say to you that -- Like I'm sure you're very proficient at
36 using your machine. If I -- Bless my husband, but if I said, hey,
37 you can get the marine boundaries on your machine, and you've just
38 got to do it, he wouldn't have the first clue on how, and so, in
39 addition to creating those files, and serving them in the right
40 formats, and making them user-friendly, so that they just get onto
41 your machines, because there's a variety of machines that use
42 different files, we would also have to create quite a bit of
43 outreach around it, videos maybe, and tutorials, to teach captains
44 how to do that.

45
46 It's not a problem. It's totally a thing that we could do, and so
47 I would say that, if this doesn't go anywhere, or if you would
48 prefer that we just focus on that regional approach, we are

1 prepared to sort of go down that road, for sure.

2
3 **MR. WALKER:** It seems to me you could -- I mean, you could even
4 put a link on the council page, for those that are technologically
5 inclined. I mean, I would love to load boundaries. I was near a
6 place the other day out, toward the 240 break, that's closed this
7 time of year, and I wasn't sure if I was getting close, or where
8 -- That would have been great for me to have it on my machine at
9 the time, and so I would definitely -- If there was a download
10 button on the council page somewhere that I could load a file, it
11 would be beneficial to me. Just a thought.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thanks, Ed, for sharing. Any other questions?
14 Mara.

15
16 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Just a question, because you mentioned, a number
17 of times, NOAA sanctioned maps, or coordinates, and so I guess I'm
18 wondering exactly what you're talking about, because all of these
19 areas, I mean, at least that I can see, the coordinates are in the
20 regulation.

21
22 The nine-mile thing is different, because we don't have a state-
23 federal boundary codified, because we just don't, but like the
24 Gulf reef fish stressed area, the longline areas, they all have
25 the coordinates, and so wouldn't you just be able to pull what's
26 in the regulations? Like what else would NMFS have to do?

27
28 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So, yes, for plenty of them, there are, and like
29 Madison-Swanson is well-defined, and we can do that one. There
30 are -- When we were making the tool, you know, this dynamic mapping
31 tool, we did find that there was a couple of sort of sticky
32 boundaries, right, and one of the ones that's really hard, and I
33 think shrimpers struggle with, is like the Texas-Louisiana
34 boundary for the closure. I'm sure -- You're nodding at me like
35 maybe you get those questions.

36
37 There are a couple of other boundaries that we're going to have to
38 chase down, that are not in the CFRs. They are not products that
39 we have developed, and that we will have to chase probably, like
40 we had to chase the nine-mile line.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Dakus.

43
44 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I don't know
45 the ins and outs of where the boundary -- I know where the boundary
46 is, but how it's going to get there, but I have the utmost
47 confidence in our partners at NOAA Fisheries that once -- If and
48 when this MAPO legislation is passed, you all can figure it out.

1 It seems like that's getting real close to getting passed.
2
3 In the interim, back to Captain Walker's point, I like the idea of
4 writing, you know, a CCC letter, but you kind of drilled back down
5 into that, Ed, that, you know, maybe a simpler of let's control
6 the controllable, and one of the options from Ms. Muehlstein was
7 write a letter from the council, and we know how long things can
8 take trying to get multiple councils on a letterhead.
9
10 I don't know, and that seems like an easier lift than going bigger.
11 So, Emily, I know that was maybe your second option. I would
12 suggest that we pursue that, and, if we need to make a motion, we
13 can do that. I'm not sure if that's the appropriate time, but
14 thanks for the presentation.
15
16 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thanks, Dakus.
17
18 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So I think we can do this. We can do both, Dakus.
19 I think, if you guys want a motion to write a letter, we can do a
20 letter to support sort of a national approach to this.
21
22 I think, in the meantime, when we go through our 2026
23 communications plan, one of the other things we can do is I can go
24 ahead and add what Ed was talking about, which is us to develop
25 and serve the areas in our region alone, and so I think we can do
26 both and cover it.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Emily. Anyone else? Ed.
29
30 **MR. WALKER:** Just one more thought. Did you, Emily, talk to the
31 Fish Rules guys? I wonder if one of the companies, like
32 StrikeLines or CMOR, would offer -- Get them to put something
33 together, and you could buy it for ten-bucks, and download the
34 boundaries of the Gulf on your unit. Let them handle it. I mean,
35 wouldn't that cover what we're trying to do here, and maybe they
36 can make some money doing it?
37
38 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Yes, but I'm not sure I understand the ethics of
39 me calling CMOR Maps and saying I have a great way for you to make
40 money. I can ask around.
41
42 **MR. WALKER:** Maybe just let them know that there's a potential
43 appetite for a product that would show the boundaries that people
44 have to follow out there in the Gulf, and see what they thought.
45 I don't know. I'm just thinking out loud here.
46
47 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Thanks, Ed. Kesley.
48

1 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** All right, and so I think you need a motion to
2 move forward, correct? Okay, and so I'm going to throw a motion
3 out there on the fly, Bernie, or I can't. I'm not on the committee.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** I guess there is some discussion. Does anyone
6 on the committee feel similar to Kesley and would like to put
7 forward a motion for us to consider?
8

9 **MS. BRENDA BALLARD:** I'll put forward one.
10

11 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Okay. Go for it.
12

13 **MS. BALLARD:** Well, I need clarification. Are we saying CCC? Do
14 you want to do it?
15

16 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So my thought is, since we do have MAPOceans in
17 the coffers, that's going to be the national push, and so maybe
18 just the council writes a letter to NOAA Fisheries supporting, I
19 don't know, their focus on developing. Gosh, and I haven't thought
20 about this yet.
21

22 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Dr. Overton, we suggest we have this conversation
23 in Full Council, to give some folks time to think about the motion.
24

25 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Okay. We'll table this to Full Council. Thank
26 you, Chair. Yes.
27

28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thanks, Chair, and so, just
29 for your information, I mean, we did take the Starlink request to
30 the CCC, and I think we got a pretty quick turnaround, and so I
31 think, if it's a well-defined issue that we can explain and provide
32 to other councils, that they have been responsive. Now, we don't
33 want to abuse that, but I would just say that that took us, before
34 this council meeting, less than two months to get the letter out
35 on Starlink to the FCC.
36

37 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Okay. We'll hold that for Full Council. Any
38 other questions for Emily before we move to the next agenda item?
39 None at all. Emily, the floor is yours.
40

41 **RECREATIONAL INITIATIVE COMMUNICATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS**

42

43 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. We will move on to Agenda Item V, which is
44 the Recreational Initiative Communications Recommendations. I'm
45 going to present you all with an overview of the five recreational
46 initiative communications recommendations that you prioritized
47 during the August council meeting, and I am also going to present
48 you with the Outreach & Education Technical Committee's

1 prioritization of these five communications recommendations, and
2 they also suggested tactics to accomplish all of these.

3
4 After I sort of give you all five of those, and the Outreach &
5 Education Technical Committee recommendations, I would like you
6 guys to suggest how we should move forward, and you'll see, in
7 this presentation, there are a couple of decision points that I
8 have added to our 2026 communications plan, and so, Bernie, if you
9 can pull up Tab 0, Number 5, and that's our presentation on this,
10 and I'll walk you through what we've got. Thank you.

11
12 Okay, and so just a brief reminder that the recreational initiative
13 was an effort to engage the recreational community to review and
14 evaluate past and current management strategies, and also to
15 explore potential innovative management strategies that could be
16 applied in the future. There were twelve working group members
17 from all of the Gulf states, and they did their work in about a
18 year-and-a-half, through a series of different meetings.

19
20 I will tell you that they ended up, as a result of this big effort,
21 in nineteen consensus statements that were sort of filed under six
22 different goals. Those nineteen consensus recommendations broke
23 up so that there was eight of them that were education-based,
24 thirteen of them that were management-based, and, in August, you
25 all prioritized both the education and management recommendations.

26
27 That resulted in six priority management recommendations, which
28 Sarah is going to work with you on tomorrow to prioritize, and
29 then five priority education recommendations that we're going to
30 look at again right now, and so those five recommendations that
31 were communications-based sort of fell under three umbrellas.

32
33 First is establishing trust with the recreational community,
34 second is increasing the increasing recreational community
35 engagement in the management process, and the third one is
36 maximizing angler satisfaction and accommodating growth in the
37 recreational sector.

38
39 The Outreach & Education Technical Committee took a look at the
40 five communications recommendations that you all prioritized in
41 August, and we had them simply prioritize by matter of vote, and
42 so what you'll see here is one of them clearly rose to the top,
43 and then there was one that had two votes, and then it kind of
44 trickled down from there, and so what I'm going to do is walk you
45 through each one of these recommendations, and then talk to you
46 about the tactics that the O&E recommended to deal with them.

47
48 The first priority, with the largest number of votes from the O&E

1 Technical Committee, was that the council should work with partners
2 to develop a scaled-down module of the Marine Resource Education
3 Program, or MREP, to share with a wider audience, possibly
4 including short videos on specific components of the fishery
5 science and management process.

6
7 Now it was indicated, and I think it's important to capture this
8 discussion, that this is not meant to be a substitute for MREP,
9 right, and MREP itself is its own entity, that really involves,
10 you know, an intensive course, where fishermen are together from
11 different backgrounds with the managers, and that is not something
12 that we can replicate.

13
14 However, throughout MREP, there are like a variety of different
15 presentations that teach you all about the science and management
16 of the fishery, and this is meant to sort of supplement that, or
17 to be that, and so the Outreach & Education Technical Committee
18 sort of suggested two separate ways that we could do this.

19
20 The first is to create a video series, and second would be to
21 create more of an online module. If any of you guys have taken
22 the Return 'Em Right module in order to get your descending gear,
23 that's what we're talking about when we say module. It's more
24 like an interactive quiz, and like it's got a whole, you know,
25 steps that you have to go through, and there's some things that
26 you have to make sure that you're doing, and so, just looking at
27 comparing these two suggestions, a video series would be pretty
28 efficient.

29
30 It would probably have a lower production barrier, right? We
31 already have the studio, and we have the video equipment, and it
32 would not have any sort of formal evaluation for comprehension,
33 and so that's sort of the drawback there, is you wouldn't really
34 know if what you were putting out was actually creating the effect
35 that you were hoping that it did.

36
37 We could try and create an online module. This would be more
38 active learning and comprehension. It would have a structured
39 progression, but it would also be a higher technology barrier, not
40 only for us as staff in developing it, but also for the user,
41 right? It would probably require a login, and it's a whole
42 different thing than passively watching a video, and so, sort of
43 at the end of this presentation, I would like some feedback on
44 which one of these you guys think would be best moving forward, so
45 that I can add that to our 2026 plan.

46
47 The next priority, which had two votes, was that the council should
48 better communicate the conservation implications of different

1 fishing activities based on individual species biology and life
2 history, like depth, spawning behaviors, and that this would
3 empower anglers to make better decisions based on their
4 conservation ethic.

5
6 I do want to just sort of add in here that we already do this in
7 some ways. If you ever go to our sort of species-specific
8 regulations, there is some information that helps with this. We
9 infuse this into the documents, when there is a management decision
10 that needs to be made, and then I'm sure you guys are also familiar
11 with like our species fact sheets, our one-pagers, that we've sort
12 of done on a number of our different species before.

13
14 These things do exist, but they might not be as upfront and forward
15 as they could be, and so the technical committee suggested that we
16 make infographics, or fact sheets, that we have straightforward
17 social media messaging that's specific to sort of these things,
18 that we create videos about this, that we enhance the rationale
19 that we use in our news releases and public hearing materials, and
20 that we write blog articles and species profiles on this. I think
21 that's something that we can definitely do to sort of enhance
22 biological understanding and decision-making from our recreational
23 anglers.

24
25 The third priority, which had one vote, and this tied for the
26 fourth priority with one vote as well, was that we should seek
27 opportunities to partner with the recreational fishing community
28 leaders to educate and engage anglers to be more active
29 participants in the Gulf Council's management process.

30
31 This could potentially be done through a leadership program
32 sponsored by the Gulf Council, where maybe participants are invited
33 to attend council meetings and to review outreach materials and
34 provide public comment.

35
36 Now, I want you to be clear that use of council funds for something
37 like this is kind of tricky, right? We couldn't just pay people
38 to come to our meetings. However, if this is something that you
39 guys think is really important, we can kind of try and find ways
40 to do this by modifying the role of our AP members, by partnering
41 with external organizations, and like a group like Sea Grant might
42 be able to find some funding to do a program like this.

43
44 You know, they've got some different programs where we might be
45 able to find a pathway for this that doesn't mess with our funding,
46 and we could also consider developing a foundation, right? I know
47 FWC has something called the Friends Foundation, and the sanctuary
48 does as well, where it's actually like a separate not-for-profit.

1 This sort of seems like a large barrier to entry here, but, if
2 it's something that's very important to you, we -- If there's a
3 will, there can be a way.

4
5 We could also, rather than sort of creating a leadership program
6 that has sort of money implications, we could simply develop
7 materials in support of external efforts. When I think about this
8 bullet, I think about the SEFHIER program. There was an external
9 funder who funded captains to sort of host meetings about the
10 transition to the new electronic reporting program.

11
12 In that case, if there was something like that, we would be happy
13 to produce materials specific for whatever that effort is, so that
14 we can help with that effort. We could also just expand our in-
15 person outreach. We could bring the council to the recreational
16 fishing community, and so we could spend a little bit more time,
17 as council members, sort of maybe doing a concerted effort to make
18 sure that we're meeting with the recreational community.

19
20 The other third priority would be that the council should work
21 with the recreational community, including the for-hire and
22 private angler sector, to develop seasons and maximize overlap in
23 focal species. If you guys remember, during the recreational
24 initiative, we kind of did a tool, and let them toggle open and
25 closed, and see if everybody was in agreement, and they were not.

26
27 This would maximize overlap with the seasons for red snapper with
28 the primary target reef fish for Gulf anglers, but it also says,
29 in this priority, that, at the same time, the council needs to
30 recognize that the for-hire folks and the tackle industry want
31 something open all year long, right, and so this is kind of
32 conflicting in itself.

33
34 The technical committee did mention that maximizing overlap may
35 conflict with maximizing season length, right, and so it might be
36 a conflict in itself, that the desire for overlap might vary by
37 location and by fleet, and that we could consider deploying a tool,
38 like we did during the recreational initiative, to gauge the real
39 desire for this, but I will tell you, you know, that Paperwork
40 Reduction Act really limits our flexibility in what kind of tools
41 we could deploy.

42
43 We would have to either get creative, or it would take us about
44 nine months to see clearance through the Paperwork Reduction Act,
45 and so, again, I'm just going to ask you to consider how important
46 is this, and is the juice worth the squeeze here or not.

47
48 Looking at sort of -- I didn't add the one that had no votes, but,

1 sort of looking at what I just shared with you, what I would like
2 from you from this discussion is, for the first most popular
3 recommendation of sort of creating this MREP lite, should we focus
4 on a video series, or would you like to see us sort of jump into
5 creating some sort of module, like Return 'Em Right has?
6

7 The second question I would like you to address is how should we
8 communicate the conservation implications of different fishing
9 activities based on species characteristics? Do you want to see
10 more infographics? Do you want to see more social media stuff?
11 What do you think would be helpful?
12

13 Then the third question I have is there's those third priority
14 items, the last two that I presented to you, partnering with the
15 recreational community, and is that important to you? Do we need
16 to find a way to do that? Also, when we consider that season
17 overlap, and trying to maybe develop a tool, do we want to go
18 through PRA clearance? Is the juice worth the squeeze for these
19 third-priority items?
20

21 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Thank you, Emily. I know that's
22 quite a bit to digest, and so I guess probably we should go through
23 each one of them first, starting with the first priority, and our
24 charge is whether or not we would prefer a video series or online
25 module.
26

27 Since I'm the chair, I'll take a point of privilege. I'm leaning
28 towards the online module, because it may also be a way to increase
29 participation on some of our APs from folks who traditionally have
30 not participated, and then maybe recruit for, you know,
31 participation in the full MREP series.
32

33 I think, by having that engagement, and someone who is committed
34 to that, it may bear fruit for some of the other initiatives,
35 trying to recruit folks that typically don't participate, but
36 that's just my thought, but the floor is open for further
37 discussion. Ed.
38

39 **MR. WALKER:** Is there really a big difference between a video
40 series and an online module? What are those differences?
41

42 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Yes, and so, an online module, you would probably
43 have to sign up with your email, and you would take a course, and
44 you would progress through that course. It would be not only just
45 videos, but there's reading, and there's probably infographics
46 involved. It would take a lot more for us to do an online module,
47 whereas a -- It might be a larger technological barrier for
48 fishermen.

1
2 A video series is something that, you know, anybody could see on
3 our YouTube. We could share it on our social media, you know, one
4 snippet at a time, so that, if you're interested in the definition
5 of MSY, you can watch a video on it, right, and it would sort of
6 be a la carte.

7
8 It would be less of a barrier to entry for fishermen. It would
9 also be a little bit less of a barrier to entry to us, even though
10 either one of them is going to be pretty involved, and so, when
11 you think about the online module, it definitely is more of a like
12 -- It would be like a college course lite on fisheries science,
13 and it has a progression, and there's usually quizzes involved, to
14 make sure that you've got your comprehension.

15
16 **MR. WALKER:** What would incentivize an average fisherman? Just a
17 personal desire to learn, I guess?

18
19 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Or we could just come up with our own
20 certification, just a certificate of completion, you know, that
21 you have at least -- I don't know, that's just me, and I like to
22 have something in hand when I do something. I think Troy was next,
23 and then John.

24
25 **MR. TROY FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I've been watching
26 Emily's videos for years, and they're quite entertaining, and
27 they're informative. You know, I'm not sure about producing a
28 whole series of videos, but the online modules we have to do every
29 year to get our HMS certification for, you know, sharks and
30 identification, and is there a way to do a hybrid, because, I mean,
31 I want -- You don't, I don't want to put a lot of cost into this
32 right here, because Emily is going to be our spokesperson, unless
33 she finds someone else to be, but I love the way she does it, her
34 energy and stuff, and she can learn.

35
36 If there was a hybrid, where you did kind of a module in Emily's
37 video series, or whoever Emily chooses to sit in there, and, I
38 mean, it's highly educational. I mean, everybody can't go through
39 the MREP class, but there would be a usage for this here, and
40 people could learn on their own, just to have the -- It wouldn't
41 change unless you started getting specific on dates and bag limits,
42 and so general information would be wonderful.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you. I have John, and then, Mike, you
45 can follow John.

46
47 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** Just an example of the online module, I know
48 that Everglades National Park has one that you have to take before

1 you can use a boat down there. It is not very good, and so you
2 have to go through and click, and take all these tests, and sign
3 up with Indiana University and go -- There's not a lot of
4 information that's gained.

5
6 I think the video series, or even something that was more
7 conversational, with perhaps two people with opposing viewpoints,
8 or different sides of a discussion, that you could kind of hear
9 that, and go through that, might be more engaging on YouTube than
10 some -- Those modules, like once you get in there, by the time you
11 sign up, and you're so frustrated that you just want to make this
12 thing go away and get your certificate, whereas the other one I
13 think is easier to generate, and more engaging.

14
15 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** To John's point, I do think that creating a module
16 is actually going to narrow your universe of learners, because
17 it's a larger barrier to entry for them. I think, if you create
18 a video series, they kind of do it a la carte. Who knows, and we
19 might go viral if I'm so exciting, but I would say that, you know,
20 if it was up to me, I would probably lean towards a video series,
21 just because we can be more nimble in creating content that's
22 meaningful at the moment, whereas, when you have a module, you
23 lock it in. We would have to buy a software to do it, and like
24 kind of go through it.

25
26 I see the value in a module, but to the point of what's the
27 incentive to take the module, right, and like I think it would be
28 really great learning, but I think you're also going to reach a
29 smaller audience of the people who are already here, that probably
30 already know a lot of this stuff, right?

31
32 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Fair enough. Mike.

33
34 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, Emily, I would tend
35 to defer to your leadership on this, because you do a great job,
36 but it seems to me that, in all of these, there's some real benefit
37 in possibly partnering with Sea Grant, because they have some
38 existing angler education programs.

39
40 Some of those are pretty static, you know, and they've been created
41 a couple of years ago, and so there may be some tweaking that needs
42 to be done to make them currently relevant to some of the issues
43 you bring up, but it just seems to me that we should not reinvent
44 the wheel and partner with folks that are -- You're doing this
45 already, but other groups are too, and maybe we can not duplicate
46 efforts.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Yes.

1
2 **MS. BALLARD:** So I -- From an education standpoint, since that's
3 what I do, I think the video series would be your best option,
4 just thinking of the audience, right, and so, in communications,
5 your first thing is to think of your audience, while I do feel
6 comprehension is important, right, and so if there was a way you
7 do a video series, and maybe, at the end of every video, you
8 mentioned they could take a test to judge their knowledge, and
9 have a separate link for them to go, if they want to do that, with
10 the possibility, like we talked about of a certificate, maybe a
11 digital badge.

12
13 It's very easy to get micro-credentials, a digital badge issued to
14 people, right, and that's super easy to do, and so -- Then that
15 kind of is some sort of way for us to make sure comprehension is
16 they get something, and I know it's not -- It's just a digital
17 badge, and it's nothing big, but it's something for those who
18 actually feel the need to do that, but, a video series, they don't
19 have to do a test, unless they want to, if they want to pursue
20 that platform.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you. So there seems to be a consensus
23 rallying around a video series, and is that the direction we would
24 like to go? It sounds like that suggestion for this, for Priority
25 1. Any others on Priority 1? I would like to move to Priority 2.
26 All right. Video series it is. All right. Priority 2, and let's
27 see here. Infographics worksheet. Did we have a choice? What
28 was -- We don't have anything to suggest on Priority 2, do we?

29
30 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Well, so Priority 2 is essentially is there
31 anything that you want -- Any of these tactics that you would like
32 us to focus on? Is there any of them that really get you going,
33 that you want to make sure that we're prioritizing for
34 communicating, you know, sort of how fishing activities impact
35 different species based on their biology?

36
37 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Any input? Yes.

38
39 **MS. BALLARD:** Do you know what your traffic is to the website?
40 Okay. Is it high enough to where putting videos there, or do you
41 feel like your social media platform is visited more?

42
43 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So, if I really want to get traffic, the best
44 thing that I can do is -- I've got two things. I can put it on
45 our regulations page, and I can put it on our social media, but
46 also doing a push through Fish Rules, which we have in our contract
47 that we can do that a certain amount of time, and so there are
48 ways I can push things, especially to like the recreational

1 community, which is what we're focused on, and that is by linking
2 them to our regulations.
3
4 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Any other suggestions based on the bullets
5 presented in Priority 2? None at all? Okay. All right. Let's
6 move to Priority 3, which I think links Priority 1 and Priority 2,
7 where we're seeking advice from the council to increase engagement
8 of anglers to better participate in the management process, and
9 there's some suggestions below. I guess the floor is open for
10 discussion there.
11
12 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** The question I think here is, is the juice worth
13 the squeeze? Is this something that seems really important to you
14 guys, and do you want me to figure this out, or is it something
15 that we can kind of put on the burner, the back burner, for now?
16
17 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** I think maybe the silence may say the back
18 burner. You okay there? Okay. Back burner. Mike.
19
20 **DR. ALLEN:** I'll just add a little bit, and so, with regard to
21 potentially partnering with Florida Sea Grant, that Florida, and
22 I'm sure you've seen it, Emily, but the Florida Friendly Angler
23 Certification Program, and those modules, and maybe there's a way
24 to partner with them more formally. I don't know, but you wouldn't
25 have to, you know, do it from scratch in that case, and so just a
26 thought.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thanks, Mike. Anyone else? Should we back
29 burner?
30
31 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Yes, and there's one more that's like a third
32 priority that I want to know if the juice is worth the squeeze on.
33
34 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Okay. Go ahead.
35
36 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** This is the season overlap one, and so would you
37 like us to essentially, knowing that this is kind of in conflict
38 with maximizing seasons, and maximizing overlap, and it's a
39 discussion that we had during the recreational initiative, from a
40 communication standpoint, do you think that it is worthwhile for
41 us to try and get clearance to deploy some sort of tool to gauge
42 the real desire for season overlap, maybe at the expense of
43 maximizing season length, or do we just not do that right now?
44
45 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Ed.
46
47 **MR. WALKER:** I mean, didn't you already make a tool for that?
48

1 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I made a tool that was associated with an in-
2 person meeting, and so it does not require Paperwork Reduction Act
3 clearance. If I was going to make a tool to launch to our broader
4 audience, I would have to get Paperwork Reduction Act clearance,
5 or there are some ways where we could host a series of meetings,
6 and have the tool associated with it, but those Paperwork Reduction
7 Act regulations are pretty strict about me not -- I can't ask more
8 than ten people the same question unless it's associated with a
9 public meeting and an agenda item.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** C.J.

12
13 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on your
14 committee. Just to this point here, I mean, my personal preference
15 here would be probably not really to spend the time moving forward
16 on this. I feel that the council does quite regularly do this as
17 we're considering fishing seasons.

18
19 I mean, we regularly have these discussions about overlap. I mean,
20 we're highlighting, with the shallow-water grouper, that we're
21 trying to align that to some degree with gag, and so, I mean, I
22 think we do that where we can, but we're also considerate of the
23 fact that there's some biological and ecological stock status
24 issues that prohibit that, and so I just think that this is -- We
25 try to do this, but I don't think the juice is worth the squeeze
26 here, in my opinion.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Okay. Thank you, C.J. Anyone else? Ed.

29
30 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and Dr. Sweetman is right. I think we do this
31 already, pretty much, and we have public input every meeting for
32 people to give their preferences on overlap, or lack thereof, and
33 so you're probably right. This is probably something that we
34 already do, unless I'm missing something here.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Okay. Not seeing any other hands, I think this
37 juice is not worth the squeeze. Let's move on to the next agenda
38 item. So the anonymous voicemail box, and is that what's up next?
39 Okay. The floor is yours, Emily.

40
41 **ANONYMOUS VOICE MAILBOX**

42
43 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** All right, and so we will move on to Agenda Item
44 VI, which is reviewing our pilot anonymous voicemail comment box.
45 I will give you guys a presentation on our pilot effort to test an
46 anonymous voicemail public comment system, and then I would like
47 you to sort of review the O&E Technical Committee's
48 recommendations, consider the cost, the content, and the volume of

1 comments that we've gotten, and also consider probably the types
2 of decisions you are queued to make in this year, and I would like
3 to have a recommendation on whether we can continue with the
4 service or we should kill it. With that, Bernie, will you bring
5 up Tab O, Number 6, please? Okay. Let's roll.

6
7 Just to remind you, we launched an anonymous voicemail public
8 comment project, or a pilot project, and what we wanted to do here
9 was provide a platform for public comment that allowed commenters
10 to remain completely anonymous and that also allowed commenters to
11 provide comment without having to write or submit them
12 electronically.

13
14 Not everybody likes to -- Is built to write a comment letter. Not
15 everybody is built to stand behind a podium in front of a scary
16 group of people such as yourselves, and so this was sort of a way
17 to allow them to give comment both anonymously and then maybe if
18 the ways that we collect comment right now don't work for them.

19
20 In December of 2024, the O&E Technical Committee did recommend we
21 pilot the program for the year 2025. They did express concern
22 that written comment is overlooked already, and that the voicemails
23 would suffer the same problem. They also shared the concern that
24 staff time necessary to operationalize this would be sort of very
25 burdensome.

26
27 Then I brought this to you all last January, and you did approve
28 an anonymous voicemail public comment pilot. You, yourselves, did
29 express concern that the comments would be of low value, because
30 there was no accountability for giving the comments, that people
31 might call me and say all sorts of nasty things.

32
33 You also expressed concern that the lack of background information
34 on commenters would remove context, right, and so, without saying,
35 hey, my name is Joe, this is the kind of fisherman I am, and this
36 is where I'm from, that essentially what they said might not be,
37 you know, incredibly useful for you all, and, finally, you
38 expressed concern that people would take advantage of the platform
39 because of the anonymity.

40
41 You know, I think the idea here was that people would try and game
42 this, so that you could call over and over and over again, and we
43 wouldn't know that it was one guy saying the same thing over and
44 over again, and so I will tell you that we did launch this program
45 on June 12.

46
47 It does cost us \$58 a month. It's a whopping cost, and it is
48 nearly automated with real time updates. Now, I say that it's

1 nearly automated, and what I'll have to do is sort of tell you how
2 this works, in order for you to understand that. We contracted an
3 external service, and they received the calls. We don't. They
4 don't come to our office. They don't come to our computer. They
5 come to nothing that is related to us, which is how I don't have
6 any phone numbers associated with calls.

7
8 Then they leave a message through that external service. There
9 are human transcriptionists, and so it's not a computer that's
10 doing it, but there are human transcriptionists that then
11 transcribe the comments. If the transcriptionist catches that
12 somebody says my name is Joe from, you know, Fairhope, Alabama,
13 they will take out that personally-identifying information, and
14 they will not transcribe that to me.

15
16 Once they do that in their own little bubble, they send an email
17 to me that says you got this comment at this time, and here's the
18 body of the text, right, and so it's completely anonymous, and,
19 once I get that email, I will go through it, and I will plug it
20 into a spreadsheet that then populates in real time on our website,
21 and so it's not exactly like as quickly as I want it to be, because
22 it does require me to transfer over from my email to this service,
23 which is okay. It's not a big deal. I also find it useful,
24 because then I read them when I get them.

25
26 So, in 2025, we received sixty-eight comments through this system.
27 The response rates were heavily dependent upon the issues that we
28 were considering and how we pushed it. When we did a social media
29 push, we would get three or four in a day, but, if we didn't have
30 any issues that people were excited about, or we didn't do any
31 sort of media pushes about it, people didn't do anything, right,
32 and so that's something to sort of keep in mind as we move forward.

33
34 Now, what I will tell you is the content of the comments was
35 totally on brand. It was not -- I was expecting a lot of swear
36 words, a lot of mean things. We did not get that, which I think
37 is really pleasant, and you can see that from the full comment
38 text.

39
40 I did a quick summary of what we heard. A lot of the comments, or
41 a majority of the comments, were about IFQ reform. There was
42 opposition and criticism of the IFQ program itself. There was
43 discussion of high prices, and the lack of available allocation,
44 and we also heard suggestions to reallocate to active fishermen
45 and reduce the concentration of shares that are held by few people.

46
47 We also heard about a lot of commercial-recreational conflicts. I
48 think you guys see this a lot, where, you know, it's the commercial

1 fishermen's fault, or it's recreational fishermen's fault. We did
2 hear information about gear and area-based regulations, people
3 complaining about longline gear boundaries, or the use of longline
4 gear in general, people complaining, or asking, for the expansion
5 of artificial reefs, and then also discussion of this nearshore
6 depletion of some of our species, and, finally, we heard complaints
7 about law enforcement.

8
9 I don't think there were any just complete junk mean comments,
10 which was a surprise to me, to be honest with you. Comments that
11 we got were relevant.

12
13 The anonymity of this program does allow for commenters to discuss
14 issues that they might not otherwise talk about on the record.
15 You know, you think about complaining about law enforcement, and
16 that's not something that somebody is going to come up with their
17 face and do, right? The IFQ program, we've discussed that in the
18 past. People don't feel super comfortable talking about the IFQ
19 program if they feel like it's going to have consequences on their
20 business.

21
22 Not all of the comments were controversial that we heard. Some of
23 them, they could have just written down, or they could have -- But
24 that's okay, right? The platform is there for a reason.

25
26 We do know that we need to improve the process for reviewing and
27 sharing the data with the council, and so, if you want to keep
28 this service available, we need to make sure that these comments
29 are relevant to you, that they are in your face, and that you are
30 seeing them, and so, as you sort of consider whether we want to
31 move forward and keep this pilot as, you know, a full-time thing,
32 I want you to consider the visibility and utility of comments.

33
34 Currently we keep them on our public comment webpage. We do put
35 them on our meeting agenda, and so what you'll see is, for this
36 council meeting agenda, under the public testimony section, there
37 is a button that says read a summary of the anonymous voicemail
38 comments. I actually took all of the comments, and I put them
39 into ChatGPT, and I had ChatGPT do it for me, in order to mitigate
40 this -- Sort of this worry that it was going to be a huge staff
41 time sink.

42
43 Now, of course, I groundtruthed it this time, because I wanted to
44 make sure that it wasn't wildly weird, but ChatGPT is actually
45 good at producing summaries, if you feed it the information that
46 you want it to summarize, and so we could also sort of take the
47 time to read that summary at the council table, if you thought
48 that was necessary, but, if not, it's just going to be in your

1 meeting materials, and we could sort it by issue.

2
3 Now, this is going to require more staff time. If you want me to
4 sort it by issue, and make sure that it goes into Amendment 62 or
5 whatever, that's going to take a little more staff time.

6
7 Currently, it's not staff intensive at all. Like I said, here it
8 is an opportunity for the use of AI. Full disclosure, I did that.
9 I don't usually do that, but I did it for this purpose, and then
10 I want you to think about the relevance of contacts, the lack of
11 commenter contacts, right, and that was one of the things that you
12 guys were worried about, and is that really a problem here or not,
13 and then, you know, commenters did not take advantage of the
14 platform so far, and if that's a concern for you guys or not moving
15 forward.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. John, Walter. John, are you still
18 there? John, unmute your mic. All right. How about we come back
19 to John?

20
21 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay, and so, with that, before we move on, I did
22 want to tell you guys that the council, that the Outreach &
23 Education Technical Committee did make a motion. They motioned
24 that the council should continue to use this anonymous voicemail
25 comment service. That motion carried with no opposition. Dylan,
26 if you would like to come up, as our O&E chair, and talk a little
27 bit about this discussion and why the O&E supported it.

28
29 **MR. HUBBARD:** Yes. We did love it, and we do support its
30 continuation. Some of the concern around it was, like Emily
31 classified already, that sometimes the public comments are -- While
32 they're in the meeting materials, maybe there's a little bit of
33 sentiment around the fact that they could be easily missed, or
34 overlooked, and this could be just more of the same, right?

35
36 There's a link on the meeting materials, but it takes, obviously,
37 some time to read through it, and so that was one of the concerns
38 that was raised, but, overall, I feel like this gives a voice to
39 folks who may not feel comfortable standing up here, or may not be
40 able to stand up here, or may not be able to speak in public,
41 right, and some of these sensitive issues.

42
43 As you can see from the summary, and, if you read through the
44 comments, some of them are a little spicy, right, that someone
45 might not feel comfortable standing up here to talk about, and so
46 it was pretty interesting, and we supported its continuation as an
47 O&E. Thank you.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thanks, Dylan. John, are you back on the line?
2 Okay. J.D.
3
4 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Overton. Yes, and I would like to echo
5 what Dylan just said. You know, page 5, I think captures exactly
6 what the intent was, talking about the IFQ reform, and it seems
7 there's a -- It seems, since June, there's about an average of
8 about ten voicemails a month, Emily, if my math is correct, and so
9 I think there's some value there, and so I would like to see it
10 continue to move forward.
11
12 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** I agree, and I think, during our meeting, we
13 like the idea of, you know, multiple platforms for those who use
14 the resource to share their thoughts, because they certainly share
15 them on Facebook, and I expected the comments to be very similar
16 to Facebook, but they were a lot more tame on the anonymous one,
17 and that was kind of welcoming, I think, also for Emily. I saw
18 someone else's hand up. Go ahead, Ed.
19
20 **MR. WALKER:** I agree. I definitely think we should keep this, and
21 I'm encouraged that we're managing to delve out useful commentary
22 better than the council webpage on Facebook, and, I mean, that's
23 for sure. I think we're reaching some of the people that we often
24 hear from privately, that say, man, I'm getting killed by this
25 thing, but I can't go in there and say this in front of these
26 people, and I think it's going to be bigger than this.
27
28 We're not hearing from all those people yet, but I say we stick
29 with it. I agree with Emily's concept of sorting them by issue,
30 so it would be better if we didn't have to -- If we were talking
31 about IFQ reform, if we could pull up the more recent comments
32 related to IFQ reform at that time, as we go through the issues,
33 and maybe increase the -- To be honest, I haven't looked at where
34 the link is on the council page, but maybe make it more prevalent
35 to people somehow. Maybe even send it out, or share it more on
36 social media, or something like that, but I definitely support
37 keeping it rolling, especially at \$58 a month. We've got nothing
38 to lose.
39
40 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thanks, Ed. Kevin.
41
42 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on your committee.
43 Thank you, Emily, for the presentation and the summary. Just a
44 real quick question, very minor, but, the \$58 a month, that is a
45 flat fee and that's not based on the number of calls or anything?
46 Okay. All right. Thank you.
47
48 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Anyone else? It seems like we have

1 a consensus to move forward. Mara.

2
3 **MS. LEVY:** Just a question. I assume that, if you get a comment
4 about a particular action, that you would somehow keep track of
5 that if you needed to -- Like if we needed to develop the
6 administrative record for it. I get the idea of not wanting to
7 like maybe sort them all, but would that be the intent, to kind of
8 tag them to a particular issue if it's related to the development
9 of some kind of action?

10
11 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So, much like we handle general comments, you
12 know, if you write a comment into the general fisheries box, we
13 will -- When we take final action, we'll look at the general
14 comment box for that last year, and we will do that for here, and
15 we can add them in, and so they are -- Especially if you look at
16 the summary that's on the meeting materials, they are sort of
17 lumped into themes, and so that's sort of a way that we'll be able
18 to pull them out, too.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Okay. Thank you. Any others? All right. This
21 leads on to our next agenda item, the analytics for communication.
22 Emily.

23 24 **2025 COMMUNICATIONS ANALYTICS**

25
26 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okey-dokey, and so I'm just going to present you
27 guys with an overview of our council communications analytics for
28 last year, and I'm looking forward to any feedback and any
29 recommendations on how we can do better, and so, Bernie, can you
30 pull up Tab 0, Number 7, please? Okey-dokey.

31
32 So, of note, we did a rebranding this year, and that was sort of
33 a big deal, right? We renamed -- The organization was renamed, in
34 response to an executive order that renamed the Gulf of America,
35 because it would be ridiculous to be the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
36 Management Council in charge of the Gulf of America, and so we had
37 to sort of go through a whole process for that, to get a doing
38 business as, and I think we talked about it already.

39
40 Then we also worked with a contractor to develop a new logo, as
41 you have probably seen by now. We did do some cool things to the
42 website. If you remember, we spent sort of the first half of this
43 year completely redesigning our website aesthetic, and function of
44 the site, and we also improved integration of the Fish Rules API
45 to our regulations.

46
47 Our regulations are consistently the most visited part of our
48 webpage, and so, at this point, you know, the logic of Fish Rules

1 requires a location, and, since we have these marine protected
2 areas, and all this different shallow-water grouper closure and
3 stuff, and different state regulations, at this point we have now
4 fully integrated Fish Rules, and so you click on the map, and it
5 populates the regulation based on where you've indicated.

6
7 I will say one really cool thing about the website improvements
8 is, when we have done this in the past, we know if it was good
9 based on how many people said I can't find this anymore, and we
10 got very few emails about, hey, everything is lost, and so I'm
11 going to take that as a major win for this one.

12
13 Spoiler alert that analytics are down this last year across all of
14 our platforms, with the exception of our email listserv, right,
15 and so that's our sign-up and get our press releases, and also two
16 of the things on Facebook, our followers and our impressions.

17
18 Now, I'm going to give you a little context for that before we go
19 into the disappointment for the rest of this presentation. We did
20 lose some capacity this year. Camilla retired. She was very
21 active in helping us sort of keep the meeting updates and some of
22 the drier stuff.

23
24 We also only took one minor final action in the year previous, and
25 so, in 2024 we didn't do anything super juicy, and so people tend
26 to stop engaging with your stuff when nothing juicy is going on,
27 and then a lot of sort of the way that social media works is, if
28 you don't interact with content, it doesn't bring you more of that
29 content, and so we kind of lost a little momentum, I think, from
30 that, and then, finally, we did do a very intentional reduction in
31 visibility in 2025.

32
33 If you remember, sort of near the beginning of the year, all
34 federal agencies were asked to stop participating in social media
35 unless they sort of went through a chain of command and approval,
36 and so, to follow suit with that, we kind of decided to quiet down
37 a little bit for a while, just out of respect for, you know, our
38 partner agencies and sort of what the climate was, and so here we
39 go.

40
41 Website analytics, this will just show you our quarterly website
42 sessions over time, right, starting from 2002, and you see there's
43 kind of a downward trend. I will say there was a weird year where
44 the analytics started changing in websites, and so this is kind of
45 a hard one to map, but our annual sessions are actually up a little
46 bit for the year, as well as our page views, and so people were
47 still visiting our website.

1 This is not surprising. On the left, you'll see the top-ten pages
2 that people visit. Our homepage is the most visible. I think
3 that's pretty normal, followed by the federal fishing regulations.
4 You can see we had 30,000, a little over, users of the federal
5 fishing regulations. Our red snapper regulations are usually
6 particularly juicy. One thing that I want to point out here, on
7 the top-ten, is, if you scroll, or look, down to the third from
8 the bottom, the Fish Rules push notifications.

9
10 I've created a blind page, which means you cannot navigate to it
11 from our website unless you have a direct URL, and what I do is,
12 every time the council is about to take a final action item, I
13 will ask Fish Rules to push that out and say, hey, the council is
14 taking final action on these two things, and users from Fish Rules
15 will go directly to this page. That's why it's a blind page,
16 because it only is tracking users from Fish Rules directly, and
17 that made our top-ten this year, even though we launched it in the
18 summer.

19
20 That's been very, very popular, and so that really just doubles
21 down on the fact that we need to keep using Fish Rules to push out
22 our regulatory information, and not just the regulations, but
23 actually like opportunities for engaging in public comment.

24
25 We did have almost 120,000 unique users, and this will just show
26 you where we're getting them. Most of them are organic search.
27 That's people going to their search bar and saying, you know, Gulf
28 of Mexico, or Gulf of America, management, right, and they will
29 organically get there, and then the next is directed, and so that's
30 when people sort of refer you, or you are looking for this specific
31 thing. You type in gulfcouncil.org, and that's a directed one,
32 and not a search.

33
34 So, moving on to Facebook, these are our quarterly Facebook
35 engagements and our quarterly Facebook views. They're usually our
36 pulses. You'll see, over sort of the spring and summer, when
37 everybody is interested in fishing, and then winter, when everybody
38 is busy hunting, it tends to go down.

39
40 You will see that our followers continue to steadily increase.
41 One weird thing is our engagements were way down last year, and so
42 it went from 80,000 to 40,000 to 12,000, and then our views and
43 impressions are keeping steady though, and so that's when somebody
44 sees your content, and so I guess there were less people yelling
45 at us, but more people seeing what we were doing, which I would
46 take as a good thing.

47
48 Our YouTube analytics here, so we've got our total video views,

1 and they remain pretty steady, and not great, but pretty steady.
2 In 2025, we had 2,390 views of all of our videos. We did make ten
3 specific videos in 2005, and, of those ten videos, we had a
4 thousand views, essentially. 68.2 hours of people watching me
5 explain amendments, and so explain that to me, Troy. That's you
6 just putting it on repeat, isn't it?

7
8 Instagram is relatively new for us. Instagram is a tricky thing
9 for us, because most of our social media posts do include a link
10 to something. That's really hard to do on Instagram, on purpose.
11 They're mostly centered around engaging videos, or pictures, and
12 so most of our content is actually directing you to other content,
13 and so it's not really our great thing, but it's where people are.

14
15 In 2025, we still gained a couple more followers. We did have
16 very little engagement, but you saw that in Facebook as well, and
17 then our reach wasn't huge last year either, and most of that is
18 because, you know, like I said, we link out to other things, and
19 we haven't been putting a whole lot of effort towards Instagram.

20
21 Our email listserv analytics, we had a little bump up this last
22 year. I think that might be because we targeted MREP graduates,
23 the alumni from, you know, back all through all the years. Our
24 subscribers are up. We had sixty publications, and the coolest
25 thing is our open rate for our emails is 50 percent. That is
26 wildly high for a nonprofit, and so a 50 percent open rate is
27 great.

28
29 Nonprofits are usually hovering around like 23 percent, and so
30 people who are signed up for our emails are engaged in what we're
31 sending, which I think is a great sign, and we did have 4,500
32 click-throughs, and so, any of those emails that had a link, or a
33 comment now, or here's some more information, 4,500 people did
34 click through to something that we gave them last year.

35
36 We did a number of outreach events this year. One of the things
37 that I like doing the most, C.J., is the fishery-dependent
38 monitoring training. Unfortunately, that overlapped last week
39 with a meeting that I was at, but that's a really cool one. We
40 got to do the Sarasota Power Squadron. That's a group of very
41 knowledgeable people in Florida.

42
43 We did a new entrant meeting with Alabama charter folks, and that
44 was put on by Elizabeth Boggs, and she invited Carrie. Andy was
45 there, and Frank was there. That was a really neat opportunity
46 that we got to have.

47
48 We did a young fisherman training, you know, training young

1 commercial fishermen who are trying to get into the industry. We
2 did another fishing club, and then we did two college courses.
3 One was for the University of South Florida, and one was for Dr.
4 Overton's class, because he wanted me to teach so he could have
5 the day off.

6
7 A little more context about why we're dropping off. I will tell
8 you that most of our content, you know, as we've lost capacity,
9 focuses on pretty boring stuff, right, and it's fishing
10 regulations, and it's meeting info, it's public comment
11 opportunities, which means that there's a lot of meat on the bone
12 for us to add engaging, positive content, maybe things like these
13 videos that we're going to start working on, just sort of --

14
15 I remember bringing back like our Fish Fact Friday, or our Marine
16 Map Monday, and I think there's a lot of opportunity for us to
17 grow. We are adding a full-time outreach specialist position this
18 year, and so hopefully, when I come speak to you at this table
19 next year, things will be awesome. With that, I'll take any
20 questions or comments.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thanks, Emily. Ed.

23
24 **MR. WALKER:** So do we -- Are we seeking big numbers in social media
25 and stuff like that? Is that a goal of ours? I mean, you could
26 put some cool fishing videos on there and get lots of viewers, but
27 is that really something the council is looking for?

28
29 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So big numbers equals bigger audiences for your
30 posts that aren't exciting, but are important, and so, if we have
31 big numbers of people who are like cool content, Emily, and I'm
32 now going to subscribe, because I like watching Ed Walker fish,
33 then that will turn them into people then who also see on their
34 page, hey, comment opportunity coming up, or, hey, this regulation
35 just changed, FYI, right, and the answer is yes, because, if you
36 engage people on your platforms, they keep seeing your content,
37 and you can sneak in the important stuff that's boring.

38
39 **MR. WALKER:** There's lots of opportunity for that that I see. I
40 mean, clicking on a bunch of rules on fishing isn't all that
41 exciting. Even if it was like a research trip, with a video of,
42 you know, catching groupers or snappers or something, and having
43 a biologist say, yes, we caught this cool big snapper on this light
44 tackle, and we let him go, and he was recaptured, and growth rates,
45 and, you know, that would get a lot more views than MSSTs and
46 things like that from the general public.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thanks, Ed. Kevin.

1
2 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you again, Mr. Chair, and, Emily, if you get the
3 outreach specialist, when we meet again next year, it will be more
4 awesome, because this is awesome, what you do, and so I appreciate
5 it.

6
7 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thanks, Kevin.

8
9 **MR. ANSON:** I'm just curious, going back to this slide here where
10 you talk about the subscribers, publications, and the open rate.
11 In 2021, you had a lot of publications there, and that was the
12 lowest open rate. Yet, in 2025, you had the least amount of
13 publications, with the highest open rate. Is there a correlation,
14 just because there's just a bombardment there, and people didn't
15 open because of that, or did you happen to have any time left to
16 look at the type of things that were published and see if there
17 was a correlation with the type of topics that people are more
18 interested in?

19
20 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I didn't look, but you're right. I think when
21 you give them -- Less is more when it comes to that, and so I take
22 that point. I also started adding species-specific emails, and
23 so, if you responded to a Fisherman Feedback for gag grouper, every
24 time we have a gag-grouper-related press release, I will tag it to
25 that group as well.

26
27 Since 2021, I have changed it and started sort of sneaking it in
28 that way, in addition to people saying give me all the reef fish
29 news, or just give me mackerel news, and so it's a little bit of
30 tweaking on my end, and also just luck of the draw, because we
31 sent out less probably.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Kevin and Emily, for that response.
34 One thing to consider with your top ten pages, and we're really
35 trying to push the anonymous email, or voicemail, it might be
36 worth, for each one of these pages, to make it prominent, and so,
37 at least if they don't get on the homepage, we know we're going to
38 hit that at some point while they're there.

39
40 Any other suggestions, because our charge is to provide some
41 feedback for the committee to improve what has been presented, but
42 I would like to say, Emily, you're doing a great job. I would
43 like to see what you and the new outreach person can really do,
44 but thank you.

45
46 All right. I'm going to push the agenda forward, because we're
47 getting close to five o'clock. Emily, the floor is still yours.
48 Communications Improvement Plan.

1
2 **2026 COMMUNICATIONS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**
3

4 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Bernie, if you can pull up Tab O, Number
5 8, you guys might recognize this. Each year, I develop a
6 communications plan to guide our communications work throughout
7 the year. There's sort of ambient sort of standard things that we
8 do, but this is sort of a goal that I like to reach, and so I would
9 just like you guys to take a look at this and give me any edits
10 that you might have, or any suggestions.

11
12 I tried to sort of add some of the things. You'll see that there's
13 stuff that's highlighted in yellow. That's because I wanted your
14 feedback first, but we've got it, and so I'll be able to fix that,
15 but, essentially, I want you to take a look at this and provide any
16 feedback for what -- You know, if there's anything you don't want
17 in there, or anything that we should be doing that we don't have
18 in there. Bernie, go ahead and pull up Tab O, Number 8, and we'll
19 just quickly breeze through this improvement plan.

20
21 Okay, and so we'll just kind of go down by topic. This management
22 area outreach, we we talked about beta testing and publishing a
23 new mapping tool. We talked about that in committee. We already
24 have develop and share appropriate files of closed areas in
25 relevant boundaries, and so I sort of predicted that Ed was going
26 to want me to do that, and then also encourage NOAA Fisheries to
27 develop a system providing appropriate marine regulatory areas,
28 and so I guess I was being clairvoyant when I put these things in
29 here, because that's essentially what you guys gave me out of that
30 committee, and so thank you for that.

31
32 Next is marketing, and so expand the use of Fish Rules push
33 notifications. I think I mentioned how successful those have been.
34 Design and order a new outreach display with our new logo, and
35 then this is a cool one. I want to pilot boosting social media
36 content, and so, right now, it's all organic. It's all based on
37 people liking your stuff. Beth has gracefully told me that I could
38 probably play with about \$500 for the year and try and pilot how
39 much boosting social media content actually increases, I guess,
40 our reach. Thank you, Carrie.

41
42 Moving on to public comment, and so develop a system for analyzing
43 and reporting our anonymous voicemail comments, and so I think I
44 can sort of work on improvements based on what you told me.

45
46 Where are we? Consistently message availability of the voicemail
47 system, and, to Anthony's point, I can add that to our website, to
48 those most popular pages. I'll use Fish Rules to push those, and

1 then consistently use social media to push notifications to do
2 this.

3
4 Moving on to domestic seafood and shrimp education, this is
5 actually a hangover from last year. We weren't able to do that
6 this year. I still am committed to developing a standalone
7 outreach webpage on domestic seafood and shrimp, and you can see
8 here what all of that means, and that will include all the state
9 information.

10
11 Next is outreach products, and so that is expanding that history
12 of management tool. I don't know if you guys remember that tool,
13 but we completed it for I think gag and greater amberjack, and we
14 want to expand it to some of our other species. We would also
15 like to rewrite Navigating the Council Process. It's that little
16 brochure we have, and it's mostly online, but it's probably time
17 for an update, once we have capacity for that.

18
19 Next, moving to recreational initiative outreach, we will modify
20 this so that it reflects what you said in committee, which is
21 developing these short informational videos, like a video series,
22 and then communicating the conservation implications, you know,
23 using some of these techniques.

24
25 Then, moving down to social media, enhancing our positive content,
26 as we discussed. I'm probably going to call Ed and see what kind
27 of video he's got for me, so that we can make things, and get more
28 people, and then also enhancing our informational content. I would
29 like to define tricky terms and concepts. I would like to enhance
30 our use of reels and shorts and improve sharing of content across
31 all of our platforms.

32
33 Dylan has got some way that you sort of make a video that turns
34 into a blog, that turns into a social media post, and I need to
35 sort of just start looping our own content across all of our
36 platforms a little bit better.

37
38 With the Fishermen Feedback tool, and you probably recognize this,
39 John and Lisa and I have tried and failed, for a number of years,
40 to come up with an actual publication on our Fishermen Feedback
41 tool, so that we can share the success of that program with
42 scientists across the country, and resource managers across the
43 country, and we also have the 50th anniversary of the council next
44 year, or this year, to think about.

45
46 In order to celebrate that 50th anniversary, we would like to do a
47 by the numbers infographic. The Mid-Atlantic has put out a similar
48 product that essentially talks about the fisheries contribution of

1 each one of the states, and so I will be calling upon you all for
2 that, and sort of really talking about the number of fishermen,
3 the economic value, the social value of our fisheries through an
4 infographic.

5
6 We are also going to do a historical photo contest. I want you
7 guys to pull out all your old pictures of, you know, your meat-
8 hanging trips and all of those things, to have a sort of photo
9 gallery, and photo contest, to gather pictures of the last fifty
10 years of fisheries in the Gulf, and, Dylan, I'm coming for you on
11 that one, too.

12
13 Then I would like to take a moment to come up with a product that
14 shares examples of how stakeholders have influenced fisheries
15 throughout the council system.

16
17 As you know, the council management system is super unique. The
18 value of that system is that fishermen like yourselves at the
19 table, and fishermen back here, have an incredible sway on the
20 regulatory process that I don't see anywhere else in our nation,
21 and so I would really like to find a way to highlight some of those
22 stories, and some of those successes, of people successfully, you
23 know, accessing the council process and getting something done
24 through it.

25
26 Then, moving on to in-person outreach, since we have a couple of
27 new staff members in the back, and since we are going to have a
28 new outreach person, I would really like to focus our in-person
29 outreach this year on doing a dock walk tour of the Gulf.

30
31 I would like to be able to sort of go to different places, maybe
32 just add on a day to a council meeting and go down to the docks
33 and introduce ourselves informally to folks, and so, also, that
34 will teach our new staff, and orient them to what, you know, the
35 climate is across the Gulf, and hopefully we can get some oral
36 histories for Annie, and some photos through that dock walking,
37 and then, if there's any fishing clubs in areas when we're there,
38 we would like to, you know, see if we can gather them and do some
39 presentations. That's my ambitious 2026 plan. If you have any
40 addendums, let me know.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Emily, and that is ambitious. I'm
43 excited about the 50th anniversary. I imagine that's a major
44 charge, and, now that February is upon us, we probably need to get
45 moving on a lot of these things fairly quickly, even though you're
46 kind of a one-person show, but we've got a lot going on.

47
48 Questions or suggestions for the plan presented to you moving

1 forward for 2026? All right. Good job. Nothing there? Okay.
2 Let's continue to move forward on our agenda here, and so we now
3 have -- The floor is still yours, Emily, and so other O&E items.
4

5 **OTHER ITEM FROM THE O&E TECHNICAL COMMITTEE SUMMARY**
6

7 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. I'm actually going to hand it over to
8 Dylan. What he's going to do is give you a summary of the pieces
9 of the Outreach & Education Technical Committee that we had in
10 December. He's going to give you a summary of the items that were
11 not by default covered in the committee so far. So, Dylan, the
12 floor is yours.
13

14 **MR. HUBBARD:** Well, thank you, and thank you, Ed, for your
15 volunteerism in providing content this year. I'm looking forward
16 to that.
17

18 **MR. WALKER:** I was looking at you, actually.
19

20 **MR. HUBBARD:** Hot potato. Good job. All right, and so, first
21 things first, the Sea Grant Ree Fish Extension Update, Dr. Drymon
22 provided a presentation to the O&E on that Sea Grant Reef Fish
23 Extension Program.
24

25 It was a multistate collaborative effort. It was all aimed at
26 addressing the issues of stock assessment results being at odds
27 with what fishermen observe on the water, eroding the credibility
28 of science, and simultaneously the issue of the Great Red Snapper
29 Count. There was no resources in sharing findings with anglers,
30 and so all these problems elicited this research project, and the
31 Gulf and South Atlantic took really different approaches to try to
32 tackle this project.
33

34 The South Atlantic pooled their resources together and hired a Sea
35 Grant agent, basically a fellow, who operated out of the South
36 Atlantic Fishery Management Council office, and the Gulf states
37 took that money, divided it, and did a bunch of little research
38 projects.
39

40 The committee discussed how both approaches could add further
41 success, and basically how the success of the South Atlantic's
42 pooling of the resource, and using that fellow to highlight the
43 good work already being done, seemed to be a greater success than
44 splitting the resources and trying to do -- Building adjacent
45 projects, and so trying to highlight what already exists was
46 essentially the outcome of that project and the summary of our
47 discussion.
48

1 We also discussed council learning opportunities. We talked a lot
2 about some of the history around different learning opportunities
3 that are tied to council meetings, like we had some of those
4 fireside chats after council meetings. We had some like learn-
5 at-lunches.

6
7 We had some different presentations, and the discussion was,
8 sometimes at council meetings, especially at the end of the day,
9 bandwidth is low, and people are burned out, and people have
10 expectations outside this room that they have to attend to, and
11 then, also, what we found in the history is sometimes some of those
12 question-and-answer periods can sometimes devolve into a little
13 bit more of a quasi-public comment, where people try to just stand
14 up there and get their point across instead of asking a question.

15
16 Essentially, we were exploring whether to bring back some of these
17 learning opportunities, and the discussion around the O&E was not
18 very extremely in favor of that. We didn't have a good path
19 forward, I should say.

20
21 We also talked about the FEP/FEI Stakeholder Engagement and
22 Communication Plan. This is pretty in-depth, and, essentially,
23 we're coming up with workshops, and workshop areas, considering
24 the regional distribution and different type of stakeholder groups
25 throughout the Gulf, and we're basically inquiring about the
26 composition of the participants at each workshop.

27
28 The workshops were meant to have a mixed representation of
29 stakeholders to gather broad perspectives on these ecosystem
30 concerns. There's funds available to support stakeholder travel
31 to workshop, which may mitigate concerns around meeting locations,
32 but, essentially, the biggest thing was the O&E contributed data
33 sources for consideration for large language model analysis, and
34 so getting stakeholders together and use these LLMs to try to boil
35 down some of these high-level concerns, to better inform the FEIs
36 and FEPs, was the discussion, and those were the final things that
37 Emily didn't cover in her really great presentation.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you. All right. Thanks, Dylan, for
40 presenting that. Good to go? Okay. Moving on to the final agenda
41 item, any other business? Seeing none, that ends our committee
42 report, and J.D., I'll pass the floor back to you.

43
44 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on January 26, 2026.)

45
46 - - -