

GULF COUNCIL

309TH MEETING

FULL COUNCIL SESSION

The Battle House Renaissance

Mobile, Alabama

April 9, 2026

VOTING MEMBERS

- J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- Michael Allen.....Florida
- Kevin Anson.....Alabama
- Brenda Ballard.....Texas
- Kesley Banks.....Texas
- Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- Troy Frady.....Alabama
- Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- John Marquez.....Mississippi
- Jason Osborne.....Mississippi
- Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- John Sanchez.....Florida
- Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- Ed Walker.....Florida

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- Lt. Jackson Morton.....USCG

STAFF

- Assane Diagne.....Economist
- Matt Freeman.....Economic Analyst
- John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
- Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- Jessica Matos.....Administrative Document Editor & IT Coordinator
- Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
- Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- Anabelle Suitor.....Social Scientist

1 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

2 Billy Archer.....Panama City, FL

3 Gabrielle Bearden.....Orange Beach, AL

4 John Black.....

5 Susan Boggs.....Orange Beach, AL

6 Brandon Branch.....Crystal River, FL

7 Elena Brosnan.....

8 Barrick Burkett.....Panama City, FL

9 Rick Burris.....MS

10 Lew Childre.....AL

11 Anthony Colletti.....Leesville, LA

12 Alan Culpepper.....

13 Jason Delacruz.....FL

14 Major Jason Downey.....AL

15 Greg Dyer.....Naples, FL

16 Richard Fischer.....LA

17 Sonja Fordham.....

18 Cole Ganey.....Biloxi, MS

19 Ben Gilchrist.....

20 Jim Green.....Destin, FL

21 Johnny Greene.....Orange Beach, AL

22 Buddy Guindon.....Galveston, TX

23 Martha Guyas.....FL

24 Randy Hanshaw.....

25 Sheena Hartsfield.....

26 Frank Helies.....NOAA

27 Dewey Hemilright.....SAFMC

28 Sean Heverin.....Madeira Beach, FL

29 Scott Hickman.....Galveston, TX

30 Rachel Hisler.....Double Bayou, TX

31 Dylan Hubbard.....FL

32 Mike Jennings.....Freeport, TX

33 Jason Karlau.....

34 Bobby Kelley.....Orange Beach, AL

35 Mark Kelley.....Panama City, FL

36 Derrick Knepp.....FL

37 Trenton Knepp.....FL

38 Larry Lemieux.....Panama City Beach, FL

39 Brian Lewis.....

40 Lawrence Marino.....LA

41 Sean McCarthy.....

42 Stewart Miller.....Panama City, FL

43 Michael Myers.....

44 Joe Nash.....

45 Chris Niquet.....FL

46 Heather Ordaz.....Double Bayou, TX

47 Clay Porch.....SEFSC

48 Ashford Roseberg.....Shareholders Alliance

1 Brett Russell.....Orange Beach, AL
2 Harris Scruggs.....Panama City Beach, FL
3 Chance Seymour.....Biloxi, MS
4 Clarence Seymour.....Biloxi, MS
5 Mike Sullivan.....
6 Hayden Taylor.....
7 Evan Tiblier.....MS
8 Maddox Trochesset.....Biloxi, MS
9 Mark Tryon.....Gulf Breeze, FL
10 Alec Vyverberg.....
11 Matt Walia.....NOAA OLE
12 John Walter.....SEFSC
13 Johnny Williams.....Galveston, TX
14 David Wilson.....Orange Beach, AL
15 Dale Woodruff.....Orange Beach, AL
16 Jordan Wright.....
17 Bob Zales.....FL
18 Kary Zarem.....FL
19
20 - - -

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3 [PAGE 85](#): Motion to direct staff to develop a document that updates
4 status determination criteria and considers modifying the permit
5 threshold of penaeid shrimp. [The motion carried on page 85.](#)
6

7 [PAGE 86](#): Motion to request NMFS continue with the Texas federal
8 closure in the upcoming year in conjunction with the State of Texas
9 closure in 2026. [The motion carried on page 86.](#)
10

11 [PAGE 88](#): Motion to request that NMFS fully utilize up to the FY26
12 \$600,000 appropriation for implementation and enforcement of the
13 Section 609 program to ensure foreign fisheries are maintaining
14 the same standard for sea turtle conservation as our domestic
15 fisheries are required to uphold. To request that NMFS provide a
16 presentation, at a future Shrimp AP meeting, on how the funding
17 will be spent to carry out the implementation and enforcement of
18 the Section 609 TED program. [The motion carried on page 88.](#)
19

20 [PAGE 88](#): Motion to request that NMFS adopts the following
21 priorities for utilizing the FY26 \$850,000 appropriation for ELB
22 development and implementation: 1)ensure the NMFS server has
23 sufficient capacity to receive and store shrimp fishery vessel
24 position data; 2)develop a statistically-robust design for
25 distributing units to a representative portion of the fleet that
26 would be equal to or greater than the last ten years; 3)cover the
27 cost of providing units and cellular service to those shrimp
28 vessels, pursuant to the Early Adopter Program. [The motion carried](#)
29 [on page 91.](#)
30

31 [PAGE 92](#): Motion to request that SEFSC staff and contractors make
32 the Shrimp Bycatch Finfish Working Group's recommendations and
33 requests from its March 2026 meeting a priority for the next
34 meeting of the working group. The recommendations for finfish
35 bycatch will need to be completed prior to and presented at the
36 July 2026 SSC meeting. [The motion carried on page 93.](#)
37

38 [PAGE 107](#): Motion to direct staff to begin a white paper exploring
39 the feasibility of identifying the universe of recreational
40 anglers targeting deepwater grouper using a permit. [The motion](#)
41 [carried on page 117.](#)
42

43 [PAGE 121](#): Motion to select Option 2 as the preferred. [The motion](#)
44 [carried on page 121.](#)
45

46 [PAGE 123](#): Motion to approve the Abbreviated Framework Action:
47 Modification of Gulf Lane Snapper Catch Limits and that it be
48 forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and

1 implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and
2 appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary
3 changes in the document. The council chair is given the authority
4 to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and
5 appropriate. [The motion carried on page 123.](#)
6

7 [PAGE 124](#): Motion in Action 1 to add an Alternative 4. Alternative
8 4 is establish a three-year commercial quota pool for Gulf red
9 grouper beginning in 2027. If the commercial quota (ACT) is at or
10 below 4.28 million pounds gutted weight, the quota pool is set at
11 zero percent of the commercial quota (zero pounds). If the
12 commercial quota is above 4.28 million pounds gutted weight, the
13 quota pool would hold: Option 4a 15 percent of the commercial red
14 grouper quota increase above 4.28 million pounds gutted weight;
15 Option 4b 20 percent of the commercial red grouper quota increase
16 above 4.28 million pounds gutted weight; Option 4c 25 percent of
17 the commercial red grouper quota increase above 4.28 million pounds
18 gutted weight; Option 4d 30 percent of the commercial red grouper
19 quota increase above 4.28 million pounds gutted weight. [The motion](#)
20 [carried on page 128.](#)
21

22 [PAGE 128](#): Motion in Action 2 to make Alternative 2, Option 2b the
23 preferred. [The motion carried on page 132.](#)
24

25 [PAGE 132](#): Motion in Action 1 to make Alternative 3, Option 3b the
26 preferred. [The motion carried on 134.](#)
27

28 [PAGE 134](#): Motion in Action 3 to make Alternative 3 the preferred.
29 [The motion was withdrawn on page 135.](#)
30

31 [PAGE 136](#): Motion in Action 3 to make Alternative 3, Option 3a(ii)
32 and 3b(ii) the preferred. [The motion carried on page 137.](#)
33

34 [PAGE 138](#): Motion to add an Option 3 that reads as follows: Option
35 3: Provide the NMFS Regional Administrator the authority to
36 withhold the percentage of the red grouper commercial quota
37 necessary to implement Amendment 63 during the 2027 fishing year.
38 If Amendment 63 is not implemented by May 1, 2027, the withheld
39 quota would be distributed to shareholders. [The motion carried on](#)
40 [page 138.](#)
41

42 [PAGE 139](#): Motion to make Option 3 the preferred. [The motion](#)
43 [carried on page 139.](#)
44

45 [PAGE 139](#): Motion to approve Abbreviated Framework Action: Red
46 Grouper Commercial Quota Retention for 2027 and that it be
47 forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and
48 implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and

1 appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary
2 changes in the document. The council chair is given the authority
3 to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and
4 appropriate. [The motion carried on page 141.](#)

5
6 [PAGE 142](#): Motion in Draft Action 1, Draft Alternative 2, add Draft
7 Options 2c and 2d. Draft Action 1: Establish a carryover provision
8 for private recreational red snapper; Draft Alternative 2:
9 Establish a carryover provision for private angling component of
10 the red snapper ACL on a state-by-state basis. For states that
11 did not land its state-specific ACL, the unused portion of would
12 be carried over to the next fishing year in the amount of unused
13 portion of the ACL not greater than Options 2a-2d of the previous
14 year's state-specific private angling ACL. Draft Option 2a: 100
15 percent of unused state-specific private angling ACL can be carried
16 over to the next year; Draft Option 2b: 75 percent of unused state-
17 specific private angling ACL can be carried over to the next year;
18 Draft Option 2c: 50 percent of unused state-specific private
19 angling ACL can be carried over to the next year; Draft Option 2d:
20 25 percent of unused state-specific private angling ACL can be
21 carried over to the next year. [The motion carried on page 145.](#)

22
23 [PAGE 145](#): Motion to direct staff to develop a document to modify
24 the private recreational red snapper post-season accountability
25 measures. [The motion carried on page 152.](#)

26
27 [PAGE 153](#): Motion in Action 1: Establish a carryover provision for
28 private recreational red snapper, add Draft Alternative 3. Draft
29 Alternative 3: Establish a carryover provision for private angling
30 component of the red snapper ACL on a state-by-state basis. For
31 a state that did not land its state-specific ACL in a fishing year,
32 that unused portion would be carried over to the following fishing
33 year. The amount carried over would be capped equal to no more
34 than a percentage of that state's ACL, based on Options 3a-3d
35 below: Draft Option 3a: up to 2.5 percent of the state-specific
36 private angling ACL can be carried over to the next year; Draft
37 Option 3b: up to 5 percent of the state-specific private angling
38 ACL can be carried over to the next year; Draft Option 3c: up to
39 7.5 percent of the state-specific private angling ACL can be
40 carried over to the next year; Draft Option 3d: up to 10 percent
41 of the state-specific private angling ACL can be carried over to
42 the next year. [The motion carried on page 159.](#)

43
44 [PAGE 159](#): Motion to add an Alternative 4 in Action 2 to allocate
45 the federal for-hire red snapper quota between the Gulf States
46 based on the Amendment 40 sector separation formula. [The motion](#)
47 [carried on page 160.](#)

1 [PAGE 160](#): Motion in Action 2 to add an Alternative 5 to allocate
2 the federal for-hire red snapper quota between the Gulf states
3 based on 50 percent of Amendment 40 sector separation formula and
4 50 percent of each state's average red snapper landings between
5 2021 and 2024 in Alternative 3. [The motion carried on page 162](#).
6

7 [PAGE 162](#): Motion in Action 1 to make Alternative 1 the preferred.
8 [The motion failed on page 169](#).
9

10 [PAGE 169](#): Motion to include a sunset provision for the delegation
11 of the federal red snapper for-hire component management authority
12 to Gulf states. Option a: two years; Option b: three years; Option
13 c: four years; Option d: five years. [The motion carried on page](#)
14 [172](#).
15

16 [PAGE 172](#): Motion to add an action with an alternative to include
17 post-season AMs for managing overages of the respective federal
18 for-hire sector state-specific allocated ACL, by reducing the
19 state-specific federal for-hire ACL in the following year by the
20 full amount of any overage. [The motion carried on page 175](#).
21

22 [PAGE 184](#): Motion to approve Draft Reef Fish Amendment 63:
23 Modifications to Gulf Red Grouper IFQ Program for virtual public
24 hearings. [The motion carried on page 184](#).
25

26 - - -
27

1 The Full Council of the Gulf Council convened at The Battle House
2 Renaissance in Mobile, Alabama on Thursday morning, April 9, 2026,
3 and was called to order by Chairman J.D. Dugas.

4
5 **CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND INTRODUCTIONS**
6

7 **CHAIRMAN J.D. DUGAS:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome back.
8 Before we get started, I just wanted to remind the council members
9 about our working lunch today, and so we'll have food set up here
10 in the room.

11
12 Okay. Welcome to the 309th meeting of the Gulf Council. My name
13 is J.D. Dugas, chair of the Gulf Council. Please place your cell
14 phone or similar device on silent or vibrating mode. For the
15 benefit of all, we ask that private conversations take place
16 outside the meeting room. Additionally, alcoholic beverages are
17 not permitted in the meeting room.

18
19 The Gulf Council is one of eight regional councils established in
20 1976 by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act, known as the
21 Magnuson-Stevens Act.

22
23 Our purpose is to serve as a deliberative body to advise the
24 Secretary of Commerce on fishery management measures in federal
25 waters of the Gulf of America, ensuring sustainable fisheries
26 resources that benefit the nation. The council consists of
27 seventeen voting members, eleven appointed by the Secretary of
28 Commerce from various Gulf regions with diverse fisheries
29 experience, plus the five state fishery managers from each Gulf
30 state and the Regional Administrator from NOAA's Southeast
31 Fisheries Service. Several non-voting members also participate.

32
33 Public input is essential to our deliberative process. We welcome
34 both oral and written comments throughout the process. Virtual
35 attendees wishing to speak during public comment must register
36 online. In-person participants should sign-in at the registration
37 kiosk in the back of the room. Only one registration per person
38 is allowed. Public comment may conclude before the scheduled time
39 if all registered participants have spoken. This meeting is being
40 digitally recorded for the public record. As a courtesy, I ask
41 that all participants seated at the table introduce themselves
42 beginning on my left.

43
44 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** Kesley Banks, Texas.

45
46 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Dakus Geeslin, Texas Parks and Wildlife
47 Department.
48

1 **MS. BRENDA BALLARD:** Brenda Ballard, Texas.
2
3 **DR. MIKE ALLEN:** Mike Allen, Florida.
4
5 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** C.J. Sweetman, Florida Fish and Wildlife
6 Conservation Commission.
7
8 **MR. ED WALKER:** Ed Walker, Florida.
9
10 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** John Sanchez, Florida.
11
12 **MR. TROY FRADY:** Troy Frady, Alabama.
13
14 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Kevin Anson, Alabama.
15
16 **DR. ANTHONY OVERTON:** Anthony Overton, Alabama.
17
18 **MR. DEWEY HEMILRIGHT:** Dewey Hemilright, liaison, South Atlantic
19 Fishery Management Council from North Carolina.
20
21 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** John Walter, Southeast Fisheries Science Center.
22
23 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Clay Porch, Southeast Fisheries Science Center.
24
25 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Mara Levy, NOAA Office of General Counsel.
26
27 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Andy Strelcheck, NOAA Fisheries Southeast
28 Regional Office.
29
30 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Dave Donaldson, Gulf States Marine Fisheries
31 Commission.
32
33 **MR. JOHN MARQUEZ:** Johnny Marquez, Mississippi.
34
35 **MR. JASON OSBORNE:** Jason Osborne, Mississippi.
36
37 **MR. RICK BURRIS:** Rick Burris, Mississippi Department of Marine
38 Resources.
39
40 **MR. BILLY BROUSSARD:** Billy Broussard, Louisiana.
41
42 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** Chris Schieble, Louisiana Department of
43 Wildlife and Fisheries.
44
45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Carrie Simmons, council staff.
46
47 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, all. The first order of business is
48 to adopt the agenda. Are there any edits or additions to the

1 agenda? Mr. Sanchez.

2

3 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I would like to add two items to Other
4 Business, the first being an update on Starlink. I know we had a
5 recent exchange with the FCC. I would like to hear what went down,
6 what was the result of that, as well as see where we're going with
7 Starlink.

8

9 Then the second item is the letter asking some questions from the
10 congresswoman from Florida, Kathy Castor, who wanted to see if the
11 council as a body, has an opportunity to help in the crafting of
12 that letter, to make sure all of these points that some of us may
13 have are considered. They may very well be with your current
14 approach, but I find it a very wonderful opportunity to have
15 somebody from Congress asking what is wrong with our process right
16 now, and how we can help, and I would really like to make sure we
17 all get that and put in some input.

18

19 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, Mr. Sanchez. It's noted. Thank you. Dr.
20 Simmons.

21

22 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so can we
23 just add, under Other Business, a status update on the council
24 2026 admin award funding?

25

26 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** That is noted as well. Thank you, Dr. Simmons.
27 Mr. Strelcheck.

28

29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and please add a brief update on our permit
30 system, and then I'll also update the council on how we're
31 approaching issuance of permits, given the delay in Coast Guard
32 certificates of documentation for certain vessels.

33

34 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Got it. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Okay, and so
35 we've added four additional items to Other Business. Can I have
36 a motion to adopt the agenda? Motion by Mr. Walker, and seconded
37 by Mr. Osborne. All right. Approval of the minutes, and are there
38 any edits to the minutes? Okay. Can I get a motion to adopt the
39 minutes? Dr. Banks with a motion, and seconded by Mr. Osborne.
40 Thank you.

41

42 We will move into public comment. Good morning. Public input is
43 a vital part of the council's deliberative process. Both oral and
44 written comments are accepted and considered throughout. The
45 Sustainable Fisheries Act requires that all statements include a
46 brief description of the background and interest of the person in
47 the subject of the statement. All written information shall
48 include a statement of the source and date of such information.

1
2 Oral or written communications provided to the council, its
3 members, or its staff that relate to matters within the council's
4 purview are public in nature. Please give any written comments to
5 Gulf Council staff, as all written comments will be posted on the
6 council's website for viewing by council members and the public
7 and will be maintained by the council as part of the permanent
8 record. Knowingly and willfully submitting false information to
9 the council is a violation of federal law.

10
11 We welcome public comment from both in-person and virtual
12 attendees. Virtual participants who wish to speak should have
13 registered online in advance. In-person participants wishing to
14 speak must sign-in at the registration kiosk located in the back
15 of the room. Only one registration per person is permitted.

16
17 Each speaker will have three minutes to deliver their testimony.
18 In-person participants should follow the timer lights on the
19 podium. The light will remain green for the first two minutes,
20 switch to a blinking yellow during the final minute, and turn red
21 when time has expired. Virtual participants should monitor the
22 on-screen three-minute countdown timer to track their remaining
23 time. Additional time for dignitaries may be granted at the
24 discretion of the chair.

25
26 If you have a cell phone or similar device, please place it on
27 silent or vibrating mode during the meeting. To ensure everyone
28 can hear the proceedings, we also ask that any private
29 conversations be conducted outside the meeting room. Please note
30 that public comment may conclude before the published agenda time
31 if all registered in-person and virtual participants have finished
32 their remarks.

33
34 What we're going to do is rotate between online and in the room,
35 and we're going to start with Mr. Hubbard. Captain Hubbard is
36 online, virtual, and then we're going to go to Mr. Lawrence Marino
37 in the room. Dylan, are you online?

38
39 **MR. DYLAN HUBBARD:** Yes. Can you hear me?

40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, and go ahead, Dylan.

42
43 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

44
45 **MR. HUBBARD:** All right. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.
46 I'm disappointed I couldn't be there to join you guys. Travel was
47 a little tricky into Mobile, unfortunately, but I did want to start
48 off by saying I don't support -- Captain Dylan Hubbard from

1 central-west Florida, by the way, a federal for-hire fisherman.

2
3 I do not support delegating management authority to any of the
4 Gulf states for our federal for-hire fleet. I'm currently very
5 happy with the way things are going for our red snapper fishery,
6 and I do not want to see that messed with or changed.

7
8 I don't want to see federal permits managed by separate governing
9 bodies. Breaking up management of federal permits across the Gulf
10 states would be very confusing for guests who often travel between
11 states to frequent our federal for-hire fleet. Also, federal for-
12 hire data should be collected by one source to maintain low
13 uncertainty, and I support strongly moving forward with the current
14 versions of modifications to the Gulf for-hire data collection
15 program, the new version of SEFHIER.

16
17 I know we're moving out to public comment, or a public hearing
18 draft, on that document, and I would love to see that move forward
19 as fast as possible, hopefully going final in June or at our next
20 meeting in August.

21
22 Currently, we have stable, accountable access to our fisheries,
23 especially this red snapper fishery, and I've seen our seasons get
24 longer and longer. We're not overfishing our ACT or ACL, and we
25 would love to see this current management strategy expanded with
26 other species.

27
28 I've listened to the conversation, and I understand there's some
29 need, or want, or appetite to explore EFPs for some of these other
30 species like amberjack or gags, and, if states want to explore
31 that, I would strongly encourage them to leave the federal for-
32 hire fleet out of it. Leave us under the federal management
33 structure, and let's expand what we've already seen success with
34 red snapper to other species, and thank you for my time. That's
35 all.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Hubbard. Do we have any
38 questions for Dylan? Not seeing any, Dylan, thank you.

39
40 **MR. HUBBARD:** Thank you.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Next up is Mr. Lawrence Marino.

43
44 **MR. LAWRENCE MARINO:** Good morning. My name is Lawrence Marino,
45 and I'm here on behalf of Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill.
46 First, as to Amendment 63 regarding the red grouper IFQ set-aside,
47 the key purpose is to create a pilot program to evaluate the
48 feasibility and usefulness of doing this and to obtain meaningful

1 observations.

2
3 The amount set aside has to be big enough to make an observable
4 difference. Using the 2026 quota instead of the 2025 emergency
5 rule quota seems too little to make any real difference. 2025
6 also makes sense, because that was an inflection point. It's still
7 the latest ACT, and, you know, since the 2026 one hasn't been
8 enacted yet, and it's the one in effect, as all this has been
9 proposed and discussed, and it's still a small amount compared to
10 the quota the shareholders would keep.

11
12 Everything up to the threshold, at least 70 percent above that,
13 and then at least 40 percent of the threshold, or the set-aside,
14 would come back to them in the redistribution if they're active
15 fishermen, and, of course, as it's always been pointed out to the
16 investors, shares aren't ownership. They're subject to revocation
17 in their entirety, much less simply not getting a few more
18 percentage points of the allocation as quotas increase.

19
20 Accordingly, Attorney General Murrill urges the council to move
21 forward with Amendment 63 and, under Action 1, to select
22 Alternative 2. As to the specific options under Alternative 2,
23 for the same reasons, Option 2d is most appropriate, as making a
24 big enough difference to make the juice worth the squeeze.
25 Everyone is tired of that metaphor, but it still applies.

26
27 As to Action 2 about the threshold harvest for eligibility to
28 receive the redistributions, refer back to the need for Amendment
29 63 to enhance economic profitability, reduce discards by improving
30 access, and provide new opportunities to obtain annual allocation.

31
32 If 500 pounds per trip indicates a vertical gear trip, and that's
33 what three-quarters of them are actually using, then it seems a
34 good minimum unit for consideration. 300 pounds isn't even an
35 entire trip, and so it seems too little. Two trips, 1,000 pounds,
36 suggests it's really someone fishing red grouper as a business.

37
38 One trip, 500 pounds, suggests they're doing at least some targeted
39 red grouper fishing, and not just bycatch, but it does capture
40 some situations where red grouper harvest is bycatch, and so that
41 seems like a good balance between the objectives for this program,
42 at least out of the options that were provided.

43
44 As with the total set-aside, distributions to individual
45 recipients have to be big enough to make an observable difference.
46 Obviously, the more accounts that are eligible, the less any one
47 account can get, and how much is needed varies by business model
48 for each fisherman. There isn't a huge difference among the

1 numbers of recipients under each of the options provided, and
2 hopefully the fisherman will provide you some useful input as to
3 these differences.

4
5 Under Action 3, a 60-40 split as to shareholders versus non-
6 shareholders, is where they really are now, and so that seems more
7 appropriate than a 50-50 split, which would actually redistribute
8 allocation back to the shareholders, and so Alternative 2 is
9 preferable to Alternative 3, and the proportional redistribution
10 seems more useful than equal redistribution, since a key purpose
11 is to get the hands -- The fish into the hands of those actually
12 fishing them. Again, hopefully the fisherman will provide some
13 useful input. The framework action, obviously, to hold the 2027
14 set-aside is also needed, and quickly, while Amendment 63 moves
15 forward.

16
17 As to Amendment 64 regarding state management of federal for-hire,
18 it's needed because fishermen in different parts of the Gulf face
19 different environments and contexts, and state management allows
20 management to be tailored to each of their needs.

21
22 The opposition comes almost entirely from the eastern Gulf. This
23 actually points up the need for state management from the point of
24 view of the entire Gulf. The eastern Gulf for-Hire industry likes
25 things the way they are, but it doesn't reflect reality, that the
26 effort has increasingly been concentrated in the eastern Gulf,
27 even though the remaining fish are increasingly concentrated in
28 the western Gulf. That's not fair and equitable to the west.

29
30 State management would be much more fair and equitable to everyone,
31 including the western states, but, under Action 2, the original
32 time series options for allocations are not appropriate, the
33 original four, because they're limited to 2026 or afterward, when
34 distribution of fishermen, and therefore fishing effort, had
35 already been shaped and altered by Amendment 40, the sector
36 separation amendment.

37
38 Sector separation led to shorter seasons and shifted fishing and
39 permits to the eastern Gulf, and so data starting in 2016 aren't
40 more appropriate to use. They're inappropriate to use.

41
42 Instead, the time series that were used for Amendment 40 should be
43 used, as Chris proposed, and, in fact, those same time series, as
44 he also pointed out, were used again in making the allocations for
45 state management of private wreck under Amendment 50, and so
46 harvest in these exact years controlled the allocation for for-
47 hire in the first place, as well as private rec allocations among
48 the states, and, if they're good for those purposes, they're good

1 for for-hire allocations of the same fish among the states.

2
3 There was comment yesterday that this doesn't take into account
4 the current data, but, again, current data is affected by Amendment
5 40, and so shouldn't be considered. There was also discussion
6 about whether the for-hire sector would always continue to be
7 overfished, currently leaving 30 percent, or a million pounds, on
8 the table, and the answer is yes, because the eastern Gulf is
9 increasingly overfishing its biomass, while the western Gulf is
10 increasingly underfishing it, precisely because of Amendment 40
11 and the Gulf-wide sector separation.

12
13 The Amendment 40 time series should not only be added as an option,
14 but selected, or, as a compromise, at least the 50-50 mix Chris
15 proposed in his second motion.

16
17 Under Action 3, the point of state management is to allow states
18 to sync up their federal and state waters, and so certainly both
19 opening and closing need to be part of the delegation, but also
20 bag limits. They need to either be added as an option or just
21 included in the definition of what delegation is in Action 1, and
22 accountability measures, such as payback and perhaps carryover,
23 should also be added, apparently as a new action.

24
25 Finally, as far as carryover for private red snapper angling,
26 states can, and have, pushed their seasons to the brink of their
27 allocations to avoid leaving fish on the table. Allowing carryover
28 at least eases that motivation, and fair is fair. If there's going
29 to be payback for going over, there ought to be pay forward for
30 going under.

31
32 Sure, you can't overfish, but it seems there's plenty of time post-
33 season to calculate all that, and limit it if and as needed, and
34 the overage should only go forward one year, which requires not
35 considering it for purposes of determining any carryover to the
36 next year. Thank you.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Marino. Do we have any questions
39 for Mr. Marino? Not seeing any, Larry, thank you. Next up,
40 online, will be Mr. Mike Sullivan, and then we'll come back in the
41 room to Mr. Johnny Williams.

42
43 **MR. MIKE SULLIVAN:** Yes, sir. Thank you very much, council, for
44 allowing us to speak virtually. I am Mike Sullivan, owner-operator
45 of multiple Coast-Guard-certified boats, federally-permitted.
46 Also, they're dual-permitted with commercial. I'm in the
47 commercial industry, an IFQ holder.

1 I am against state management. We fear, as we're seeing every
2 year, and the seasons are getting longer. Even the charter season
3 is getting longer. Anybody in the fishing industry can tell you
4 we have too many days, and our fear is this tipping point where
5 we're coming to, and we're going to relapse to where we were
6 fifteen years ago, where the fish have gone down, and then we have
7 massive closures, which puts a major strain on our industry.

8
9 We would like the Gulf Council to continue managing us. This is
10 what you all do for a living. We feel like we've done a great job
11 with this throughout time. I'm against, again, states taking over,
12 because I also fear that it could become a political thing, where
13 a governor could say we're going to get ten months, you know, and
14 it's all about votes, and I don't want that. I want it about
15 science and real data.

16
17 I'm also not for the proposed amendments where we're taking fish
18 away from Florida and giving to Louisiana or Texas. There's always
19 going to be discussions on what years of data to take. Everybody
20 is going to try to want to take data that's going to pad them,
21 and, also, for the charter-for-hire, yes, we need to get SEFHIER
22 going in.

23
24 We need to have electronic reporting, logbooks, because that is
25 the best validation, just as a commercial industry, to what we're
26 catching, what's real-time data, and not just guessing from, you
27 know, taking dockside surveys where there's just a small
28 percentage, and that data could get skewed pretty easily. That's
29 all I have to say, and I appreciate you all very much.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Sullivan. Do we have any
32 questions? Not seeing any, Mike, and thanks again.

33
34 **MR. SULLIVAN:** Thank you. Yes, sir.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Next up is Mr. Johnny Williams, and we will go
37 back after to Mr. Michael Myers online.

38
39 **MR. JOHNNY WILLIAMS:** Good morning. Johnny Williams, Williams
40 Party Boats Incorporated our of Galveston, Texas, a third-
41 generation partyboat operator out of Galveston.

42
43 I've seen a lot of things over the years. I got involved in the
44 council in 1988. I've seen times when we were rebuilding the
45 stock, which, in the early 1990s, we were having a lot of success.
46 Then we initiated trip limits for commercial fishermen, with a
47 derby effect. It was disastrous for the fishery. The fishery
48 went from being vibrant to really not very good at all. Then we

1 initiated the IFQ system for the commercial fishery, and that made
2 a big difference. The stock was recovering remarkably well.

3
4 However, we came to state management for the recreational sector,
5 and I think it's been an abject failure. The fishing is getting
6 worse every year. I've been up here asking that you all not
7 increase the quota, which you all did, even though all the for-
8 hire people and the commercial fishermen asked you not to do such,
9 and it was still initiated, and the fishing has been on the wane
10 for about three years now, in my opinion.

11
12 We're kind of coming full circle. I think, if we continue on this
13 path, that we're going to be back to where we were in the 1980s,
14 and so I ask you to please consider this.

15
16 This year, the fish just aren't there. I mean, the for-hire
17 sector, we've only caught three-quarters of our fish the last
18 couple of years, even though the season has been extended. This
19 year, we're going to be fishing until October 25, and I'll be
20 willing to bet anybody in here that we're not going to catch our
21 quota this year either in the for-hire sector, because fish just
22 aren't there.

23
24 We need to do something to make the purely recreational fishermen
25 accountable. I mean, it's ludicrous to think that you can get a
26 fishery that was, you know, a few weeks long, and, when you turn
27 it over to state management now, you know, it might be months and
28 months long, and the days that they're allowed to fish are many
29 times the days where they have the opportunity for the most
30 fishermen to get out there on the water, on weekends and stuff
31 like that.

32
33 I don't know if we need a tag system or what we need, but we need
34 to get the recreational fishermen accountable some way. Otherwise,
35 we're just going to destroy this fishery again, and all the work
36 that we've done, over all these years, is going to be for naught.
37 Like I say, I've been involved in it since the late 1980s, and
38 I've seen the fish come and go, and different management efforts
39 have had different effects, and state management has been an abject
40 failure, as far as I can see.

41
42 I don't think we need to have the for-hire sector into that group
43 with the state management. I think it will be even worse. Thank
44 you very much for your time, and I appreciate it.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Williams. Do we have any
47 questions? I'm not seeing any. Next up on the line is Michael
48 Myers. Michael, are you with us?

1
2 **MS. BERNADINE ROY:** Mr. Myers, you'll have to unmute your line to
3 speak.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. we're having trouble getting the mic on.
6 Captain Zales, you can come up next.
7

8 **MR. BOB ZALES, II:** Good morning. Bob Zales II, Executive Director
9 of Southeastern Fisheries Association. First off, and I'm going
10 to try to run through this pretty quick, because I've got a lot to
11 say about the for-hire thing.
12

13 On 63, we fully support John's recommended alternative to you all.
14 We would like to see, whatever you all do with that amendment to
15 move it forward, that, when you finish up here today, that you
16 send it back to the AP for their recommendations and considerations
17 and things, to see where we go with that.
18

19 On lane snapper, we urge you to go ahead and send that off to the
20 Secretary to get that done. On the for-hire part of this thing,
21 I was the chairman of the ad hoc committee that created limited
22 permit for the for-hire fleet. We did that on the recommendation
23 of Dr. Hogarth, who had Andy's job at the time. The purpose of
24 that limited entry permit was to cap effort.
25

26 Magnuson was created to manage resources. The business part of
27 the fishing world wasn't considered, and it's not considered in
28 Magnuson. The reason why you see the big push to try to get the
29 seafood industry on the same level as farmers and ranchers is
30 because the USDA manages business.
31

32 These people in the back, and I used to be one of them, they know
33 best how to manage and operate their business. While we were a
34 little hesitant when that limited entry process started, about
35 doing that, it turned out to be a great thing, because it capped
36 the effort in our business. Had that not happened, this business
37 probably wouldn't be here today, because unlimited access would
38 just be growing. The business would be not profitable. The
39 resource would be harmed. Limited access worked.
40

41 It has worked well since it was established. The only real issue
42 is that this industry has had with that, and it's really no fault
43 of the Fisheries Service, to Andy, and it has to do with the way
44 data is collected every year. Andy gets these calls of when is
45 the season going to open, and how long is it going to be, and
46 that's been the big bitch for this. Other than that, this industry
47 hasn't complained very much about what's going on.
48

1 They don't want to see state management. They want to continue
2 like they are. The industry is stable, and it's profitable, and
3 they know best what and how their business operates.
4

5 You heard, when this issue first came up in October, overwhelming
6 comments of don't do it. At the January meeting, overwhelming
7 comments of don't do it. You're going to hear that today. It
8 would be great if you would listen to these people and do what
9 they're asking you to do, as a majority, and clearly it's not 100
10 percent, but, as a majority, and eliminate this process. That's
11 pretty much all I've got to say. If you like, I can --
12

13 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Captain Zales, could you give us an update on the
14 Starlink? You shared some information with me, and some council
15 members would probably be interested.
16

17 **MR. ZALES:** Yes, and I was part of the call that John talked about
18 that the FCC and Coast Guard had with your staff and Ed, and I was
19 on that call. It was a great call. We got a lot of information
20 passed on to those people. After the call, a lady with FCC
21 contacted me about -- To clarify some information, which I did.
22 That whole thing is moving forward.
23

24 Shortly after that -- Right now, the whole thing is in limbo,
25 because government is not working right. Nobody is being paid,
26 and that's the reason why the Coast Guard is not here. Nothing is
27 being done, but apparently the captain, and I'm going to say
28 District 8, because that's what it used to be, is in tune to trying
29 to do a policy directive for District 8 for the commercial vessels
30 and the COI for-hire vessels in his districts to allow the Starlink
31 system as an alternative communication device.
32

33 I had a call with his Lieutenant Commander, asking questions that
34 she passed on to him, and, since the shutdown, I haven't heard
35 anything back.
36

37 There's an international body, and it's the Radio Technical
38 Commission for Marine Services, I believe, that deal with all this
39 communication stuff worldwide, for everything from super tankers
40 down to the lowest vessel. They're meeting in Lauderdale the first
41 week of May, and they've invited me there. The Starlink people
42 are supposed to be there. So far, we haven't found too many humans
43 that work for Starlink, but they're supposed to be at this meeting,
44 and so I'm going to try to be there.
45

46 This whole thing is moving forward. It's probably going to happen.
47 I feel certain it is. It's just a matter of when, and so I'll
48 keep you all informed on everything as well. Thank you.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Zales, for the information.
3 Do we have any questions? Captain Walker.
4
5 **MR. WALKER:** Just on that on that topic, I was on that call, and
6 the FCC guy was quite unhappy about the fact that the Coast Guard
7 pointed the finger at him, and he said that I'm going to -- Tell
8 me the guy's name at the Coast Guard, and I'm going to go talk to
9 that guy, and so there was some finger pointing going on, but it
10 sounds like things are moving in the right direction, as Captain
11 Zales mentioned.
12
13 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you. Do we have any other questions for
14 Captain Zales? Thank you, Bob.
15
16 **MR. ZALES:** All right. Thank you very much.
17
18 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Next, we'll go online. We'll try Mr.
19 Michael Myers, and then Johnny Greene. Michael, are you with us?
20
21 **MS. ROY:** Mr. Myers, you'll have to unmute your line.
22
23 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. We're going to come back to the room.
24 Mr. Johnny Greene.
25
26 **MR. JOHNNY GREENE:** Good morning. Well, this room brings back
27 some nightmare memories of 2014, I think it was, and sector
28 separation, and all the things that went on. If you did not have
29 the pleasure to be here for that meeting, be thankful. That was
30 the roughest council meeting I've ever sat through in my nine years
31 as a council member. It was -- You could cut the air, and, as
32 I've traveled around and met people from other councils, and found
33 out how many councils were actually at that meeting, it was kind
34 of interesting.
35
36 Yesterday, it was kind of like being in a time warp, because it
37 kind of went back to 2014. It seemed like we were having some of
38 the same discussions yesterday that we had in 2014. You know, we
39 battled the sector separation, and that was a very hotly-contested
40 deal. There was deliberation across the tables. We never had a
41 three-day council meeting. We were lucky to get done in four-and-
42 a-half days.
43
44 It just took a lot of time and a lot of effort to put in it, and,
45 you know, hearing some of the stuff yesterday, and I recognize
46 that maybe a lot of you weren't here, but we did vote back then to
47 not be part of state management, and we wanted to be regulated
48 under the federal government.

1
2 Then, you know, yesterday was just kind of a hot day. It was --
3 Sitting in the back of the room brought back a lot of memories,
4 that I really blocked out for some really good reasons, but,
5 anyway, I talked to you last time, when I gave public testimony,
6 about environmental concerns going on in Gulf of Mexico.

7
8 I sat through the deal yesterday, or the day before, and watched
9 the snapper, the landings, and everything is trending down, all
10 the way across the Gulf, and it's true, but I think we've got
11 bigger issues.

12
13 I don't think it's management. I think there's something to do
14 with the environmental side of this that's going on. Every time
15 they open up the Bonne Carre Spillway, and they dump all the water
16 out through Lake Borgne, and it comes out through the Mississippi,
17 they start having shrimpers and crabbers, and all the things that
18 go as a negative influence, and it just doesn't stop at the beach.

19
20 It goes on offshore, and it continues on offshore. I have a
21 photograph on my phone, that I would be glad to share with you,
22 that took back in 2023, of water temperature about fifty miles
23 south of Dauphin Island, and it was 93.7 degrees. I've been
24 fishing since 1986, and I've never seen water temperature that
25 high. I keep a notebook, a logbook, every day of water
26 temperature, sea conditions, customers, what we caught, and so on
27 and so forth.

28
29 I think we've got a bigger issue here. Now, I don't know what to
30 do, and, to Mr. Dugas' credit, he always asked me, well, what can
31 we do, and, Mr. Dugas, I still don't know, but there has to be
32 something. I feel like we're missing a huge component.

33
34 I don't know if it needs to be figured in a stock assessment, like
35 a fleet-type deal, but I think there has to be something we're
36 missing there, because it's got a lot to do with it, because I'm
37 telling you that, when you look at Orange Beach, Alabama, and you
38 draw a map to the south tip of Louisiana, and you go back up into
39 the Chandeleurs, it's what we've always called the fertile
40 crescent.

41
42 Whether you know anything about snapper spawning or not, when they
43 turn into little bitty larvae, and they sink to the bottom, if
44 they don't hit the correct pH, they die.

45
46 Well, that area was covered with oil, and the water temperature is
47 now extremely high. I think that's a big part of what we're
48 dealing with right now, and so I think we really need to look into

1 that. I don't know what to do, and I know that we have the
2 incredible staff and SSC members and all that, but I think we
3 really need to back up on that.

4
5 I wish -- I hate to come up here and bitch at you when I don't
6 have a solution, but this is something that's above me, above my
7 pay grade, with that. I just -- I feel like we're missing
8 something, because that's a huge area. That area has always been
9 extremely fertile, and it's always been a great area, and then, to
10 think that there could be a dead zone east of the Mississippi
11 River, similar to the one west of the Mississippi River, that's
12 not good either, and so I guess I'm out of time. I've got a lot
13 more to say, but I'll just leave it at that.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Greene. Do we have any
16 questions? Captain Walker.

17
18 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Captain Greene. I know you've been around
19 through the sector separation days, as a council member, and have
20 seen all sides of it, but, just the short version, your marina,
21 and I've been over there, and I've been on your boat and stuff,
22 and do you believe that most of the guys in your marina would
23 oppose state management for the for-hire sector?

24
25 **MR. GREENE:** Well, I mean, if you look back historically, everybody
26 has been adamant against it. I mean, we voted it up and down
27 several different times at the council level when I was on. I
28 haven't heard anything that would make me want to support it at
29 this point.

30
31 Maybe there's something I'm missing, but I don't know what it is.
32 You know, I'm struggling. You know, when I read an amendment, the
33 first thing I do is go to the purpose and need, and then I'm kind
34 of lazy, and I'll go to the executive summary, and then I'll go
35 back to certain things.

36
37 You know, if we're just trying to control open and close dates,
38 then maybe that would be a very simple way to go down that path,
39 but to get into doing it state-by-state and different things, and
40 you get into landings, and possession, and, you know, rough-
41 weather-type situations and all, and, you know, I just don't know
42 at this point. I don't know of any -- I haven't heard anybody
43 specifically tell me that they like this idea and want to move
44 forward. No, sir, I don't.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Greene. Any other questions?
47 Captain Frady.

48

1 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Captain Greene, for being here, and thank
2 you for all your years you put on this council, and all the work
3 you put into it, but, you know, over the years, we have had
4 conversations, and I've heard you sit at this table many days and
5 battle the sector separation issue and was it the right thing to
6 do.

7
8 We're in a situation right now to where the Regional Administrator
9 -- We thought about giving the Regional Administrator the authority
10 to open and close seasons, much like it used to be. Was that
11 something that is wise, because I know that the federal for-hire
12 fleet, that I work with every day, have all said they don't want
13 to be managed under the state, and we've yet to see anything that's
14 beneficial to make us want to do that.

15
16 Would it be beneficial, in your eyes, to let the Regional
17 Administrator -- Give him the flexibility to be able to set seasons
18 to keep the shortest distance between the fishermen and the source
19 of the fish as short as possible? What are your thoughts on that?
20

21 **MR. GREENE:** Well, I never really thought a whole lot about it
22 until this week, but, you know, I think there would have to be a
23 lot of parameters around something like that. I mean, I think it
24 -- Obviously, you should always be willing to look at anything and
25 see if there's something there.

26
27 You know, if you were trying to give the Regional Administrator
28 that ability, I think it would need a lot of a lot of protection
29 and certain things. I mean, you know, as we sit here at the table
30 with Andy and everything, and we like Andy, and he thinks whatever,
31 but, if Andy is replaced, and that Regional Administrator wants to
32 go a different way, then that could be a huge issue, just like
33 within state deal.

34
35 If you have a state-by-state deal, and you have a new governor,
36 and they decide they want to go a complete different direction
37 than what the fishermen want, then it's -- You know, it's one of
38 those things.

39
40 I would be interested to see what the federal government could do,
41 if they could somehow, you know, modify openings, or bag limits,
42 or whatever, and I would be interested in about anything, to see
43 what could come up, but I think it would have to have a lot of
44 safeguards in place with whichever way you go, if you ultimately
45 decide to do that way, but, you know, I think it would just take
46 a lot of -- It would take a lot of conversation, and a lot of time,
47 to get that one right, as it would as it would the state deal.
48

1 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you.

2
3 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Captain Greene. I appreciate that. I too
4 agree with you, that the devil is in the details, but having the
5 safeguards, the triggers, and the guardrails, so to speak, in any
6 program, whether it be state or federal, is key, but that's very
7 -- It's very vulnerable. I mean, who is going to be sitting in
8 that seat three or four years from now, or whatever, but thank you
9 so much for your comments. I appreciate you.

10
11 **MR. GREENE:** Mr. Schieble, I think that you should look into
12 Amendment 30B, and see how that would play into your state
13 management as you move forward, if you want to do something like
14 that, because I don't know. I tried to look it up last night, and
15 I don't know. I didn't get too far with it, but you might want to
16 look at that as you move forward.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Greene. Thank you for being
19 here. Next up, we'll go online to Mr. Scott Hickman.

20
21 **MR. SCOTT HICKMAN:** How is everybody doing? Sorry to miss all you
22 bright, fun people in Mobile, Alabama, but we've getting a lot of
23 stuff going in Galveston this month. Kind of weighing on what
24 Captain Johnny Greene -- Well, first of all, Captain Scott Hickman,
25 from Galveston, Texas, a thirty-seven-year professional charter
26 boat captain, federally-permitted on both the charter-for-hire
27 side, and a commercial reef fish holder, and a red snapper
28 shareholder.

29
30 Like Captain Johnny Greene was just talking about, you know, one
31 of the things that we're seeing, and this kind of plays into state
32 management for charter boats, is we're seeing some really strange
33 deals going on with our fisheries, whether it be kingfish, cobia,
34 and red snapper numbers are starting to pull back. I applaud the
35 council for looking into this ecosystem-based fishery management
36 concept, and having these workshops around the Gulf. I think it's
37 going to be real helpful.

38
39 We know we've got some stock assessments in the future that are
40 probably not going to be too rosy, and it's -- How we got there
41 with sector separation in the first place was we were losing access
42 so quickly, under a shrinking stock before we rebuilt this fishery,
43 and we didn't have the ability to grow. We're a defined universe,
44 and, you know, we have this moratorium in place.

45
46 We have so many charter boat permits, and we are America's non-
47 boat-owning public's access to this reef fish complex, and having
48 that secured is a big thing for our coastal communities and our

1 coastal economies.

2
3 You know, Larry, at the first part of the public comment, said
4 about people west of Mississippi, or I think Florida west, weren't
5 supporting this, and I couldn't disagree more, because I poll our
6 captains, and we do have one of the highest concentrations, and I
7 think the second highest concentration of federally-permitted
8 charter boats in the Gulf is in the Galveston-Freeport area, which
9 are very close geographically.

10
11 I talk to our captains. We talk on the radio every day. We're
12 talking at different events in Galveston, and our folks don't want
13 to go down this road. We know that there's going to be a bad stock
14 assessment probably in the future. The fishery is decreasing, and
15 we're way better off, as a business, as serving the public, the
16 non-boat-owning public, as our defined charter-for-hire allocation
17 of fish.

18
19 Sector separation has worked well. They can forecast our seasons
20 better, our business plans better, and we're not interested right
21 now, and I think some of the biggest crowds were in Galveston when
22 we went through this whole process, and I know the council is
23 finally coming back to Galveston this year, and you'll have -- If
24 this is still moving forward, you're going to have a big crowd,
25 and you're going to hear, from our people here, that what I'm
26 saying is factual.

27
28 The Starlink deal, I've had some good conversations with Commerce
29 Committee staff on the Senate side, and I've actually given them
30 that FCC guy's name that they were discussing earlier, and it
31 sounds like the Commerce Committee is working with the Coast Guard
32 on fixing this issue, because it's just absolutely crazy that they
33 would not use this as a preferred and approved device for
34 communication on commercial fishing vessels.

35
36 I've had a Starlink on my boat for two years. I take Zoom calls.
37 I could, you know, call into the council fifty miles from offshore,
38 you know, and it's a game-changer, and it's going to be a game-
39 changer on data collection for us moving forward, with things like
40 SEFHIER and electronic logbooks on commercial vessels, and so
41 that's it, in a nutshell. I appreciate you all, and I'm sorry I'm
42 missed all of you. It's always good to visit, and, if anybody's
43 got a question, I would be happy to answer it.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Hickman. Do we have any
46 questions? I'm not seeing any, Scott. Thanks for calling in.
47 Next up, in the room, Mr. Mark Tryon, and then next, online, Harris
48 Scruggs.

1
2 **MR. MARK TRYON:** Mark Tryon, commercial fisherman, Gulf Breeze,
3 Florida. I do day trips, rod-and-reel fishing. We've seen the
4 fishery decline tremendously for red snapper, which is my primary
5 target species, since the advent of state management.
6

7 Just to give you some data, back in 2019, I had my best year. I
8 averaged 538 pounds of snapper a trip, plus other fish. It has
9 steadily declined since then, and, year-to-date in 2026, it's been
10 -- The year has been totally a disaster. I'm down to 189 pounds
11 a trip, and it's looking quite bleak.
12

13 I think we need some accountability on the recreational individual
14 angler sector. I've gone through these numbers before, and I'm
15 just going to keep going through it every single time until
16 something is done.
17

18 2.8 million pounds of red snapper for the State of Florida
19 recreational fleet. Now, that includes the inshore guideboats
20 that operate just in state waters, okay, and it also includes kids.
21 If you take your kid on a trip, I don't think that's being accounted
22 for, and a lot of people do that to bulk up their catch.
23

24 Okay, and so, if you took this 2.8 million pounds, and you say how
25 many -- What's our effort, and divide it by X, and X is the effort,
26 and nobody seems to want to tell us what the effort is, and the
27 reason being is because, if you plug in any reasonable number, and
28 let's just say 280,000 anglers, okay, divided by the 2.8 million,
29 you come up with ten pounds of red snapper per angler for the
30 entire 126-day season. It doesn't compute. It makes no sense at
31 all. Everybody knows it's wrong.
32

33 In closing, with this Amendment 63, I think it should be -- Any
34 action should be deferred until after the Ad Hoc IFQ AP meets.
35 They're meeting in a couple weeks, and let's examine what they
36 come up with, and then utilize that in the decision-making process.
37 Thank you.
38

39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Tryon. Do we have any questions?
40 Not seeing any, Mark, and thank you. Next, we'll go online to
41 Harris Scruggs, and he will be followed by Mark Kelley in the room.
42 Harris, are you with us?
43

44 **MR. HARRIS SCRUGGS:** Can you hear me now?
45

46 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, and go ahead.
47

48 **MR, SCRUGGS:** My name is Harris Scruggs, owner-operator of Triple

1 B Fishing in Panama City Beach, Florida. I'm dually-permitted,
2 and I own multiple sets of charter-headboat permits. To start off
3 with, the state season is too long. 147 days is ridiculous. We
4 don't have the fish to support that.

5
6 I strongly disagree with delegating management authority to any of
7 the Gulf states. I do not want federal permits managed by separate
8 governing bodies. To go along with what my predecessors have said,
9 and as a commercial fisherman also, the red snapper assessment is
10 -- The red snapper amount in the Gulf has definitely dwindled the
11 last five years, and so we definitely need to do something about
12 shortening the season and having recreational accountability. I'm
13 all go for the new SEFHIER program, to get the real-time data back
14 to us.

15
16 I think that's very important, to keep our fishery like it is.
17 Sector separation was a great idea, and it seems to be working.
18 We're all profitable and busy when the fishing is good, and so I
19 think we need to shorten our seasons up and really concentrate on
20 making the fishery and resource better for the future, and not
21 killing it by allowing it to be overfished every year. Other than
22 that, I think that's it for me.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Harris. Do we have any questions?
25 Not seeing any, thank you.

26
27 **MR. SCRUGGS:** All right. You have a good day.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We'll go, in the room, to Mark Kelley, and next
30 up is Richard Fischer, online.

31
32 **MR. MARK KELLEY:** I didn't prepare a fifteen-minute speech, like
33 some of these others that have got the time to do it. Anyway, I'm
34 Mark Kelley. I'm from Panama City. I've got dually-permitted
35 chartered-for-hire boats. I'm an IFQ holder. I'm fully in state
36 in this snapper that we're all talking about.

37
38 I'm up here to talk about the state. I don't want -- We worked
39 hard to get where we're at, to have sustainability in our season,
40 and, actually, we got to where we can make a living, and now we're
41 talking about changing things up, of something that's working, and
42 we've capped our effort.

43
44 What really scares me about state management is, in the State of
45 Florida, the state guideboat business has boomed, and I can tell
46 you a fine example of that. Online, there's a page that's called
47 FishingBooker, and, on this FishingBooker, we've gone from like
48 seventy-five boats to 400 or 500, and, of course, we know the

1 federal end of it is not growing, because the permits are capped,
2 and, if you turn those jokers loose outside of nine miles, they
3 will triple, or they'll even get bigger.

4
5 Saying all that, there is zero accountability in the state
6 management, in my opinion, and it's fly-by-night businesses, and
7 it's terrible, and they're hurting the charter business, because
8 they're running for nothing, and that's really -- Let's see. I
9 should have wrote it all down if I was going to have to stay up
10 her for fifteen minutes, but, anyway, that's all I got to say.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Kelley. Do we have any questions?
13 We do. Mr. Anson.

14
15 **MR. ANSON:** Not a question, but, Captain Kelley, thanks for coming
16 here from Florida. Just your comment relative to those state
17 licensed vessels being able to go into federal waters through any
18 action that the council takes relative to delegation of management
19 to the states, that's not been proposed, as of yet, and hasn't
20 been part of the conversation, and so the access to federal waters
21 would still be exclusive to those federally-permitted vessels.

22
23 **MR. KELLEY:** So do we have any plans how we're going to enforce
24 the state guideboats for not going in there? That's the problem
25 that the federal boats are having, right at this time, is so --
26 This state guideboat, he puts these people on there, and the way
27 they beat the system is they're making their people pay for a
28 license, and so, when they go across state lines, they're telling
29 them, oh, we're on a pleasure trip.

30
31 Well now, I don't know many businesses that you get to play on,
32 and they're buying taxed fuel, or commercial, a commercial price,
33 and it's -- I mean, it's terrible right now, just the way things
34 are.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We have Mr. Anson.

37
38 **MR. ANSON:** To that question, and so enforcement of federal
39 regulations is through a partnership with NOAA and their
40 enforcement agents, as well as the state enforcement agents, and
41 so, to the extent that each state participates, or tries to conduct
42 enforcement activities in federal waters to catch those parties
43 that are engaged in the activity you described, that is ongoing
44 now, and certainly you can make an argument there needs to be more,
45 and it sounds like you are, but that situation occurs now, and,
46 even if state management were to go through, a vessel that is only
47 state-licensed -- That activity could still probably occur under
48 that scenario too, but, inasmuch as allowing state-licensed

1 vessels access to federal waters, again, that's not part of the
2 discussion as it pertains to state management or delegation of
3 federal management to states.

4
5 **MR. KELLEY:** I've got two responses to that. The first response
6 is so we have the FWC in Florida, and I don't know what any other
7 state does, and so, in order to enforce that, that FWC boat has to
8 go outside nine miles. I mean, I've done it for forty years, and
9 you may see one a year, maybe one a year.

10
11 The second aspect of the whole thing is you've got the state, and
12 you've got the federal. The federal's main objectives is that
13 species, is making sure that species recovers and comes back. Then
14 you throw the state factor in there, and the state -- I'm going to
15 speak about the State of Florida, because I can't speak on no
16 other, but the State of Florida is all worried about that dollar
17 bill, and it's not as much worried about the fishery as much as
18 the feds, and I've been in it long enough to see no snapper and a
19 healthy stock, to know my business is only good when I can catch
20 them, and so, I mean, it don't matter how long of a season. You
21 still have to produce.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Kelley. Any other questions? Not
24 seeing any -- Captain Frady.

25
26 **MR. KELLEY:** Lord, I might use those fifteen minutes.

27
28 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Captain, it's so good to see
29 you here. All of us are hearing everybody talking about we've got
30 too long of a season. My question is we're getting too long of a
31 season because it takes that much longer to catch the ACL, the
32 catch limit, and what are you seeing where you are?

33
34 Are you having to go farther to maintain the same size fish? How
35 far are you having to go now? Tell me each step of the way. Is
36 it getting better or worse? Farther offshore, is it better,
37 because we're trying to determine -- To make decisions on what's
38 best for each user group, but we care about the health stock, those
39 of us who make our living off of it, and what do you see?

40
41 **MR. KELLEY:** So, you know, the fishery also throws in a little
42 talent, and so you've got one guy that's not as talented as the
43 other, and you've got one guy that can go in and catch his limit
44 every day. I think I missed one day last year catching my limit,
45 and you've got some that haven't been fortunate enough to be in
46 the business for forty years like me. They're learning, and so of
47 course they have some struggles.

1 Is the fishery as healthy as it once was? That is an absolute it
2 is not. It is in -- It is going the other way. We stood up here,
3 three years ago, when there was an increase, and that's -- All the
4 for-hire, I think with the exception of one person, stood up here,
5 and we did not want the increase, but what happened? We had the
6 increase, and so I'm going to rejoice under 147 days, whether I
7 catch them or not. At least I can book a potential trip of catching
8 red snapper, but, as far as in our area, the snapper fishing has
9 decreased.

10
11 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Captain.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Kelley. Any other questions? I'm
14 not seeing any. Thank you, Mark.

15
16 **MR. KELLEY:** Thank you.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Next up, online, Mr. Richard Fischer.

19
20 **MR. RICHARD FISCHER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the
21 commission. Good morning. Good morning. It was seeing you all
22 the last couple days in Mobile. Sorry I had to head on out. I am
23 on my way to our state commission meeting in Vidalia, and so thank
24 you all so much for accommodating the virtual testimony and letting
25 people like us participate in the process still.

26
27 I wasn't really going to touch on illegal charters, but, since it
28 just came up, it's apropos. That is also a huge issue in Louisiana,
29 where you've got state charter boats, from what I'm told, going
30 into federal waters to either harvest or traverse with red snapper,
31 which is, obviously, in violation of the law, and was never the
32 intention of any of this state management opportunities.

33
34 As was discussed, it is an enforcement issue. I have had these
35 conversations with multiple levels of enforcement, whether it's
36 our state wildlife and fisheries enforcement, NOAA enforcement, or
37 the Coast Guard, and, you know, they continue to tell me they're
38 ramping up operations on it.

39
40 One major issue though that I have heard, and this is going to be
41 a blanket statement to anybody listening, is what I hear from
42 charter captains is, hey, this is happening, and this is happening,
43 and, okay, I need names, and, okay, tell me who, and then the phone
44 goes silent. Look, and nobody wants to be the snitch. I'll be
45 the snitch.

46
47 This is the blanket statement to anybody listening. Let me know
48 who is doing it, and I will pass it on to enforcement agencies, so

1 that you guys don't have to, and so I just wanted to make that
2 little PSA.

3
4 As far as state management, it sounds like, in Louisiana, we are
5 a bit of a minority, in terms of wanting state management, and
6 that's okay, and that's okay, because it's written in the document
7 and is the intention for this to not be forced on anybody who
8 doesn't want it.

9
10 Look, in Louisiana, we have never -- In recent years, we have never
11 been able to get close to our historical percentage of red snapper,
12 due to makeup of this one-size-fits-all federal season, and I fully
13 appreciate, and acknowledge, those from other parts of the Gulf
14 that have different opinions, and that's fine. That's great.
15 That's what makes us America.

16
17 You know, different regulations that make sense for different
18 people in different parts of the country, and so I fully respect
19 those opinions, but I also would, you know, like to ask that they
20 respect ours, and let's give it a shot, and see how it goes. You
21 know, we've got LA Creel in Louisiana. If there are other reasons,
22 in other states, why they would like to not participate, I respect
23 that, but we definitely believe in our ability to stay within the
24 constraints of our limits.

25
26 We've repeatedly shown that we can with the state private rec
27 season in Louisiana. We believe that we would be able to do that
28 for the federally-permitted charter boats as well, and I want to
29 applaud the council for going down this path.

30
31 For a very long time, we've experienced the tyranny of the majority
32 from other parts of the Gulf, and I'm just very happy that this
33 council is breaking out of that and exploring these new
34 opportunities that would be beneficial to our fleet in Louisiana.
35 I see my time is running short. Thank you all so much for all you
36 all do, and I am happy to field any questions, if there are any.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Richard. We have a question from
39 Captain Frady.

40
41 **MR. FRADY:** Hi, Richard. Thank you for being here. You and I
42 have gone around and around over the years about state management
43 versus the federal management. Have you talked to your people,
44 your federally-permitted charter boats in Louisiana, to ask them
45 if the federal government -- If the Regional Administrator had the
46 same authority that your state would probably offer your federal
47 charter boats, would they want to stay with federal, or all of
48 them are just 100 percent that they don't want anything to do with

1 federal, but what if it were set up to where the federal government
2 still had the same authority, and the same flexibility, for setting
3 seasons and bag limits that your state has, and would they still
4 want to stay, or they would still want to defect and become state
5 managed?
6

7 **MR. FISCHER:** So, if I'm understanding the question properly, this
8 would be an opportunity for the State of Louisiana to have a
9 separate season from the rest of the Gulf, but that season would
10 be managed by the federal government, rather than the state
11 government?
12

13 **MR. FRADY:** No, sir. All I'm talking about is you've talked before
14 supporting that the federally-permitted charter boats in
15 Louisiana, if they were managed by the state, they could be managed
16 more effectively, more better, for whatever reason.
17

18 The question I've got is, if that didn't happen, and your federal
19 guideboats, the federal charter boats in Louisiana, would they be
20 happy remaining underneath the federal control under the Regional
21 Administrator's proposed authority, if they could give you the
22 seasons that you wanted, and bag limits, and stuff like that, and
23 would you still go -- Would your people like that or not if it
24 happened? If they had flexibility under the federal, would they
25 like that?
26

27 **MR. FISCHER:** I feel like I heard, the second time, the same thing
28 I heard the first time, and so I'm not quite sure I'm understanding
29 where you're going, Captain Frady. I would greatly like the
30 opportunity to have private conversations and fully grasp where
31 you're going with this.
32

33 I would say -- Look, I would have to have these conversations on
34 a more specific way with our captains, but I think they would
35 appreciate any opportunity to take advantage of the greater and
36 different red snapper stock, separate red snapper stock, that we
37 have in the western Gulf, as opposed to the eastern Gulf.
38

39 I would say that, however the sausage is made for them to get
40 there, they would appreciate that opportunity. I don't know if
41 that would be the maximum benefit for them. We would have to talk
42 about the details, and, as always, the devil is in the details,
43 but, if what we're talking about is some sort of half measure,
44 rather than a full measure, that would still get them most of what
45 they want, of course, we're listening, but I'm not quite sure if
46 I understood where you were going with that, Captain Frady.
47

48 **MR. FRADY:** You did. You did.

1
2 **MR. FISCHER:** Okay.
3

4 **MR. FRADY:** All I said was, if the state management didn't happen,
5 but the flexibility was given to the Regional Administrator, would
6 they be content, or they're still going to push, and still want
7 state control.
8

9 **MR. FISCHER:** I think we would have to get into the details, and
10 then I would have an answer for you.
11

12 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, sir. I appreciate it. I wasn't trying to
13 nitpick you, but I was just -- I mean, everybody is heard.
14

15 **MR. FISCHER:** Yes, sir. I appreciate you, and appreciate all of
16 you all. Thank you, all.
17

18 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Richard. Next up is Martha Guyas,
19 followed by Trenton Knepp.
20

21 **MS. MARTHA GUYAS:** Good morning, everybody. It's good to be back.
22 Martha Guyas, speaking on behalf of the American Sportfishing
23 Association. I just want to touch on a couple of quick things.
24

25 First, we are supportive of the final action on lane snapper as
26 discussed in the Reef Fish Committee yesterday. Regarding the
27 accountability measures for the private rec component of red
28 snapper, and that's the other thing I want to talk about, we're
29 certainly supportive of looking at how to make this work, so that
30 it is not overly complicated, but provide some flexibility to the
31 states as they're working through their seasons.
32

33 I thought the discussion yesterday was pretty good. I think post-
34 season adjustments make the most sense, based on what was fleshed
35 out. There have been some state overages over the past few years,
36 you know, but they've been relatively infrequent, and quite modest.
37 Overall, you know, the ACL hasn't been exceeded, and it's likely
38 that this isn't really a conservation concern, and so there should
39 be some flexibility there.
40

41 I think there probably are some guardrails that could provide this
42 flexibility while maintaining the accountability among states. I
43 think you could look at, and some of these were discussed
44 yesterday, you know, some kind of cap on the overage. Again, the
45 overages have been pretty modest, and so that shouldn't be a big
46 deal, and then perhaps a limitation on the number of consecutive
47 years a state could receive assistance after an overage, just to,
48 you know, make sure that this is not a thing that they're banking

1 on, but, overall, I think there's a way to make accommodations and
2 support continued discussions on accountability measure options.

3
4 The last thing I'll touch on is a thing I talked about last time
5 I was here, which was the DESCEND Act. Thanks to the council for
6 taking action last year to keep DESCEND regulations in place, and
7 certainly we would like to see those regulations actually go into
8 place now, because the sunset has expired, and so thank you.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Guyas. Do we have any questions?
11 Not seeing any, thank you, Martha. Next up, online, Trenton Knepp,
12 followed by Billy Archer.

13
14 **MR. TRENTON KNEPP:** Can you hear me now?

15
16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, Trenton, and go ahead.

17
18 **MR. KNEPP:** My name is Trenton Knepp. I'm a commercial rod-and-
19 reel dayboat fisherman. I do a little stone crab. My parents
20 have had longline boats since I was a kid.

21
22 On the red grouper, Alternative 2a. For me personally, Number 1
23 would probably give me more fish, but, to be completely fair to
24 all the fishermen, I would have to say 2 would be the more fair
25 way, even though it would hurt me more.

26
27 It's been a long time, and we've been asking for shares to give us
28 our turn, to give us our shot, and I just talked to another good
29 friend of mine, who has been a lifetime commercial fisherman, and
30 I asked him to tune in, and make an opinion, and he said, no, and
31 I'm finally just giving up. That's the second good friend of mine
32 that has given up in the last six months. We need our fair shot
33 at it. It's been way too long.

34
35 On the poundage, I didn't catch the beginning of the meeting, and
36 so I don't know if that was per day or per trip. Like if it is
37 per trip for dayboats, that's going to be a harder threshold to
38 get to. That should be taken in consideration for all the little
39 guys, like how much are you landing per year, and not per trip,
40 because, you know, a one-day trip isn't the same as a fourteen-
41 day trip.

42
43 The last trip I was out, I had ten recreational boats fishing
44 within eyesight. I could see a boat at three miles, two to three
45 miles, and so pressure is off the charts.

46
47 We live stream on TikTok every trip, and so, if you guys ever want
48 to check it out, Advanced Crab and Seafood, and see how we work,

1 how hard we grind for practically peanuts, and so I'll take any
2 questions, if anyone has got any, and I'll leave you at that, but
3 I just wanted to put my two-cents in.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Knepp. Do we have any questions?
6 We do. Mr. Osborne.
7

8 **MR. OSBORNE:** Yes, and I missed where you're from, Trenton.
9

10 **MR. KNEPP:** I fish out of Venice Jetties, Sarasota County, Florida.
11

12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** One more question. Mr. Strelcheck.
13

14 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Trenton, thanks for joining. You talked about
15 Amendment 63. I would be curious to hear your perspective on how
16 you see this benefiting you and other fishermen in the red grouper
17 fishery.
18

19 **MR. KNEPP:** I mean, now that we've had the red grouper increase,
20 the share prices are, of course, down for the first time, but like,
21 forever, all of our profits have been going to pay the
22 shareholders. It's just been -- You know, I go out -- On days I
23 work, I'm putting in seventeen-hour days, on average, and to come
24 home and to see all your profits go to a shareholder is so
25 disheartening. I work how hard, how long, and I've got nothing,
26 but they got it, and so this would give us a fair shot at actually
27 making, hopefully, a fair day's wages for a hard day's work.
28

29 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Knepp. Any other questions? Not
30 seeing any -- We do. Mr. Anson.
31

32 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Trenton, for calling in. There was some
33 discussion yesterday relative to share price and the benefit that
34 some of the things in Amendment 63 would do. Some of the prices
35 that were mentioned, it amounted -- You know, the share price
36 relative to the dockside price that you would get per pound, it
37 amounted to about 4 percent. Would you appreciate saving 4 percent
38 for your business?
39

40 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Trenton, we lost you.
41

42 **UNIDENTIFIED:** That's a yes, and I think he said roll tide, too.
43

44 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Trenton, we lost you there. We're going to move
45 on to Mr. Billy Archer, and next up is Joe Nash.
46

47 **MR. BILLY ARCHER:** Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the Gulf
48 Council. My name is Billy Archer. I'm a third-generation

1 fisherman from Panama City, Florida, and also a permit holder.
2 Thank you for allowing me to speak.

3
4 The idea of the states taking control of the federal fishery, red
5 snapper fishery, isn't just a bad idea, but it's a nightmare
6 scenario, both from the fish and my industry. The states' own
7 data proves this point. Longer seasons are producing smaller and
8 less fish. That's a fact. I can back that up with the public
9 testimony that you've heard every time you have a meeting.

10
11 I highly recommend this council stop and really listen to what the
12 fishermen are telling you. It's the truth, and we are currently
13 experiencing localized depletion that is Gulf-wide. That's a fact.
14 Since 2020, none of the states have been in agreement on allocation
15 data or season lengths. It appears that they are in it for
16 themselves.

17
18 With that being said, it is why I do not support my federal permits
19 being managed by separate governing bodies. The federal for-hire
20 data should be collected by one source, to maintain a low
21 uncertainty, and I fully support moving forward to a final action
22 with a new version of SEFHIER.

23
24 In 2015, Amendment 40 was passed and implemented. I was one of
25 the people that was behind it, and Mike Jennings behind me, and
26 Scott Hickman and Gary Jarvis, and several of us, in the beginning,
27 came up with the sector separation idea. That one action brought
28 stability to my industry. It's a hard -- It was a hard-fought
29 battle that has proven successful on every count.

30
31 The states taking over the federal red snapper fishery has the
32 ability to undermine all the provisions provided by Amendment 40.
33 I cannot support that. Amendment 40 protects the nation's access
34 to fisheries. I can support that. In closing, I stand in
35 solidarity with the majority of the fishermen that do not support
36 state managers take -- The state takeover of our federal fisheries.
37 Thank you.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Archer. Do I have any questions?

40
41 **MR. ARCHER:** Thank you all.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Not seeing any, next, up online, we'll go to Joe
44 Nash. Joe, are you with us?

45
46 **MR. JOE NASH:** Can you hear me now?

47
48 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, and we got you, Joe.

1
2 **MR. NASH:** Okay. All right. Thank you for letting us do this
3 remotely like that. We're out fishing right now. Joe Nash, and
4 I'm a charter captain. This is my thirty-ninth year.
5
6 I'm not really for the state taking over. I just feel that the
7 advantage -- They kind of took advantage of the seasons. They
8 went from a nine-day season, and now they're running all the way
9 through Christmas, and so just kind of the reporting system, I
10 guess, is not working.
11
12 I'm all for, you know, a good reporting system for the charter
13 fleet, one that you'll actually use the data, because, the last
14 couple ones, were doing it every day, and come to find out they
15 didn't use any of the data, but those are the only two things I'm
16 looking at.
17
18 Just, you know, the fishery, you know, and we always want to put
19 the blame on somebody, and, you know, from what Johnny Greene
20 brought up about the water temperature and stuff, that could be an
21 issue, because it seems to be Gulf-wide, and, you know, but we
22 just know that, six or seven years ago, going from a nine-day
23 recreational season all the way to now, you know, having pretty
24 much a full-blown season from Memorial weekend to Christmas, we
25 have noticed a very sharp decline in the size of snapper, and
26 quantity of snapper, and so I just want to stay separated and stay
27 federally regulated. That's about it.
28
29 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you, Mr. Nash. Do we have any questions? Mr.
30 Sanchez.
31
32 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you for calling in from offshore. I'm curious,
33 and are you using Starlink?
34
35 **MR. NASH:** No, and I'm actually back in the bay right now today,
36 and so it's a little too rough out there today.
37
38 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you.
39
40 **DR. BANKS:** Any more questions? Not seeing any, thank you, Mr.
41 Nash. We're going to come back in the room for Mr. Chris Niquet.
42
43 **MR. CHRIS NIQUET:** My name is Chris Niquet, Panama City, Florida.
44 Today, I'm going to talk to you about the proposed commercial red
45 grouper 30 percent over of any increase. Let's take scenarios.
46
47 As long as the TAC is increasing, it's a wonderful program. They
48 go out and they buy some boats, and maybe a nice house, and a car.

1 When the TAC goes back down, which it will, as we've seen in recent
2 years, that disappears. What happens to the payments on the car
3 and the boat in the house? See you later. You've created a class
4 of welfare people who continually say it ain't enough. It don't
5 matter if it's 30 percent or 50 percent or 60 percent. It ain't
6 enough.

7
8 However, I'm going to give you an alternate plan. Now that they've
9 got this deal with the farmers, and I'm going to call it a farmers
10 co-op, they can go out and contact a shareholder and say I want to
11 buy your shares. They agree on a price, and let's take it, in the
12 snapper, whatever the price is, and I don't care if it's \$30 or a
13 hundred, whatever they agree on.

14
15 The farmers co-op finances these things, and an insurance company
16 insures the payments will be made, and let me tell you how they're
17 going to be made. Let's just say the fellow has 10,000 pounds to
18 start with, and he makes the payments at \$3 per pound. Now, he's
19 already paying \$5 for allocation, and so he's going to make two
20 more dollars a pound. He takes that \$3 a pound and applies it to
21 the loan, to pay off his loan debt.

22
23 Now, after the \$3 is paid, he does whatever he wants to with the
24 money. It's his. That's great. You say, okay, if the TAC goes
25 up, he pays \$3 a pound. If it goes to 12,000 pounds, he pays
26 \$36,000. What happens if the TAC goes down? He pays \$3 a pound.
27 He can always meet his loan payments.

28
29 I can see that I'm getting close to the end here. If anybody on
30 this council sees anything wrong with this, let me know right now,
31 and I'll answer your questions. I'm a numbers man, and these
32 numbers will work. Thank you very much for your time.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Niquet. Do we have any questions?

35
36 **MR. NIQUET:** That's what I thought.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Next up is Greg Dyer, online, followed by Barrick
39 Burkett. Greg, are you with us?

40
41 **MR. GREG DYER:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Can you hear
42 me now?

43
44 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, sir. Go ahead.

45
46 **MR. DYER:** Good morning, guys. My name is Greg Dyer. I am the
47 operator of Pure Florida and Seaflight Fishing. I'm proud to be
48 here with you ladies and gentlemen. I want to start off by agreeing

1 with Scott earlier. Starlink is incredible, and the fact this is
2 even a conversation is outrageous. I consider Starlink a safety
3 asset, the same as I would a life vest or a beacon light onboard.
4

5 It's incredible. I have it on all three of my charter vessels, if
6 they're going farther off than nine miles, and it truly is an
7 incredible asset. I highly recommend if you're not already using
8 it. I also agree with many of the captains and operators before
9 me that the bigger issue that we're looking here is the
10 recreational side, but that's not what we're here to discuss this
11 morning.
12

13 Whether we're an operator in business or a solo captain, all of us
14 have two common goals. We want what's best for our business, and
15 we also want to protect our fisheries, and that's because our
16 livelihoods depend on it. Without these fisheries, our businesses
17 fall apart. This shouldn't be a state decision for red snapper,
18 due to the fact that we all have that same common goal. It's not
19 an individual state's goal. It's the entire Gulf Council's goal
20 to protect all of our fisheries for all of us.
21

22 Whether you're in southwest Florida like myself, down in Naples,
23 or the shores of Texas, we all want what's best for our waters in
24 this area, and I do not believe that leaving it for the state is
25 best.
26

27 I do think that our current season works, the 147 days. I do
28 think, again, that we need to, you know, put more emphasis on the
29 recreational side, but, again, that's not our decision while we're
30 here today, but, like I said, I do firmly believe in the season
31 that we have currently, and I'm sorry to not catch the name of who
32 was speaking before me, speaking of the data, and we also report
33 all of our fish every single day.
34

35 We've got three different type of permits on three vessels. We
36 report our information of catches every single day, but that
37 information is only good for those type of charter vessels. We're
38 not capturing what other recreational vessels or anyone else in
39 the area is catching, and so we can't really make these decisions
40 on what's truly being caught and everything, and that's all I have.
41

42 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Dyer. Do we have any questions?
43 We do. Captain Walker.
44

45 **MR. WALKER:** Thanks, Captain Dyer. I just want to say thanks for
46 calling in. I feel like we don't get a lot of charter boat input
47 from your part of southwest Florida down there, and so I appreciate
48 you contacting us and giving some input from that part of Florida.

1
2 **MR. DYER:** Absolutely. Proud to be here. Thank you, guys.
3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** One more. Mr. Strelcheck.
5
6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Captain Dyer, Andy Strelcheck here. I'm curious,
7 since we don't get a lot of input from southwest Florida, and what
8 are you seeing, in terms of changes in the red snapper fishery
9 down your way?
10
11 **MR. DYER:** I've seen -- Unlike many of you guys, we've seen a
12 pretty good increase in our red snapper fishing, but, due to the
13 fact is they are moving, you know, much farther offshore, we are
14 having to run a lot farther offshore to target red snapper,
15 especially ever since the effects of Hurricane Ian. They moved
16 much farther offshore since that, which is helping, due to the
17 fact that a lot of the recreational boaters will not go out that
18 far, and so we have seen an increase in red snapper. That's why
19 I was not surprised by the increase in the season consistently
20 over the past couple years.
21
22 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Dyer.
23
24 **MR. DYER:** Absolutely.
25
26 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other questions? All right. Not seeing any,
27 we'll move on. Next, in the room, Barrick Burkett, followed by
28 David Wilson online.
29
30 **MR. BARRICK BURKETT:** My name is B.J. Burkett. I'm a three-boat
31 owner out of Panama City, Florida. All three are dually-permitted.
32 I'm an IFQ holder. The first thing I want to talk about is one of
33 my boats does a lot of commercial fishing, and a long range, and
34 so we're from 300 miles south of Panama to 400 miles west.
35
36 The 400 miles west puts us off Louisiana, and I've had this boat
37 since 2014, and we are seeing a decline in red snapper across our
38 whole range, and so I heard people talk earlier saying that they're
39 booming off Louisiana. That's not the case. You may think they
40 are, but we're out there every day, and we're seeing it. Our fish
41 are smaller. We're having to stay longer to fill the boxes. That
42 is a decline of fish, and so don't stand up here and tell me that
43 it's better in one place than the other.
44
45 You're hearing from Texas, and they're declining over there.
46 They're declining in the eastern Gulf. Red snapper needs some
47 help. We just need you all to reduce the days, and it will get a
48 lot better.

1
2 Magically, in my opinion, we started the state management, what
3 four or five years ago, and, ever since then, that's when we've
4 started having this problem, and now you all come up and want to
5 add some more state management issues, and it's going to make it
6 worse.

7
8 There's no reason to pursue this any further. I shouldn't even be
9 standing here today to talk about it. It should have been squashed
10 the first time it was brought up. You have 6 percent of all the
11 permit holders that are even interested in this idea, and 94
12 percent that are not, and it is time to squash this and move on
13 from state management. It's not going to work. Our system we
14 have right now is working fairly good. If you all would reduce
15 our days just a little bit, it would come back.

16
17 I just -- I'm struggling with this state management. I'm seeing
18 it fail now, and you're wanting to add to it. I just -- It's a
19 bad move. I hope all the other states does not follow along with
20 Louisiana on this. This is not good, guys.

21
22 Somebody brought it up earlier that the federal guys -- This
23 council is supposed to be for the fishery, and, for years, it
24 really has been, and, the states, I just don't see that. They
25 want the recognition, and they want the money, and they want the
26 votes. Keep this a federal fishery, and that's all I got. Thank
27 you.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Burkett. Do we have any questions?
30 I'm not seeing any. We'll move on, online, to David Wilson, and
31 next up, in the room, will be Dale Woodruff. David, are you with
32 us?

33
34 **MR. DAVID WILSON:** Can you hear me?

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, and go ahead, Dave.

37
38 **MR. WILSON:** Yes, my name is David Wilson. Everybody calls me
39 Seth. I'm from Orange Beach, Alabama. I've got two charter
40 vessels, both multi-passengers, both permit holders. I don't
41 really agree with the state taking over Alabama, or, I mean, the
42 state taking over our permits, or having more power than our
43 permits. I would like to keep the federal permit.

44
45 Also, I think the management might be going about this the whole
46 wrong way. I heard a lot of people talking about targeting red
47 snapper, and that's what we do. When it's red snapper season, we
48 target red snapper. We change the way we fish completely in order

1 just to catch those, and I think, if everybody wants a longer
2 season, which I think a longer season is great, and, you know, it
3 makes people want to go fishing, but I think we should reduce the
4 number of fish that we can catch in order to where we don't just
5 target one species, and that we can just go out there and fish and
6 have a good time.

7
8 I have seen a decline in the size of the red snapper that we catch.
9 I understand that some people are better at this than others, but
10 we're having to work harder to get what we have. I would rather
11 it be easier for us and conserve what we do have. Does that make
12 any sense?

13
14 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for your comments, Mr. Wilson. We have
15 a question from Mr. Anson.

16
17 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Wilson, for calling in. I just
18 wanted to address your comment relative to state management and
19 the action that you claim is in the document relative to the states
20 taking over federal permits.

21
22 We're not talking about, at this time, taking over, or assuming,
23 federal permits within the states. Everyone who has a federal
24 reef fish permit would still retain their reef fish permit. They
25 would still have to renew their reef fish permit with National
26 Marine Fisheries Service each year, and so there would not be any
27 loss, or forfeiture, of your permit to the state under state
28 management. Thank you.

29
30 **MR. WILSON:** Well, I think the state management -- Just like the
31 fellow said before me, the guideboats have allowed so many people
32 to put more pressure on what was already a limited resource without
33 any accountability, and I think our charter boats -- Charter boats
34 and commercial guys are looked at a lot as being the enemy, which
35 we're really not. We care more about that resource than somebody
36 that doesn't get to use it all the time.

37
38 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I appreciate the comment, you know, but the
39 state charter boats, in my mind, have the same accountability as
40 federal charter boats right now. Now, certainly there's movement,
41 and has been movement, to try to implement the, you know, trip
42 reporting under SEFHIER, and that appears that it will go to
43 fruition here, this Version 2 of SEFHIER, but state guideboats are
44 reporting similar to the federal.

45
46 In fact, in some states, they're reporting actually more than the
47 federally-permitted vessels, and so I certainly appreciate your
48 comment relative to folks feeling like they're pitted against one

1 another, and that's not the intention of the council. It's just
2 part of the business as we try to develop management for our
3 fisheries, but thanks again for calling in.
4

5 **MR. WILSON:** Right, well, I don't -- There's not much
6 accountability going on, period. I mean, when we were reporting,
7 that was accountability. When the charter fishermen were
8 reporting, we had accountability. You knew what we were catching.
9 There's so many people going in and out right now, and so much
10 going on, and there is not much accountability. I don't see how
11 you can make an assessment of something that you don't know what's
12 going on, or that nobody knows what's going on.
13

14 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for your comments, Mr. Wilson. We don't
15 have any further questions. Next up, in the room, will be Mr.
16 Dale Woodruff, followed by Brandon Branch online.
17

18 **MR. DALE WOODRUFF:** Good morning. Dale Woodruff, president of the
19 Alabama Charter Fishing Association. I'm also -- I have a six-
20 pack boat and a multi-passenger, and both are federally-permitted,
21 and I'm here to speak on behalf of our association, of course, and
22 we make up the majority of the federally-permitted boats in the
23 State of Alabama, and we don't want state management.
24

25 You know, it seems like right now, 80 percent of the individuals
26 in the United States, our voters, want voter ID passed. 80 percent
27 votes yes, and our elected politicians won't listen to that, and
28 get it passed, and so now -- I mean, I'm like why would an appointee
29 of an appointee listen? I mean, where's that accountability?
30

31 When you have a majority of a group of individuals that have
32 financially made a statement, by going in this type of business,
33 a federally-permitted boat, federally-permitted vessels, fishing
34 in the Gulf of America, you know, and I've been doing this since
35 1999 as a boat owner, and it just seems like, when you have a
36 majority saying no, and, you know, if those guys want to be part
37 of whatever is happening in the state, they can take those permits
38 off their boat.
39

40 They can fish their four fish per person. They can have however
41 many days they want, and they can go over 80,000 pounds, or
42 whatever they do every year, you know, and where's that
43 accountability? If you go over, it needs to be taken off, two or
44 three times.
45

46 I heard somebody, earlier, say that nobody in the western Gulf
47 wants federal management. I've been to these meetings. I've heard
48 more people in the western Gulf don't want federally-permitted,

1 or, I mean, don't want the states to take over them than for the
2 state to take over, and so, again, there's another politician, or
3 another appointed individual, that stands right up here and lies
4 out of their mouth again, and so, I mean, at what point do we
5 listen to us? No is no. No is no.

6
7 Of course, I heard, just a second ago, that of course the charter-
8 for-hire right now can't report, because there's no reporting
9 system. The states, yes, you have a system, and you're reporting,
10 but, the charter-for-hire, we have nothing. We're sitting here
11 again with nothing. We had something, but now we have nothing,
12 and so, of course, the takeover is what it is.

13
14 Sorry I got on this little bit of a tangent, but it's every day I
15 wake up, and I think about this, but, yes, we need accountability.
16 We need SEFHIER to go. We need to report, and, if the states want
17 this so bad, go start the amberjack. You go work on that. You go
18 work on everything else, and just leave us alone. The majority,
19 and hear that? The majority says leave it alone.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Woodruff. Do we have any
22 questions? Mr. Strelcheck.

23
24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Dale, for being here. Two questions.
25 I'm curious how many federal permit holders are in your
26 association.

27
28 **MR. WOODRUFF:** Right now, we're sitting at about fifty, and I also
29 represent state guideboats, too. I don't just represent federal
30 boat, and the state guideboats also -- They don't -- They really
31 don't care. They don't -- It don't matter to them, and so, you
32 know, when we have our meetings, I ask, and nobody ever comes up
33 and says, hey, I want this.

34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Then a follow-on question, and so there's a --
36 I'll call it an opt-in and opt-out provision, right, where some
37 states could opt into this, versus, you know, opting out of it,
38 and what are your thoughts in terms of the impacts and implications
39 of that? Let's say Alabama opted out, and the other states opted
40 in, and what do you see as the issue or concerns there?

41
42 **MR. WOODRUFF:** Again, it all boils down to -- I mean, we have to
43 make business decisions, and so what's the bottom line? Where's
44 the -- What are we going to get if we opt-in or opt-out? If we
45 have a couple of states that want to do this, and the other three
46 states don't, I mean, I don't know. Tell us, but, again, the opt-
47 in and opt-out, they can opt-in and opt-out right now by dropping
48 those federal permits, and they can be a state boat, if that's

1 what they want. You know, they don't have to be in this industry,
2 in the federal for-hire. I made that business decision years ago,
3 and now I'm sitting here looking like here we go again.

4
5 The fish are getting smaller. The age class is getting less. Just
6 wait until we get another administration in, and guess what's going
7 to happen, and a rogue administration at that.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dale. One more question from Mr.
10 Sanchez.

11
12 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Hello, Dale. It's good to see you again. I've been
13 to many of your social functions during council meetings when we've
14 been in Alabama, as part of the association, and thank you for
15 that, with Gary putting them on, too.

16
17 I wanted to ask you, since you're really dialed into the charter
18 federal for-hire fleet in Alabama, does the majority of your
19 members in your association, do they want to go to state
20 management?

21
22 **MR. WOODRUFF:** No, with a capital N and capital O, and I just went
23 to our state commission meeting not too long ago, or whatever we
24 call it, and I spoke on behalf of the Alabama Charter Fishing
25 Association again, and we said we do not want this.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dale. Any other questions? Not seeing
28 any, thank you, Mr. Woodruff. Next, online, is Brandon Branch,
29 and he'll be followed by Ashford Rosenberg.

30
31 **MR. BRANDON BRANCH:** Can you hear me?

32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, Brandon. Go ahead.

34
35 **MR. BRANCH:** Good afternoon, guys. I am Captain Brandon Branch,
36 a federally-permitted vessel here in Crystal River, Florida,
37 central Florida, and I'm speaking on behalf of seven charter boats
38 out of Crystal River here at Shrimp Landing Marina.

39
40 I strongly oppose any effort to transfer red snapper management
41 from federal oversight to state control. I feel like we're in a
42 good spot right now. Even if we had a little bit shorter season,
43 I would be okay with it.

44
45 Red snapper is a Gulf-wide resource, and not a state-by-state
46 commodity. It requires unified management, fairness, and
47 sustainability, and not a short-term political gain that the state
48 could gain out of it. I think we really should push to get this

1 SEFHIER program off the ground as fast as possible, as that is our
2 only way to really show what we're catching.

3
4 I have seen a decline in snapper here in Crystal River. We're
5 having to go further and further every year, every boat, to catch
6 limits of snapper. Years ago, we were fishing fifty to seventy
7 miles, and now we're fishing 120 miles, just to catch a limit of
8 snapper.

9
10 The state management, obviously, is giving and giving and giving,
11 and eventually they're going to have to take, or we're going to be
12 in a bad spot, like we were before. That's really all I have to
13 say, and I look forward to hopefully keeping it federally
14 oversighted, and, if you all have any questions, I would be happy
15 to answer them.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Brandon. Do we have any questions?
18 Dr. Allen.

19
20 **DR. ALLEN:** Hey, Brandon. This is Mike Allen. Thank you for being
21 here today. I'm curious about your observations on gag grouper
22 and what you think you've been seeing the last couple years.

23
24 **MR. BRANCH:** Our gag grouper fishery here in Crystal River, I
25 understand it's a statewide situation, but our gag fishery is the
26 best I've ever seen it. I'm a fourth-generation Crystal River
27 native. My grandparents and great-grandparents have grouper
28 fished in Crystal River, and it's some of the best my dad has ever
29 seen it, and the numbers are just, I mean, plentiful.

30
31 The numbers of fish we're catching every day is just unreal, to be
32 honest with you, and I really think that we can look at different
33 management situations on gag grouper. I think the gag grouper
34 fishery is a lot better than the snapper fishery here, to be honest
35 with you, from what we're seeing even out deep. Just the numbers
36 of gag grouper is really, really strong right now.

37
38 **DR. ALLEN:** Okay. Thank you for sharing that.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Brandon. Do we have any other
41 questions? Not seeing any, we'll move on in the room to Ms.
42 Ashford Rosenberg, followed by Brett Russell online.

43
44 **MS. ASHFORD ROSENBERG:** Good afternoon, council, or I guess it's
45 morning. Sorry. I'm used to public comment being in the
46 afternoon. Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to
47 speak. I'm Ashford Rosenberg. I'm the Director of Regional Policy
48 and Special Projects with the Gulf of America Reef Fish

1 Shareholders Alliance.

2

3 This morning, my comments are going to be focused on Amendment 63.
4 While we acknowledge that there are challenges for next-generation
5 fishermen, we have concerns that Amendment 63 is being rushed
6 without the opportunity for proper deliberation. It has no current
7 methods identified for how the Gulf Council and NOAA will determine
8 if the pilot program is successful.

9

10 While we can debate the benefits and drawbacks of IFQ programs
11 until we're blue in the face, one of the goals of the IFQ program
12 is to give fishermen the opportunity to build stability in their
13 livelihoods and invest in themselves through share or allocation
14 purchase.

15

16 Both business models are viable, and demonizing one, while
17 glorifying the other, is an oversimplistic view of the commercial
18 fishing industry. I also want to remind the Gulf Council that,
19 just four years ago, the quota for red grouper was reduced through
20 Amendment 53. Redistributing and reallocating quota within the
21 commercial sector before fishermen have been given the opportunity
22 to recover what they lost as unfair and inequitable. It also
23 further destabilizes the IFQ program, by devaluing it and
24 disincentivizing fishermen to invest in shares due to regulatory-
25 induced uncertainty.

26

27 To that end, we have two recommendations on Amendment 63. The
28 first is do not move forward with a public hearing draft of
29 Amendment 63 at this meeting. Instead, present a draft amendment
30 to the Ad Hoc IFQ AP.

31

32 To approve the public hearing draft here goes outside of the
33 regular council process for development. An IFQ AP is a diverse
34 group of people who have multiple different business models and
35 experiences in the fishery. They are the experts that you should
36 be relying on to help form this amendment.

37

38 The second is to add the new Alternative 4 in Action 1, which would
39 set aside a portion of the quota above 4.28 million pounds, instead
40 of seeding the quota pool with a percentage of the difference
41 between 2.79 and 4.28. The definition of a pilot is serving as an
42 experimental or trial undertaking prior to full-scale operation or
43 use. The current alternatives exceed the amount appropriate for
44 a pilot, and the new alternative would be more appropriate for a
45 small-scale pilot.

46

47 More generally, the Gulf Council must identify in the document
48 metrics of success for the pilot. How has it reduced discards?

1 How has it improved economic efficiency? Who is responsible for
2 evaluating those metrics? How often will the Gulf Council be
3 provided an update on those metrics? How will the Gulf Council
4 analyze the impacts of the pilot independent from the organic
5 changes that are going to occur with the 53 percent quota increase
6 fishery-wide?
7

8 We also recommend that, for any considerations of set-asides, that
9 the Gulf Council only use allocation for shares reclaimed by NMFS.
10 Currently, NMFS has about, if my math is correct, about 6,000
11 pounds of red grouper allocation from the shares reclaimed in
12 Amendment 36A, and, within 59A and B, there will be a mechanism
13 for NMFS to reclaim shares in the future for accounts that fall
14 out of compliance. Using that allocation for something to test
15 new ideas is a more appropriate source than taking from fishermen
16 who have currently invested in the fishery, and that's all I have
17 today. Thank you.
18

19 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Rosenberg. Do we have any
20 questions? Not seeing any, Ashford, thank you.
21

22 **MS. ROSENBERG:** Thank you.
23

24 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Next, online, is Brett Russell, and followed by
25 Jim Green in the room. Brett, are you with us? All right. We're
26 going to move on to Captain Green in the room, and we'll come back
27 to Brett.
28

29 **MR. JIM GREEN:** Good morning. How are you all doing? Captain Jim
30 Green, Destin Charterboat Association and Charter Fishermen's
31 Association President.
32

33 Yesterday was very disheartening and a staunch reminder as to why
34 our industry does not need to be part of the dichotomy of state
35 politics. Over a decade ago, in this exact spot, we were liberated
36 from the grip of state politics, and that was with the passage of
37 Amendment 40.
38

39 Our industry worked extremely hard to secure our angler's
40 historical access, and, in the end, we took a one-third percent
41 reduction in access to secure it. We did that because the state's
42 nimbleness is not what we wanted. We wanted a stable, secure
43 process found within the MSA. We do not want to play the game of
44 governor roulette, where every few years our livelihood is affected
45 directly by a new administration, with new views on fishery
46 management practices, or is beholden to the next election, which
47 is exactly why we wanted out of Amendment 50.
48

1 During the proposal of this document, there was a lack of
2 articulation on the purpose and need, and now, in the draft
3 document, it states that the purpose and need is to prevent
4 overfishing and provide fair and equitable access and, to the
5 extent possible, to minimize adverse impacts.

6
7 Amendment 40, as designed, has provided all of that for our anglers
8 and coastal communities. Our industry has diligently requested
9 cautious management, to the point our subsector has not overfished
10 and has provided fair and equitable access and minimized adverse
11 economic impacts.

12
13 This action, whether intended or not, is trying to tear apart the
14 most effective and efficient management plan our anglers and
15 industry has ever had. To take a Gulf-wide permit and break it up
16 into multiple governing bodies and data programs, you inject such
17 an elevated level of uncertainty that effectiveness will be
18 severely degraded.

19
20 This was articulated as a desire to tailor seasons and bag limits,
21 but that will inherently create a situation of inequity, which may
22 face a legal challenge, but we saw, blatantly yesterday, that this
23 has to do with fish allocations, which means soon a biomass
24 component will come up, but that also will create an inequity when
25 used as a metric for management.

26
27 This is a Gulf stock. The fish found in the EEZ off a certain
28 state is not that state's fish. It's the nation's resource. This
29 is a Gulf permit, and, if you break it apart and try to subject
30 permit holders to geographic differences in management without
31 proper validation, it will adversely affect the equality and value
32 of these permits, and this is a flagrant violation of National
33 Standard 8.

34
35 Let us get SEFHIER back up and running. Let us protect this
36 industry and its anglers' access, and, once we have validated data,
37 then, with certainty, we can look at the desired concerns and needs
38 of fleets and states and evaluate what can feasibly be done.

39
40 This was one of the major reasons we wanted SEFHIER, was to
41 evaluate, with certainty, the needs of our industry, but to
42 fracture the effectiveness of a working management plan, and do so
43 with this haggling of allocations, is messy and uncertain and
44 unnecessary. We request this action be tabled indefinitely until
45 we get all the permits under one validated data collection program
46 where there is no loss of effective management.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Green.

1
2 **MR. GREEN:** Thank you.
3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Do we have any questions? Mr. Strelcheck.
5
6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Captain Green, thanks for being here. As
7 president of CFA, how many federal permit holders do you have in
8 your association?
9
10 **MR. GREEN:** CFA kind of broadly represents Galveston and Alabama
11 and some associations in Florida. It's right around 400 or 500
12 permits, give or take. DCBA right now has seventy-nine members,
13 with eighty-six permits it represents.
14
15 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So no membership from Mississippi or Louisiana
16 then?
17
18 **MR. GREEN:** We have a few from Mississippi. We have one board
19 member that's a for-hire fishermen, a federally-permitted for-hire
20 fishermen in Louisiana right now. Yes, sir. Thank you.
21
22 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other questions for Captain Green? Thank
23 you, Jim. Okay. We'll go back online and try Brett Russell, and
24 is Emily going to assist with this?
25
26 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Yes, and I've got Brett on the phone.
27 Brett, you can go ahead.
28
29 **MR. BRETT RUSSELL:** Hi, guys, and sorry about that. Thank you all
30 for letting us comment today virtually. My name is Brett Russell.
31 I'm from Orange Beach, Alabama, owner-operator of four federally-
32 permitted charter boats. I'm just here today to tell you guys
33 that I, just like most of us here in Orange Beach, are against
34 state management, and I'm also for a SEFHIER program.
35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Brett. Do we have any questions? We
37 do. Mr. Anson.
38
39 **MR. ANSON:** Captain Russell, thanks for calling in. Can you be a
40 little more descriptive as to why you're not supportive of state
41 management?
42
43 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Brett, they want to know why you are not
44 supportive of state management.
45
46 **MR. RUSSELL:** I'm not in support of state management just because
47 we've kind of seen where the state has gone with the fishery, and,
48 to be quite frank with you, we don't really trust the state.

1 That's pretty much what it boils down to.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Anson.

4

5 **MR. ANSON:** I don't want to belabor that point, but why don't you
6 trust the state? Is there any specific reason for that?

7

8 **MR. RUSSELL:** Specifically, I can go back to what you said earlier
9 about accountability and everyone reporting and all that stuff.
10 I'm pretty sure the state's reporting was thirty-some-odd percent
11 last year. I'm not really sure if you would call that real
12 accountability or not, but, I mean, that's just one of the things.

13

14 **MR. ANSON:** All right. Thank you, and my comment was there was
15 more reporting. I didn't mention anything about, you know, the
16 statistical robustness of the reporting. It's just that generally
17 state boats are reporting more. Thank you.

18

19 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Brett. No other questions. Next up
20 in the room, Anthony Coletti, and then we'll go to Kary Zarem,
21 online.

22

23 **MR. ANTHONY COLLETTI:** Good morning, council. Anthony Coletti,
24 owner-operator, commercial fisherman of eighteen years, primarily
25 out of Leeville, Louisiana, at the time. I've got a lot to talk
26 about here today.

27

28 The set-asides with the red grouper, I know I'm not working in
29 that region right now, but, when I purchased my boat, I purchased
30 a large chunk of red grouper with it, with intentions to go catch
31 them someday. I've paid for every pound of red grouper that I
32 bought with my boat. I don't agree with the set-asides one bit,
33 because you'll be creating instability in fishermen's business
34 when you take it away.

35

36 With that being said, I'm fully supportive of leaving the IFQ
37 system the way it is at the time. There's no reason to change it.
38 It's been effective for myself and several others. You can work
39 your way into the industry, and build your business to be stable,
40 and that, to me, is more important than a small set-aside, which
41 it's such a small amount of fish you can't survive on it anyway.

42

43 Moving forward from that, I've done a lot of king mackerel fishing
44 here this year. The king mackerel are doing well. I would like
45 to see us get some of our amberjacks back at some point.

46

47 You know, another thing I've been hearing a lot of is percentages.
48 If you make certain shareholders catch a percentage of their fish,

1 there's going to be a lot of unintended consequences. These people
2 are going to have to partner up, buy boats, and you're going to
3 take a lot of allocation off the open market. Then you're going
4 to have even more people upset that they can't go to work, and so
5 I strongly suggest just leave it alone.

6
7 I've been up to D.C. We've been working on getting funding for
8 the fishermen. I've been a small part of that process. There's
9 no reason to change anything at this time. Let's slow down and
10 look at everything from every angle before we make drastic changes.
11 Even with, you know, with this whole red grouper increase, I have
12 friends that are struggling to catch fish. I don't understand why
13 we did such an increase at the time.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Anthony. Do we have any questions?
16 Mr. Schieble.

17
18 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I've got two questions I'll hit you with.
19 You mentioned amberjack briefly, and you said you're doing well
20 with amberjack. Did the early season closure commercially last
21 year impact you at all, and how are you doing with catching the
22 seven-fish limit that's currently in place? Is that really
23 impacting your ability to harvest amberjack? The second question
24 is, can you speak to the red grouper set-aside with regards to the
25 share price?

26
27 **MR. COLLETTI:** The red grouper, and I'm going to start with the
28 red grouper. The allocation is so cheap right now, and the shares
29 are so cheap, that nobody should have any complaints leasing the
30 fish or purchasing shares to invest in themselves. If they don't
31 want to invest in their business, nobody is twisting their arm to
32 stay in the industry.

33
34 Back to the amberjacks, seven fish is not -- I don't target them
35 anymore. I used to target them. We used to have 2,000-pound trip
36 limits. We went to 1,500 pounds, 1,000 pounds, 500 pounds, or did
37 we skip the 500 pounds? I can't remember now, or did we just go
38 right to seven fish? It's not worth running a boat for seven fish,
39 and there is a lot of amberjacks west of the river.

40
41 I know there's a lot of different thoughts east of the river and
42 on the Florida coast, with amberjacks, but, west of the river, I
43 have friends who longline, other bandit fishermen that couldn't
44 make it here today, and, I mean, you have a 10,000-pound ball of
45 amberjacks at the back of the boat when you're beeliner fishing,
46 and you can't do nothing about it.

47
48 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Captain. I appreciate it.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other questions for Anthony? Not seeing any,
3 thank you for being here.
4
5 **MR. COLLETTI:** Thank you.
6
7 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Next up, online, Kary Zarem. Kary, are you with
8 us?
9
10 **MR. KARY ZAREM:** Can you hear me now?
11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, and we've got you. Go ahead.
13
14 **MR. ZAREM:** My name is Captain Kary Zarem. I'm out of Manatee
15 County, Florida. I run a dayboat, and I also have a bandit boat
16 out of St. Pete. I'm new to the fishing industry. I've only been
17 in commercial fishing about four years, and so I'm here just as
18 much to learn today as I am to voice my opinion. I'm also a spear
19 fisherman, and so I have some differences of opinions than a lot
20 of guys.
21
22 I think, you know, the fish have grown a lot smarter over the
23 years. I see a lot more gags than people claim that there to be.
24 The same thing with the amberjacks. I have no problem getting my
25 trip limit every single time I'm out there, because I'm spearing
26 them. I mean, I think there's healthy populations with the
27 amberjack.
28
29 As far as red snapper go, I mean, I definitely think there's a
30 decrease in the north northern part of the Gulf. I think it has
31 a lot more to do with water quality than anything else. I don't
32 seem to have a problem catching red snapper in our general area.
33 We do have to go further out for them than we used to, because
34 there's so many rec guys in Florida now that, I mean, if you're
35 not pushing out past 150 foot, you're just wasting your time, and
36 so I think there definitely needs to be more accountability on the
37 recreational side. I think the numbers are definitely skewed on
38 recreational side.
39
40 I really appreciate, you know, you guys giving us the opportunity
41 to speak, because I think it does make a difference for you to
42 hear from us that are on the water seeing it every day.
43
44 The only thing I would say in addition to that would be I'm
45 definitely against state management of the recreation. I think
46 the federal government is doing a fine job of it, and I think that,
47 you know, the state management would be used for political reasons,
48 to get votes.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Kary. Do we have any questions? Mr.
3 Strelcheck has one.

4
5 **MR. ZAREM:** Yes, sir.

6
7 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Kary, for being online. A question for
8 you. You mentioned you have a bandit boat in St. Pete. Do you
9 fish for red grouper? Do you lease red grouper, or have shares,
10 and do you have any opinion with regard to Amendment 63 that we're
11 working on?

12
13 **MR. ZAREM:** I mean, I'm not -- Being new, and just trying to adapt
14 to all the amendments, I can't speak about the amendment. I have
15 started purchasing red grouper shares. That is our primary target.
16 It's next to impossible for me to obtain, or even lease, red
17 snapper shares at the moment, I mean, and they're priced out of
18 the ballpark, to where I can even make money, and I have my
19 wholesale dealer's license, and so I just intentionally don't even
20 target them anymore, because -- As much as I would like to catch
21 them, because there's an abundance of them, and I could have no
22 problem putting a thousand pounds on the boat if I wanted in a
23 day, or 500 minimum, easily.

24
25 I just I can't get a hold of the allocation, and I can't afford to
26 buy the shares. It's impossible for me to buy the shares, but
27 I've been able to, fortunately, get my hands on red grouper shares,
28 and will continue to purchase them, because they're affordable. I
29 guess that's it.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Kary. Any other questions? Not seeing
32 any, next up is Mr. Larry Lemieux.

33
34 **MR. LARRY LEMIEUX:** Good afternoon. My name is Larry Lemieux.
35 I'm a charter fisherman, federally-permitted, out of Captain
36 Anderson's Marina in Panama City Beach, Florida. I'm a part of
37 the Panama City Boatmen's Association, where we have approximately
38 eighty federally-permitted boats that run out of our three or four
39 marinas here where I work out of.

40
41 First of all, I have to say I'm definitely against state
42 management. You guys have worked for twenty-plus years to get us
43 where we're at. When I started, and I started in 1996, it 180
44 days, four fish a person. All right, and so we got down to a nine-
45 day season in about the middle of my career, and now we're back up
46 to a 148-day season, with two fish per person, and I'm going to
47 say, just like everybody else before me, and I definitely say,
48 whether it be localized, we're in a decline with snapper.

1
2 We haven't caught our TAC. We've been standing up here saying
3 this for more than three years now, that, you know, hey -- Whether
4 it be the gentleman, Mr. Green, before me with the pollution, and
5 definitely effort, and I think there's more than one attribute
6 causing this.

7
8 Definitely, you know, there's more people on the water. You know,
9 the guideboat situation in the State of Florida, where I'm from,
10 has exploded in the last five years. It has almost tripled. You
11 know, we had the SEFHIER program holding us accountable. That
12 way, we knew what we were catching, and we could prove to you guys
13 on paper what we're catching. There is no way that you guys, and
14 I know it's a state thing with guideboats, can manage. There's no
15 accountability. There's no SEFHIER program, and there's no federal
16 permit.

17
18 If my memory is right, about 1,478 when I started this in 1996,
19 okay, and so we're down to about 1,300. We're losing 1 to 2
20 percent of the federally-permitted boats a year, due to death or
21 what have you, and so, until we can get a handle on the state
22 guideboats in all areas, especially in the Panhandle, and I know
23 further south -- Like I just heard a gentleman from south Florida
24 say that there's plenty of snappers.

25
26 Well, guideboats in south Florida ain't catching snappers, because
27 they've got to go outside of nine miles, but in the Panhandle and
28 to the west, like Alabama and Mississippi, they can catch a snapper
29 inside of nine miles. Louisiana, you only get three miles, but
30 they can still catch some snappers. You know, there's got to be
31 some accountability for the guideboats, you know, moving forward.

32
33 I know, you know, we're federal, and let's stay federal. Let's
34 keep you guys in business, and keep us in business. We definitely
35 need, you know, stability in our businesses, like the dates. We
36 need to be able to tell our customers -- You know, I thought we
37 were catching snappers on May 23 this year, but we didn't, and so
38 we had to back up and punt the ball within seven days, because we
39 didn't get them until June 1, and so, you know, that's okay. Seven
40 days, and we changed it, but I do think, you know, moving forward,
41 definitely some kind of moratorium on some permits for the state.

42
43 You know, you keep our federal the way it is. You guys have done
44 a good job. You know, snapper, you know, we're going to have to
45 look at it a little bit closer. You know, like Mr. Greene said,
46 and I think this pollution thing -- I was a part of a cobia thing
47 two weeks ago in Destin, Florida. We've definitely got some
48 problems with those guys.

1
2 You know, there's hardly no cobias anywhere. There's no annual
3 migration. You know, my personal belief, and I've been out there
4 about 200 days a year for the last twenty-nine years, and I think
5 pollution and water quality needs to be looked at. You know,
6 environmental has got to be definitely, definitely involved as
7 well. I appreciate you guys' time, and thank you all.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Larry. Do we have any questions? Not
10 seeing any, next up, we'll move, online, to Jason Karlau. Jason,
11 are you with us?
12

13 **MS. ROY:** You'll need to unmute your line to speak.
14

15 **MR. JASON KARLAU:** Hello. Can you hear me?
16

17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, Jason. Go ahead.
18

19 **MR. KARLAU:** Good morning, everyone. I'm a commercial fisherman.
20 I've been doing it for thirty years. I'm a permit holder, owner-
21 operator, just getting into the business. As we know, there's
22 more people getting out of the business than getting into it.
23

24 So, in this household, we would like to elect Action 3, Option
25 Bravo 1. Allocating shares to active hands-on fishermen will, I
26 believe, will help reduce, you know, the corporations, investment
27 groups, and allow owner-operators a fighting chance to succeed and
28 manage our fishery in a more personable, sustainable manner.
29

30 As far as benefiting the fishery and environment, I believe it
31 will afford us site-specific opportunity to manage the biomasses
32 of fish in a more sustainable rate, resulting in healthier
33 populations.
34

35 As far as my assessment on the fish, the snapper are -- You've got
36 to travel a little further, and they're a little smaller, but
37 they're still there. The red grouper are very healthy, and, as
38 far as the gags go, I believe they're out of control. I mean,
39 we're going through thousands of pounds of them just to get to the
40 snapper and the grouper. We just don't have the quota to deal
41 with them, really.
42

43 As far as charters, I mean, charter guys have the potential to run
44 two and three charters a day, and so, I mean, even if you gave
45 them, you know, ten days a year, they could still fit twenty or
46 thirty charters in that ten days, and so you've got to take that
47 into account as well.
48

1 What I'm not seeing, or hearing, a lot of is recreational
2 reporting, and so, you know, with Starlink now, and I'm not
3 familiar with the SEFHIER program and all that, but that could be
4 something that could, you know, potentially help out in the future.

5
6 Earlier, Captain Scott Hickman mentioned the future stock
7 assessments might not look so rosy, and I would have to agree with
8 him, due to the fact I'm close blood related to someone who is in
9 the collection and processing of data for the government sector,
10 who has informed me, for the past seventeen years, they've been
11 told to guess the age of the fish, since they don't even possess
12 the proper tool to age the otoliths of the fish, and there's still
13 file cabinets from 1985 that they're still digitizing, which tells
14 me that most, or all, the data collected could be inconclusive,
15 you know, and some of this on-time reporting, with these new
16 programs, and especially with Starlink, I think should be something
17 to be looked at.

18
19 With that being said, the owner-operators and the hands-on
20 fishermen are the only true source that, you know, know the data,
21 and know exactly what's going on out there, and it's what should
22 be considered, in my opinion.

23
24 You know, even something as simple as, I don't know, and, in my
25 mind, it may sound stupid, but, you know, we have hatcheries for
26 salmon out west, and we have hatcheries for, you know, snook and
27 trout, redfish for inshore, you know, and maybe that could be
28 something that could be looked into, you know, farming little
29 hatchlings and releasing them in certain areas offshore, but, other
30 than that, that's all I got. I appreciate the opportunity to
31 speak.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Jason. Do we have any questions? Not
34 seeing any questions, thank you, Jason. Next up, Gabby Bearden.

35
36 **MS. GABRIELLE BEARDEN:** My name is Gabrielle Bearden. I'm a
37 deckhand in Orange Beach, Alabama. My hands have baited and de-
38 hooked nine seasons worth of fish, a headboat with fifty-five
39 people twice a day, a six-pack, a multi-passenger vessel that
40 carries one mate, being me, and sixteen head.

41
42 I work in a marina with over fifty boats, where I was able to walk
43 across thirty different charter boats being a fill-in deckhand,
44 and now I currently reside on a sixty-five-foot custom charter
45 yacht that does multi-day overnight trips, catching everything
46 under the sun. With that being said, I'm a fisherman, and I feel
47 like I've climbed the ladder on the boat, and I'm standing in the
48 wheelhouse, and I have something to say to the guy driving, being

1 you all.

2
3 Deckhands are the backbones of our industry. Roughly about 80
4 percent of our fleet, every single fish that has been boxed or
5 killed in the last ten years has been by a deckhand who is in their
6 early twenties.

7
8 Personally, in Orange Beach, Alabama, I count, in just two of our
9 marinas, there are over fifty charter boats, not including state
10 or inshore guides. Of those fifty boats, kids between the ages of
11 twenty and thirty-five, I count fifty deckhands, with eleven of
12 them holding 100 tons.

13
14 In addition to that, two deckhands that have made the dumbest
15 financial decisions of their lives and bought six-pack vessels.
16 In addition to that, four deckhands that are running operations
17 that all happen to be multi-passenger vessels. In the last ten
18 years, I've had the privilege of digging next to every single one
19 of these kids. Of the fifty deckhands, I count seventeen kids,
20 seventeen future captains. That's 34 percent of crew, in two
21 marinas alone, are getting in that wheelhouse.

22
23 In today's world, us kids are battling something that our
24 respective elders didn't have to, the economy, social media,
25 fishing pressure, and more fishing politics. I look around this
26 room, and it scares me a little bit. In ten years, I think there
27 will be faces sitting in those seats you've never met before, but,
28 right now, those kids are sitting on the edge of their seats
29 waiting for a weather window, because that's what's going to pay
30 for gas next week to get to the boat.

31
32 In captain's school, they teach you it doesn't matter until it
33 matters. As I sit in the back of the room, I feel like my comment
34 matters on Amendment 64, delegation of the federal for-hire
35 management authority for red snapper to the Gulf states. My
36 comment is that it is very concerning for the future, but I'm
37 anxious to see what comes of the council's decision.

38
39 I would also like to take a moment and thank everyone involved in
40 the Marine Resource Education Program. I'm a graduate of the MREP,
41 of the 2026 class that was held in St. Pete a few weeks ago.

42
43 Because of that class, I feel like I have the knowledge to
44 understand, and the validation that my word and involvement
45 matters, and so thank you to everyone who put that class together
46 and to who takes the time to be a part of it. I'm standing here
47 today because of MREP. Thank you.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Gabby. Do we have any questions for
2 Gabby? We do. Captain Frady.
3
4 **MR. FRADY:** Gabby, as us old-timers now sit back and watch young
5 rock stars like yourself enter this fishery and interject your
6 energy and your professionalism and your willingness to learn,
7 change, adapt, overcome, and all these things, and you are the
8 future of this industry, people just like you are, and it is such
9 a relief to hear something fresh and new. Thank you so much for
10 your involvement in this council, the MREP class, and we look
11 forward to many more years of hearing you and seeing you on the
12 water. Thank you, Gabby.
13
14 **MS. BEARDON:** Yes, sir. Thank you.
15
16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We have one more question. Dr. Sweetman.
17
18 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Not even a question. That was an impressive three
19 minutes, Gabby. This is the first time I think I've seen you at
20 one of these meetings here, but I will certainly remember you.
21 That was -- I know this process can be discouraging at times, but
22 keep at it, and keep coming to these meetings, and we certainly
23 want to hear from you, and so just thank you for what you said
24 today.
25
26 **MS. BEARDEN:** Yes, sir. Thank you.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Do we have any other questions or comments for
29 Gabby? Not seeing any, congratulations on MREP.
30
31 **MS. BEARDEN:** Yes, sir. Thank you.
32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Next up, online, Brian Lewis.
34
35 **MR. BRIAN LEWIS:** Good morning, you all. Do you hear me?
36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Brian, we've got you. Go ahead.
38
39 **MR. LEWIS:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity
40 to speak. You know, I hear a lot about the charter guys and what
41 they're about ready to face with the state management, and I'm not
42 a -- I'm a commercial fishing vessel, IFQ owner, and I really enjoy
43 the council process that I'm able to utilize for our fishery, and
44 I think a lot of these guys, that worked really hard for sector
45 separation and everything they did with their fishery, is feeling
46 like it's now very vulnerable for everything they worked for, okay?
47
48 With that said, you know, the question really comes down to are

1 they going to be able to have this same process with state
2 management, and that's something that I haven't heard, you know,
3 and pardon my ignorance, and maybe I missed it, but I think that's
4 something that they need to be reassured about, all right, because
5 that's going to be a big problem. All right, enough said.

6
7 I want to talk about -- I am on the Ad Hoc IFQ Advisory Panel,
8 okay, to do with these amendments that are before us with the quota
9 pool for red grouper. I'm going to ask that anything, or any
10 alternatives, to be selected be -- Wait until after we meet, which
11 is in two weeks, okay, and then also have public hearing after
12 that, before any decision process is made.

13
14 All right. Now, I am -- I bought every pound of grouper quota and
15 red snapper quota I own for my fishing vessel to go, to be able to
16 go fishing, all right? I've worked hard at it, and, right now,
17 like you hear the questions asking how much is red grouper quota
18 going for, and probably fifteen or twenty-cents a pound, if not
19 cheaper, right, and so there's no reason why any of these guys
20 can't seize the day at \$7 a pound for the whole fish, okay?

21
22 Then, just like Chris Niquet said earlier, right, we've taken all
23 the risks buying into our IFQ program, okay, and I haven't even
24 been able to get back to anywhere of my investment that I put into
25 this, all right, and so I'm a little -- I'm not totally in favor
26 of this, but these guys are all going to find out what it's all
27 about.

28
29 Whatever quota set-aside you come up with, it's not going to help.
30 It's not going to make them survive. It's not going to be the
31 saving day. This is politicking, okay? That's exactly what it
32 is. We need to stop the politicking in fishery management, end of
33 discussion, okay? I appreciate this opportunity to speak, and I
34 look forward to my meeting in two weeks with my peers. Thank you.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Lewis. Do we have any questions?
37 I'm not seeing any. Thanks, Brian.

38
39 **MR. LEWIS:** Thank you.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We'll move on, in the room, to Mr. Buddy Guindon.

42
43 **MR. BUDDY GUINDON:** Hello. Well, that took the wind out of my
44 sails. I was going to jump all over that. I think that trying to
45 redistribute value from this group to this group is probably not
46 exactly what the President was looking for in his executive order,
47 and it will change these people's lives, and it will change these
48 people's lives, but it's just moving the wealth from one person to

1 another.

2
3 It's not fair for people that are buying quota, and investing in
4 the system, and wanting to build a business, and I think that's
5 what you should look at. These are businesses that need to be
6 built. This is not a welfare system that needs to be handed out.

7
8 Our Regional Administrator, in his infinite wisdom yesterday, told
9 the committee to look at the trends that we're looking at in the
10 private angler sector, where we're adding days to the season to
11 try to catch that magic number of fish, and what he was trying to
12 get across, and he was not blatantly saying, is the fish are gone,
13 and we would like to save the rest of the stock, and so let's quit
14 adding days to the season.

15
16 I'll say it for him. You're about to give a big red grouper raise
17 that the industry has come to you before and said don't do that.
18 It's not because we don't want the money. It's because the stocks
19 are suffering, and we're doing this for the benefit of the private
20 angler, so they don't get a closed season. That's not fair to the
21 country. That's not in line with the President's thoughts on the
22 executive order of making our nation's fisheries great.

23
24 That's in the order of crashing them, like we did many years ago,
25 and so it's your job to keep that from happening. I hope you take
26 it to heart. I hope that you reach in deep and decide that we
27 have a good management system in the commercial fishery. It's
28 something that needs to be worked through, and not dictated to the
29 folks that are in the fishery and catching the fish.

30
31 Now, if there was a possibility that the red grouper would be
32 landed this year, those guys would be begging you right now saying,
33 yes, raise the quota, and we really need it, but they're not going
34 to be caught, and further devastation to the stock will take place.

35
36 Just to end up with, anybody that tells you they catch a thousand
37 pounds of gags and throw them away before they start fishing is
38 full of things that you wouldn't want to smell in this room, and
39 so don't believe it. Is there any questions? Yes, sir.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Captain Walker.

42
43 **MR. WALKER:** Thanks, Buddy. This is a very specific question. I
44 don't know how much red grouper you guys deal with, but I'm pretty
45 sure you can comment on how the red grouper landings are looking
46 so far this year overall. Are you seeing similar catches to
47 previous years, or less than in the past?

48

1 **MR. GUINDON:** I'm hearing, while they had a few good trips, it's
2 terrible, and certainly it's probably not going to get any better
3 if we keep extending the seasons and increasing the quota. We did
4 this, and you've got to understand your actions here have real-
5 world consequences.

6
7 You started with the deepwater grouper last year, and you held
8 back half of it, and said we're going to get this done, and you
9 didn't manage to get it done, and so what you did is you drove the
10 price up for deepwater grouper to a dollar-and-a-quarter, or a
11 dollar-and-a-half, at the beginning of the year, when everybody
12 gets their quota, so they can manage it through the year, and then,
13 later down the line, you dumped all that back out here and made
14 this dollar-and-a-quarter fish, that you already bought,
15 worthless.

16
17 You're about to do the same thing with red grouper if you decide
18 to move forward with this plan. You're going to hold some back,
19 and then, if the government remains in the same slow-speed mode
20 that it's in, we'll be doing the same thing. Drive that quota
21 price up for allocation, and then dump a bunch on the market, and
22 crash it out, and so it's destabilizing a really good fishery, and
23 we wish that you would start listening to the people come to the
24 podium and tell you that the fish aren't there, and we need to
25 take care of our stock. I might have went off subject there. Is
26 there any other questions?

27
28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Do we have any other questions for Mr. Guindon?
29 Mr. Sanchez.

30
31 **MR. SANCHEZ:** No, and you answered it. I was going to ask you
32 about that, about putting a bunch of additional quota, making it
33 available, but making the recipients fish that first, provided
34 they have some shares, and then, if it isn't all caught, and then
35 there's surplus at the end, what happens to the stability, and you
36 answered that at the tail-end, and thank you.

37
38 **MR. GUINDON:** What happens to the surplus?

39
40 **MR. SANCHEZ:** No. The stability of the fishery, and you hit on
41 that at the end of your speech. I was going to ask you that
42 question, but you happened to finish up with that, and so that was
43 perfect. That answered my question.

44
45 **MR. GUINDON:** Well, one more thing. Dr. Allen has a plan to count
46 the deepwater grouper. Let's try it. Let's make the state step
47 up to the licking log, like you said when you implemented the state
48 management plan, that you said you will have to be accountable.

1 Accountability is what we need. Get on it. That's your job.
2 Thank you.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Guindon. Next up, online, Jordan
5 Wright. Jordan, you with us? Okay. Can we move to the room?
6 Mr. Bobby Kelley.

7
8 **MR. BOBBY KELLEY:** Good morning, council. How are you all doing
9 today? I came up, and got out of bed this morning, because we're
10 not fishing, because it's blowing twenty knots out of the east,
11 and we don't want to make any more people throw up than what we
12 have to, right?

13
14 I just wanted to get up this morning and come over and express my
15 concerns about the federal for-hire fleet being taken over by the
16 states, individual, and, Kevin, I just wanted to talk to you
17 directly, as it seemed like they casted some dispersions at you
18 earlier, and it's -- I want to clarify that, on how the fisherman
19 is, that the state political landscape can change faster, and,
20 even though, you know, we like Kevin, and we like Commissioner
21 Chris, and Governor Ivey, things change faster there on the
22 political side of it, and I think it's that uncertainty which is
23 why the Alabama charter fleet is not in favor of charter-for-hire,
24 and not that we don't trust you, and we love you, man, all that
25 stuff.

26
27 Just with that saying, we want to be alone, left out, and let the
28 broader political landscape of the federal level protect us and
29 give us a little bit more of a buffer.

30
31 I want to say, as far as the red snapper fishery goes, the -- I
32 know Magnuson requires you guys to give us maximum sustainable
33 yield, and there's some National Standard somewhere that I should
34 be able to quote by now to back that up, but the fishery out there
35 is on the decline. Every person that has come up here, that has
36 a financial stake in that fishery, has all urged us to proceed
37 with caution, and it's for a reason.

38
39 We know that the groups here that aren't stakeholders in the
40 fishery, like your outboard association, and sportsmen
41 association, and just say CCA, they thrive on opportunity, and
42 they need long seasons.

43
44 You guys are in charge, and I've said this before, that you guys
45 are in charge of protecting the fish. It is on a decline.
46 Everybody up here says it. You think the charter fishermen say,
47 hey, we don't want the extra time, and we don't want the money?
48 Trophy fish and opportunity sells fishing trips. It does.

1
2 We just ask you all guys to -- I know the council has the ability
3 to look at the stock assessments coming up, and you know it's not
4 favorable, and stuff like that, and so just go cautiously on that.

5
6 I do want to say that, the amberjack, the regulations and all that
7 obviously works. It's probably the best amberjack fishery I've
8 seen since I've been in the career. I own two charter boats out
9 of Orange Beach, Alabama, and I've been doing this for a long time,
10 thirty years now, and so thank you guys for all your time.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Kelley. We have a question from
13 Mr. Anson.

14
15 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Kelley, for being here. Thank you
16 for the comments. I didn't take any of the questions, or
17 discussion, I had earlier personally. My point with discussing
18 with some of the comments that were made were just trying to make
19 sure that everybody has the right information, and trying to
20 clarify the issue, to make sure people can go into this, you know,
21 with all the facts and clarity and conscience.

22
23 Relative to your concern, as you expressed it, or at least you
24 generalized to the charter boat captains in Alabama with the
25 political environment, I mean, that's what we -- As we craft this
26 document, you know, we are trying to address those issues, and so,
27 you know, carving out an allocation to each of the states, that
28 the state that would then manage, but then making sure that there
29 is the access and use of those pounds are to the federally-
30 permitted charter boats within each of the states.

31
32 In my mind, relative to the political issue, if things go awry,
33 and those pounds are somehow taken up for the private recs by a
34 governor, then delegation goes away, and then, the other issue
35 relative to the politics of it that I can see a state agency might
36 be swayed by a governor, would be just the season length and such,
37 or, you know, when it's open, the timing of it and such, and I
38 just don't see how a governor would spend much time in doing that
39 for a --

40
41 **MR. B. KELLEY:** Can you guarantee me a governor would never press
42 for any type of reallocation from the for-hire end to private
43 recreational at any point in time?

44
45 **MR. ANSON:** Well, I can't guarantee what a governor would do, but
46 I'm saying that, relative to the protections that are afforded the
47 federal government in management of the fish -- Currently, in the
48 state management for private recs, you know, if a state continues

1 to go over its allocation each year, the federal government can
2 come and take that --

3
4 **MR. B. KELLEY:** That's what's best for the fish, right, and like
5 we all agree.

6
7 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, I mean, and so, you know, to say that there aren't
8 protections in there for the fish, the resource, or protections
9 for the sector, I just -- I don't think they run as deep as what
10 a lot of people think they do, and so that's all, and that's all
11 I'm trying to do as we move forward with the document, is to make
12 sure that it clarifies those concerns that are addressed, and I
13 can understand that people just don't like it, because they don't
14 like it, and Troy was trying to get that from one of the earlier
15 commenters, whether or not it's just because it's under state
16 management versus federal management, and they just like federal
17 management.

18
19 I understand that, but inasmuch as just trying to go forward to
20 make sure that we have a document that at least the folks here at
21 the table think is clear and can understand that, we want to make
22 sure that's projected as well to everyone else, and so I appreciate
23 you coming here. It's unfortunate it is so windy, because you
24 would probably rather be on the water, but thank you for your
25 comment.

26
27 **MR. B. KELLEY:** Kevin, you do understand that your state does not
28 want to be included, your federal for-hire fleet, the overwhelming
29 majority, does not wish to be included in state management, and
30 you do understand that?

31
32 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, I understand that. The document is written where
33 there are options within an action item, and one of the
34 alternatives has multiple options where a state opts in or opts
35 out, and so I hear you all loud and clear, but inasmuch as what
36 the document is trying to do, and that is to provide other states
37 the opportunity and flexibility, that's where I'm coming from.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Bobby, we've got one more from Mr. Sanchez.

40
41 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Bobby, it's good to see you again. I'm glad you
42 could make it today. I'm sorry you got blown out, but I hear you
43 loud and clear that you're saying that your group as a whole, and
44 you're dialed-in, and you're connected to them as a universe, and
45 you don't want this, and, to me, it's a hell of a thing when you're
46 saying that I don't want more days, and I don't want this, and I
47 don't want that, and that's more money out of my pocket, because
48 I believe what we're doing is working, and so I'm hearing you loud

1 and clear.

2

3 **MR. B. KELLEY:** By the way, Starlink is awesome.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Bobby. Next up, online, is Sonja
6 Fordham. Sonja, are you with us?

7

8 **MS. SONJA FORDHAM:** Hi. Sorry. Can you hear me?

9

10 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes. Go ahead.

11

12 **MS. FORDHAM:** Okay. Thank you. Good morning. My name is Sonja
13 Fordham. I am President of Shark Advocates International, a
14 nonprofit project of the Ocean Foundation. I'm also a longtime
15 member of NOAA's ESA recovery team for the smalltooth sawfish.

16

17 I appreciate this opportunity to once again highlight for the
18 council, and underscore for NOAA, the urgent plight of this
19 endangered species, as bycatch in the pink shrimp fishery continues
20 to be considered a primary threat to its survival.

21

22 My colleagues in the conservation and science communities remain
23 deeply concerned about the to increase observer coverage in Gulf
24 shrimp trawls and to consider scientists' recommendations to
25 expand the areas close to this gear to protect reproductive female
26 sawfish off southwest Florida. We are eager for the associated
27 biological opinion and the working group on endangered species
28 bycatch, but we cannot accept that these seriously-delayed
29 initiatives are prerequisites for embarking on urgently-needed
30 fishery management actions.

31

32 As you may know, spinning sickness in the Florida Keys over the
33 last several years has taken a dramatic toll on the already
34 depleted sawfish population. Losses have amounted to a mass
35 mortality event, making it all the more vital to minimize fisheries
36 mortality on remaining individuals and to properly assess their
37 fate.

38

39 I was impressed by Tuesday's recap of efforts to monitor where
40 shrimpers are operating, but maintain that reliably documenting
41 what they are catching is also critical. The report on Shrimp
42 Futures, the Shrimp Futures project, was also impressive, and yet
43 I find the lack of conservation NGO participation deeply
44 disappointing.

45

46 Such experts have not only pressing concerns over bycatch of
47 several ESA listed species, but also valuable perspectives on the
48 relationship between fishery management standards and the

1 potential for marketing product as sustainable seafood. We urge
2 NOAA to make a concerted effort to promptly engage NGOs,
3 conservation NGOs, for the next stages of the project.
4

5 In closing, I stress that smalltooth sawfish have been driven to
6 local extinction in most of their former range. Only the U.S. and
7 the Bahamas are known to still have viable populations, both of
8 which are quite small. The species is truly in dire status. We
9 welcome any and all leadership towards reversing this decline.
10 Thank you for your consideration.
11

12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Fordham. We have a question from
13 Mr. Sanchez.
14

15 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and thank you for your update. I'm glad the
16 working group convened, that we had requested that we try to
17 address this issue, along with several, and I wanted to ask you,
18 and, during that meeting of the working group, how much discussion
19 was dedicated to discussing the sawfish issue with the shrimp
20 industry?
21

22 **MS. FORDHAM:** It's my understanding that just the South Atlantic,
23 and someone there knows better than I, but just the South Atlantic
24 has initiated that working group, and that we still had some
25 discussion Tuesday about differing opinions on when to start that
26 in the Gulf, and, at the South Atlantic meeting, it was primarily
27 introduction, and getting people's basic perspective on bycatch of
28 not just sawfish, but also there's a manta ray issue there, and so
29 someone in the room who knows better could correct me if I'm wrong.
30

31 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you for that. I encourage you to continue
32 working, and obviously with the Gulf folks, because I think they
33 have some ideas that would help address this without being as
34 impactful. As we all know, we have seen the spinning fish in the
35 Keys, and the Gambierdiscus virus affecting them, but I would
36 encourage you, and strongly hope, that you work with the industry
37 to address some of these things that can be done to mitigate these
38 interactions, rather than seemingly like --
39

40 Because as a consequence of a virus, which I don't know that we
41 can control the origin of that, and the impact it's having, but to
42 target the industry then seems a little unfair, and like they're
43 the easy mark, and so I encourage you to work with them, and I
44 appreciate your efforts.
45

46 **MS. FORDHAM:** Yes, and can I just say that I actually drafted the
47 petition to list sawfish under the ESA in 1999, and we've known
48 all this time that shrimp bycatch was the primary threat, and

1 engaging with the industry is the reason why I'm suggesting that
2 the Shrimp Futures project include NGO representatives.

3
4 I also would urge the same for the working groups, that they have
5 conservation orgs represented, so we can participate in those
6 discussions, and I was serious about the importance of expertise
7 on how to best market the product and how to ensure its perceived
8 as sustainable.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Fordham. No other questions. Next
11 up is Captain Mike Jennings.

12
13 **MR. MICHAEL JENNINGS:** Hello, council. My name is Michael
14 Jennings. I'm a dual-permitted holder in and out of Freeport,
15 Texas, commercial charter boat, et cetera. I lease 100 percent of
16 my allocation.

17
18 I want to start off by saying that the season length on red snapper
19 for our charter boats makes me kind of sick to my stomach, knowing
20 what it's going to do to that fishery, with a declining fishery
21 and these fish getting smaller. We're going to -- Next season is
22 going to be ugly, when we get done with them, but I do not support
23 delegate management of authority to the states on the for-hire
24 industry.

25
26 The governors issue, and the elections, and things along those
27 lines, are one of our biggest fears, and, with all due respect to
28 Kevin and his point earlier, the governors do have a large
29 influence on that, and I think this council itself is an example
30 of that, and we can -- We can get into that if we need to.

31
32 I also don't want to see the permits managed by separate governing
33 bodies. There's some issues that you all brought up yesterday,
34 and there's some that you all didn't bring up that are even bigger
35 gorillas in the room, in my opinion, that you haven't even thought
36 of yet that can cause a lot of problems.

37
38 I would like to see the council just simply table this issue on
39 the state water management for charter boats or state management
40 for charter boats. Get our SEFHIER, our new SEFHIER, back in,
41 and, if you all want to talk about this, let's talk about it.
42 Let's talk about it after we get our SEFHIER program back up and
43 running, and get some actual information that we can -- That's
44 hard information, in our opinion, that we can go forward with, but
45 the one last thing I want to hit on is a few comments that I've
46 heard today.

47
48 One of them I heard today, an exact quote, was sector separation

1 has caused shorter seasons. It came out of this room, and it's
2 absolutely unequivocally misinformation. It's not a fact. The
3 fact is that, the year before sector separation, we had a nine-
4 day season. The next year was -- I remember every one of them
5 like they were yesterday.

6
7 I was here ten years screaming sector separation at this podium
8 before we were passed it in 2015. We're twenty-two years, or
9 twenty-one years, deep, twenty-two years deep, in it now. The
10 next season was forty-four days. It was a 400 percent increase on
11 the first year, and it has increased every season since. It
12 effectively stopped overfishing in the for-hire sector on that
13 day.

14
15 It has brought stability, and it has brought -- We know what we're
16 getting. We know that it's increasing. We've even, a few years,
17 left a few fish in the water, and that's been of value to this
18 fishery.

19
20 There are a few places -- I heard today that the entire western
21 Gulf wants state management. That's also not true. There's one
22 state organization that is touting state management. There's
23 seventy-three permits. They're 5.4 percent of the industry. I
24 know no one in the state of Texas, and I know that I don't know
25 them all, and there's almost 200 permits there, and I know a lot
26 of them, and I don't know a single one in that part of the western
27 Gulf of Mexico, in that three-hundred-and-something miles of the
28 Gulf of Mexico, that wants anything to do with the state management
29 table.

30
31 Table this, guys. This thing is out of control. It's going
32 against everything we've accomplished over the last few years.
33 Let's put it on the -- Get our SEFHIER going, and bring this back
34 and discuss it when we've got all the facts, but I'm out of time,
35 and I appreciate you all's time. Thanks.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Jennings. Do we have any
38 questions? No. Thank you, Mike. Next up is Sean Heverin, online.
39 Sean are you with us?

40
41 **MS. ROY:** You'll have to unmute your line.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We'll move on in the room, and we'll come
44 back to Sean. Next up is Ms. Susan Boggs.

45
46 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Good morning, Mr. Chair and council. Thank you
47 for letting me testify today. My name is Susan Boggs. I'm
48 president of BND Maritime, Inc. That organization owns a

1 federally-permitted headboat that can fish forty-nine passengers
2 that is now operated by my daughter, Elizabeth Boggs, and we also
3 own a six-passenger boat that is federally-permitted.
4
5 We own a marina with a full fuel a fuel dock, and I say that
6 because I bring a different perspective to the table today. I do
7 not disagree with one person, other than what Mike Jennings said.
8 Yes, we've had an increase in season since sector separation.
9
10 I too recall the day I stood at this podium with my nine-year-old
11 daughter standing here holding my hand, because she has grown up
12 in this fishery, and she has seen it. Sector separation has been
13 a great thing for the charter fishing industry. I do not support
14 state management, as many of these people in the room do not
15 either.
16
17 We've been down this road, Kevin. Yes, we have elections coming
18 up with our governors, and it's not just the governors. I mean,
19 it is the governors, because that's who makes this body change,
20 and there's no consistency. We've got consistency now, with
21 Amendment 40 sector separation. We don't want state management.
22 We've said it. Let's move on. Let's do something different.
23
24 As others have said too, let's get on the SEFHIER. Let's get a
25 data collection system in place that is census-based, that the
26 charter-for-hire industry helped to develop. Even the SEFHIER
27 that was shot down was developed by the fishermen. Not everybody
28 agreed with it. There were some differences, but there is a way
29 to compromise and get SEFHIER back on the water.
30
31 That was an enormous leap for this group of fishermen, the charter-
32 for-hire, but the different perspective that I bring today is
33 because of the marina that we own. I talk to fishermen from all
34 over. We have boats from Louisiana in our marina. I calculated
35 it this morning, and there's seven boats in our marina from
36 Louisiana, but most of the people that I do talk to at our fuel
37 dock say to me the fishing is terrible, and what are we going to
38 do about the fishing?
39
40 Well, one, I could tell them don't go fishing, but I need to sell
41 fuel. Not that you all care, but I just spent three-quarters-of-
42 a-million dollars replacing the fuel system. I want to sell fuel.
43 I want people to go fishing, but there's a better way to do it,
44 and the charter fishermen are telling you that the fishing is not
45 as good as it's been. Yes, there's still fish out there, but
46 they're smaller fish. You have to go forty-five miles to catch
47 them. I've been there. I've been on the boat when my husband had
48 to go do that.

1
2 I think the solution to get us going in the right direction, and
3 I'm going to run out of time, is going to be SEFHIER, to help the
4 charter-for-hire fleet, but I want to bring it to the attention
5 that I did something last night, and I'll be very quick, Mr. Chair.
6

7 Back in 2019, this council tabled Amendment 42, and what amendment
8 42 was going to do, and I want you to listen very closely, is it
9 was going to improve economic conditions for the Gulf reef fish
10 headboat, in this case, provide flexibility for their angler
11 passengers, help achieve optimum yield, allow for variations among
12 fishery resources.
13

14 This body tabled that amendment that was going to give a sector
15 the ability to do what you all are now trying to do in your
16 amendments for state management, to provide flexibility for their
17 anglers, prevent overfishing, achieving -- My point is we've been
18 down this path.
19

20 We gave you a plan. It came from the fishermen, and you didn't
21 want to do that, but you want to take your plan, that they basically
22 developed, and shove it down our throats, and that I don't
23 appreciate, because we worked hard, as fishermen, for Amendment
24 42, and you all said, no, we're not going to do that, and now
25 you're going to try to do this. I think that's wrong. Thank you.
26 I appreciate it.
27

28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Boggs. Do we have any questions?
29 Not seeing any, thank you, Susan, for being here. We'll go back
30 to Sean Heverin online.
31

32 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** All right, Sean. I've got you on the phone. You
33 can go ahead.
34

35 **MR. SEAN HEVERIN:** All right. Can you hear me?
36

37 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Yes.
38

39 **MR. HEVER:** Great. This is Sean Heverin from Madeira Beach. I
40 own three longline vessels in Florida and one bandit vessel in
41 Texas. I've invested money in purchasing around 12,000 pounds of
42 red grouper shares, but it's maybe only one-tenth of what my three
43 longline boats in Florida catch each year.
44

45 I think the red grouper quota pool pilot program is a great idea
46 for this fishery. As a shareholder that not only owns red grouper
47 shares, and also vessels actually catching red grouper, this will
48 help my business tremendously.

1
2 Even though the expected quota pool will likely be small, this
3 will help my boats avoid leasing as much red grouper quota in the
4 future. The red grouper quota pool will help fish where they're
5 actively catching red grouper.

6
7 I would like to applaud the council for trying to push the red
8 grouper quota pool through quickly, to get it done for 2027. There
9 have been a lot of talks and quota changes, and problems that have
10 been talked about for far too long with no changes, and I think
11 that getting things done quickly is key to fixing issues with the
12 fishery.

13
14 I think this red grouper quota pool pilot program is a step in the
15 right direction, and I'm fine with either Alternative 2 or 3, but
16 I personally think Alternative 3 is better, because it lets
17 shareholders that have invested in quota shares have an equal shot
18 at getting fish through the quota pool.

19
20 Also, I think that the fish should be distributed proportionately
21 based on red grouper landings, instead of equally, and the reason
22 why I say this is because, if you're only catching 300 pounds of
23 red grouper a year, and you give that person 3,000 pounds of red
24 grouper allocation from the quota pool, and they can't transfer
25 that, then the person may not catch it all, and the quota will be
26 wasted. I think you should still give the person with 300 pounds
27 of red grouper landings quota from the quota pool, but it should
28 be proportionate.

29
30 Also, I think that the quota pool eligibility should be reassessed
31 each year based on the landings of the previous two years. This
32 will prevent fish -- Sorry. Giving fish to people who aren't
33 actively fishing.

34
35 I think if we could use the pelagic fishery as an example of this,
36 with the bluefin tuna IBQ, and bluefin tuna IBQ is given to
37 fishermen who are putting sets in the water each year. If they're
38 not actively putting sets in the water, then they don't get any
39 bluefin IBQ for that next year. The more sets they put in the
40 water, the more bluefin IBQ they get issued for that year.

41
42 I think the red grouper quota pool should also include the year
43 2025, when red grouper quota was more abundant for fishermen, and,
44 if this goes on in the future, I think that the most recent previous
45 year should be included for consideration. People that recently
46 got into fishery in 2025, or have been long-term permit leasers
47 that recently bought a permit 2025, may be left out if they only
48 use 2023 and 2024 landings.

1
2 Other than that, the only thing I would like to say is I would
3 like to encourage the council for looking at traps for the grouper
4 -- For the snapper fishery, to prevent shark and dolphin
5 interactions with predation on the fish, and that's about all I
6 have to say for today.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Sean. We have a question from Captain
9 Walker.

10
11 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Sean. It's good to hear from a big red
12 grouper guy like yourself, and I appreciate your comments on each
13 of the decision points we're looking at on that issue. I've also
14 talked to a couple of longline guys about the potential to examine
15 maybe some fish traps to deal with some of the predation that's
16 happening on the longlines.

17
18 Some of the guys feel like, you know, you've got a better chance
19 of getting your fish all the way up to the top if it's in a cage,
20 and so I would be in favor of examining that. I'm not saying bring
21 them back, and, you know, there would be a lot of caveats there,
22 but I'm open to looking at that.

23
24 My question to you, as a guy that -- I think I've heard you say
25 you buy 10 percent or more of the red grouper in the Gulf, and
26 what is the status of the fishery so far this year that you've
27 witnessed?

28
29 **MR. HEVERIN:** I've noticed that the red grouper landings overall
30 are down. Some guys are doing exceptionally well, and then some
31 guys are just not catching anything, and so like here's an example,
32 and so like we had a boat that offloaded on Friday. They fished
33 seven days, two-handed. They had 4,500 red grouper, or sorry.
34 4,600 red grouper.

35
36 Another boat landed, and they fished the exact same amount of time,
37 with one deckhand, and both these boats are longlining, and they
38 only had 500 pounds of red grouper, and so there's a big difference
39 between guys that are doing really well and guys that are
40 struggling.

41
42 We buy fish from a couple guys in Everglades City who do buoy
43 fishing for red grouper. Last year, around the same time, they
44 were catching between 3,500 to 5,500 pounds a trip. Now it's about
45 1,000 to 2,500 pounds a trip, and so I think, overall, the red
46 grouper fishery is down, but some people are still catching fish.

47
48 We had a boat last week that unloaded 9,100 pounds of red grouper

1 for a fourteen-day longline trip. That's their best, that
2 captain's best, trip he's ever had, and I've had other guys, and
3 like Sean McCarthy, and you may have caught it earlier, and he's
4 offshore now, and he's struggling to catch red grouper, and so
5 it's kind of hit or miss with some of these fishermen.
6

7 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Sean. No other questions? Not seeing
8 any, next up is Lew Childre.
9

10 **MR. LEW CHILDRE:** My name is Lew Childre. I am a lifelong resident
11 of coastal Alabama. I grew up on the Bon Secour River. I remember
12 when there was six shrimp boats coming in out of Bon Secour, and
13 now there's one steel hull. I've watched the seafood industry
14 shrink. I've watched a lot of things happen, and I deck-handed on
15 a lot of charter boats out of Orange Beach when I was younger.
16

17 I'm a full-time mechanical engineer, a licensed PE in the State of
18 Alabama. I have a full-time day job to afford my commercial
19 fishing habit. I currently own two directed shark permits, and I
20 know that this is the Gulf Council, but we are looking for
21 advocates. We are in an industry where every day we are on the
22 edge of survival.
23

24 We've seen our markets dwindle. We are a meat fishery. We are
25 not a fin fishery. We've gone from a fifty-seven-foot boat to a
26 forty-eight-foot boat to a thirty-four-foot boat. We are the last
27 of the Mohicans, I guess you would say, in the water in the shark
28 fishery, and, with that being said, I look to see some advocates
29 other places.
30

31 We see an unbelievable amount of shark predation on our own
32 longline sets. We mainly gillnet fish smaller sharks, because
33 that's what the market has dictated. We do see -- When we're
34 targeting and locating, we use a longline, a bottom longline, and
35 we lose a lot of fish.
36

37 If we're losing fish, I know other people are losing fish, and I'm
38 not advocating for the eradication of sharks. They're my
39 livelihood, part of it, and, you know, this industry was built in
40 Florida in the late 1930s, and, at one point, there was 920
41 permits. We are the last active full-time permit holder and fisher
42 in the entire Gulf.
43

44 Now, there's some people that are shark fishing, yes, but we are
45 the last full-time. We shark fish twelve months out of the year.
46 We have a shark charter business that, due to reading and working
47 within the state regulations, we're allowed to do commercial-like
48 charters. We've had to open up every avenue to stay in business.

1 We sell skulls, and we sell everything you can imagine to try to
2 stay in business, and we are surviving, but we're not thriving.

3
4 We ran 220 trips last year. That's 220 times we left the dock and
5 came back, whether we unloaded anything or not, because many times
6 we're sitting and waiting on weather. The little boat that could
7 is tired. We're tired. We would love to invest, but we need some
8 advocates to help.

9
10 The markets are there. We're not catching the quota. With one
11 boat in the Gulf of Mexico fishing full-time, I don't believe that
12 we caught a third of the quota limits for the western Gulf. Now,
13 of course, that's for different species, and we target small
14 coastals, but we're only allowed fifty-five head per trip of large
15 coastals.

16
17 When those fish only weigh thirty pounds, because that's what the
18 market dictates, it's very hard to make any weight, and so we spend
19 a lot of our time searching for smaller coastal sharks, and we
20 throw a lot of discards over. Now, a lot of those are alive, but
21 we would love to target species that would help, but we can't,
22 because of the regulations.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for your comments, Lew. Do we have any
25 questions? We do. Captain Walker.

26
27 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, thank you, and I had lunch with Lew yesterday,
28 and it's fascinating, talking to the last shark fisherman in the
29 Gulf of Mexico, and, obviously, there's not a lot we can do, and
30 we are sending some messages to HMS that, you know, we would like
31 to see things managed a little different on sustainable stocks,
32 but I know a lot of charter boat guys appreciate what you're doing.

33
34 I heard, yesterday, some stories about the extremists that are
35 constantly attacking you, often misinformed, and your business
36 model in every way, so I encourage you to fight the good fight,
37 and stand up for it, and maybe -- You know, I believe there's a
38 little bit of a groundswell of pushback on how far shark has gone
39 from the rational fishing community, and so maybe things are going
40 to come back and get better for you, and, if there's anything we
41 can do about it, I think we would.

42
43 **MR. CHILDRE:** For me, it's really more of an advocacy program when
44 you have many stakeholders talking about a resource. You know,
45 when we went from 920 permits to -- You know, there's more permits
46 out there, but only one active. It's hard to have a voice when
47 you're the only voice, and there's -- You know, even if you look
48 on HMS, there's plenty of other people that are on other sides of

1 arguments, and there's just us, and so it would be extremely
2 helpful to have even the accreditation, and I've looked at
3 everybody's Snapper Check or whatever program the states have, and
4 there's nothing in there to, you know, categorize, or even, you
5 know, aggregate the shark accreditation accounts that happen, and
6 so how many interactions are happening is unknown.

7
8 I don't think that that's good data, because, you know, I think
9 everyone in this water has seen sharks increase those interactions,
10 and any kind of that data would help justify the fact that we would
11 at least be able to catch the quota.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Lew, we have a question from Mr. Anson.

14
15 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and not so much a question, but thanks for coming.
16 Thanks for providing public testimony. I echo a lot of what
17 Captain Walker said, and, you know, there's not much we can do. I
18 certainly appreciate you coming here and talking about your
19 perceptions of the fishery, but I would also encourage you to keep
20 engaged, keep advocating for your issue.

21
22 I just want to add, on the comment you just made relative to the
23 data and such, and so Alabama has started a new recreational creel
24 survey, and it was fully implemented last year, based off of
25 Louisiana's LA Creel, and, in the interviews at dockside with
26 anglers, as we encounter them, we do ask about their discarded
27 fish, and we do get -- We question them about those that are
28 released that are predated upon, whether that be with sharks or
29 dolphins or birds or what have you, but we do have some of that
30 predation information in our survey.

31
32 **MR. CHILDRE:** I appreciate that, and I appreciate the State of
33 Alabama. They made some small steps to expand the state longline
34 for sharks. We would like to see it expanded some more, but it
35 was a start, and we appreciate that, but, across the entire Gulf,
36 it's a great protein. It's clean, and it's super sustainable.
37 You know, we've developed a shark burger. We've developed a shark
38 sausage. It's just something different to try to get people to
39 eat, and it's healthy, and it's clean, and any help and advocacy
40 would go a long way for us.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Lew. I don't see any other questions.
43 Thank you for being here and giving comment. Next up, online,
44 Heather Ordaz.

45
46 **MS. HEATHER ORDAZ:** Good morning. My name is Heather Ordaz. I am
47 from Double Bayou, Texas. My family has been in the commercial
48 fishing industry for generations. I understand the need to improve

1 the participation opportunities for the IFQ program.

2
3 However, as Ms. Rosenberg stated, their proposed program is missing
4 important factors, such as metrics of success and evaluation plans.
5 Also, the Ad Hoc IFQ advisory panel has not yet met, and they
6 haven't provided any feedback, and I think their feedback should
7 be valued and considered. There's no doubt there would be growing
8 pains.

9
10 There's two years of grouper increases coming, and, considering
11 the magnitude this program carries, and the effects it would have
12 on the fishermen and their families and the fishing industry's
13 future, I think more time needs to be invested. There's no urgency
14 to get this done this year. Thank you for your time.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Heather. Do we have any questions?
17 I'm not seeing any. Thank you. We'll move on to Mr. Jason
18 Delacruz, online. Jason, are you with us?

19
20 **MR. JASON DELACRUZ:** Can you hear me?

21
22 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, and we've got you, Jason. Go ahead.

23
24 **MR. DELACRUZ:** All right, and so I'll be real quick. On 63, I
25 think there may be merit there. I'm just scared we're rushing
26 this thing faster than we should. We're also drastically changing
27 the incentivization to participate in this fishery.

28
29 We had a system that was designed one way, and maybe I'm the fool,
30 and I've said that to myself a million times, because I've invested
31 in my fishery, and then doubled down and invested again, and I
32 harvest 95 percent of my fish with my own boats, and yet it just
33 feels, to me, with some certain comments that were made the other
34 day when we were talking about this, do we even have to give
35 anything to shareholders, and that I'm being penalized as a
36 fisherman that actually invested in my business.

37
38 I know I'm not, and I can see how the program is kind of coming
39 together, but I don't know. I just feel like let's let the people
40 that built this program -- Let's let the AP work through this and
41 come up with a plan that actually makes it.

42
43 If the big bad boogeyman in this scenario, which is what everybody
44 really wants to talk about, which is people that just lease and
45 don't harvest, is the real problem, then let's focus on that, as
46 opposed to just, you know, manipulating a program to try to, you
47 know, change something that changes the incentivization, because
48 the incentivization thing is really what's driving me crazy, and

1 maybe I'm just the fool, and I should have seen the writing on the
2 wall, but it is what it is. Thank you.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Jason. Do we have any questions? I'm
5 not seeing any, Jason. Thank you. Next up, online, Cole Ganey.

6
7 **MR. COLE GANEY:** Hello.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Cole, go ahead.

10
11 **MR. GANEY:** I'm Captain Cole Ganey. I'm located out of Biloxi,
12 Mississippi. I have two boats. One of them is federally-
13 permitted, and the other one is just a six-pack boat.

14
15 I do not want to, you know, see it go to state management and
16 everything. Even with having both boats here recently, the state
17 actually tried to do away with some of our oyster public reefs,
18 and sell them outright, and why would they not do that to let's
19 say the snapper or some other stuff, and mismanage, or lead us in
20 the wrong direction? That pretty much covers everything that I
21 had to say. I just want to, you know, make it clear that we do
22 not want state management.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Cole. Do we have any questions? I'm
25 not seeing any, and we'll move on. Next, online, Clarence Seymour.

26
27 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Sebo is having trouble getting on the webinar.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Clarence, we have you. Go ahead.

30
31 **MR. CLARENCE SEYMOUR:** Okay. Thanks, council. Captain Clarence
32 Seymour, Charterboat SYL, a federally-permitted charterboat,
33 twenty-nine years. As far as the amendment to state regional
34 management for charter-for-hire, I personally am not for that, and
35 the fleet now in Biloxi is about fourteen federal for-hire that
36 run from Pascagoula to Pass Christian.

37
38 I haven't met with any of the guys lately, but there's not a one
39 of them that have come to me and said, hey, Captain Sebo, we want
40 to try that state management deal, and so, on the record, they
41 haven't -- None of them has called and said anything about it, and
42 so except for Captain Kenny with Fish on Charters. He's offshore
43 today, and he asked me to say, on the record, that he was not for
44 public state management also.

45
46 Going back to some of the other things in the discussion was the
47 state for-hire guides that does a lot of funsies. The federal-
48 permitted fleet can't really do a bunch of funsies, but these guys

1 are still doing it out of here, and there's a handful of them that
2 does, and a handful of them that does it right, and so that's still
3 part of the of an issue of going over the nine-mile boundary into
4 the federal fishery during the open Mississippi state snapper
5 season.

6
7 As Captain Cole touched on, the Mississippi oysterman was in a
8 political battle with our state legislature over privatizing the
9 oyster lease, and a Harrison County judge struck it down, where it
10 is part of your right to hunt and fish, and that is still a public
11 resource for the thing.

12
13 Not saying that General Spraggins and his team would not probably
14 -- They would probably give us a fair opportunity to be managed
15 correctly, but, being in it so long, for twenty-nine years, after
16 Amendment 40, we've had really great opportunities on our
17 coastlines to succeed again, and make our businesses profitable
18 again when it comes to the federal fishery, because the king
19 mackerel is down, and so, really, the red snapper fishery is about
20 the only thing that we still have a tangible item that we actually
21 have a good sale on. So I'm out of time, or, well, I almost am,
22 but I thank everybody for -- Sorry I couldn't make it over, and,
23 if there's any questions, I'll be glad to answer.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Clarence. We have a question from Mr.
26 Sanchez.

27
28 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Sebo, it's always good to hear from you, and so I
29 just want to be very clear. I know you're very connected to
30 everybody there, and you were there with us during Amendment 40.
31 Your folks, your universe of federally-permitted for-hire vessels
32 in Mississippi, do not want to go to state management, and is that
33 correct?

34
35 **MR. SEYMOUR:** That is correct. Capital N and capital O.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Clarence. Any other questions? Not
38 seeing any, we'll move on to Stewart Miller, online.

39
40 **MR. STEWART MILLER:** Can you hear me?

41
42 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, sir. Go ahead.

43
44 **MR. MILLER:** My name is Stewart Miller. I own the Charterboat
45 Great Escape out of Panama City, Florida. It's dual-permitted,
46 and we carry a COI of nineteen people on there, but I also own a
47 couple of commercial boats.

48

1 I am not for state management, not at all. My fear there is, like
2 a lot of them have said, and, I mean, even our governor in the
3 State of Florida, they came to Panama City, and I think it was
4 last year, two years ago, and announced their snapper season, and
5 so, there again, I mean, that's -- I'm not for it.

6
7 I would like for you all to let us know a little bit of a heads-
8 up on our seasons. I've done it for twenty-four years, which I
9 know we found out, not too long ago, what kind of season we were
10 going to have, but there's been some times where it's been down to
11 the wire, and I have a lot of people that call, that book way in
12 advance, and I can't answer, I mean, on what's going to open, and
13 what's going to be there, and what's closing and all that. I would
14 like to, if you all could, give us a little bit better heads up,
15 and it would be wonderful, but, besides that, that is all I have
16 to say. Thank you. Thank you for your time.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Miller. Do we have any questions?
19 Not seeing, we'll move on --

20
21 **MR. MILLER:** I've got -- Are you still there? I have one more
22 thing, if you can hear me. I heard somebody ask earlier about how
23 far boats are having to go. I mean, my commercial boat there,
24 they're having to go all the way over there to the river, I mean,
25 out of Panama City, and, with the price of fuel, I mean, that's -
26 - There's a reason why they're going there, and it's because our
27 fishery out of here is definitely on a decline, and so I just
28 wanted to make that -- To say that, also. Thank you.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Miller. We'll move on to Maddux
31 Trouchesset.

32
33 **MR. MADDUX TROUCHESSET:** Can you hear me?

34
35 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, Maddox. Go ahead.

36
37 **MR. TROUCHESSET:** How are you doing, guys? My name is Captain
38 Maddux Trouchesset, out of Biloxi, Mississippi. I'm a captain
39 aboard Silver Dollar Charters. We're the largest for-hire vessel
40 out of Mississippi. We can carry forty-four passengers. We are
41 federally-permitted, and we are very much against state
42 management.

43
44 If something is not broken, why fix it, is kind of what we're
45 looking at. We are going to agree with Sebo and everybody else.
46 Whenever somebody new comes in, they could definitely mess it up
47 for us.

48

1 I do think our season is way too long this year, and we profit off
2 of it more than anybody, and I don't think the fish are there for
3 us to fish all the way into October. I think September 15 last
4 year was perfect, and that's all I got to say on that.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right, Maddux. Thank you. Do we have any
7 questions? Not seeing any, we'll move on to Evan Tiblier.

8
9 **MR. EVAN TIBLIER:** Yes, sir. Can you hear me?

10
11 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, Evan. Go ahead.

12
13 **MR. TIBLIER:** All right. I'm Captain Evan. I'm out of Biloxi,
14 Mississippi. I run two charter boats, and I have a -- I see both
15 sides of the argument. I have a state for-hire vessel and a
16 federally-permitted boat that I bought two years ago.

17
18 I don't want to go with state regulation. I do like the way that
19 it is now. I have both boats. I make -- We do good enough with
20 a state for-hire on a smaller boat, with trout and stuff, that we
21 really don't need to get into the red snapper sector, even though
22 I bought the big boat to get into it, and we rely on snapper season
23 on the larger vessel, the permitted boat.

24
25 Snapper season is what keeps us going, especially with the price
26 of fuel and everything that we have now. It's just -- You know,
27 it works out good, us having snapper federally regulated. When
28 state waters are open, I see them get stomped out, and it takes
29 three weeks, and the fish has already slowed up, but, being
30 federally-permitted, we go out further, and we catch more fish.
31 It's a better, more consistent bite.

32
33 I just -- Pretty much where I'm at is I see both sides of the
34 argument, but my main thing is I agree with the federal boats. I
35 like being federally-permitted, and what you all are doing is a
36 great job, and I don't see a reason in the state getting in it,
37 and that's about all I got.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Evan. Do we have any questions? Not
40 seeing any, we'll move on to Rachel Hisler.

41
42 **MS. RACHEL HISLER:** Hi, this is Rachel Hisler in Double Bayou,
43 Texas. I'm sorry that I couldn't be there with you all during
44 this meeting, but I'm happy to be able to offer my comment
45 virtually.

46
47 I would like to start off by thanking everyone who has made the
48 effort to comment today and say that there has been so much great

1 feedback that has been shared with the council, and I hope that
2 you will give it consideration.

3
4 The first topic I want to talk about is going to be Amendment 63,
5 and I would like to echo and heartily agree with the points that
6 Ashford Rosenberg made earlier. I would like you to allow the ad
7 hoc AP to have their meeting before you make decisions and allow
8 them to do the duty and due diligence that you have assigned to
9 them as an advisory panel.

10
11 Then the next thing I want to touch on is the state management.
12 The thing that jumps out to me is the currency issues and
13 calibration issues that currently exist, and what kind of Pandora's
14 Box we're going to be opening up with that with further building
15 that on state management.

16
17 What it made me think of is the fact that our federal government
18 doesn't allow states to print their own currency, and there's a
19 reason for that, and I believe that we are going to run into so
20 many problems if we allow these states to each individually manage
21 a federally-regulated resource.

22
23 That is my comment for today, and I would really like to see you
24 shift the effort and resources that are being talked about to be
25 devoted to state management, and I would like to see that shifted
26 toward better measurement of catch for the recreational sector,
27 because you can't manage what you can't measure, and, right now,
28 we're working off of estimates and models that don't have true
29 hard data to be entered into them, and that's what I would like to
30 see you do with that time, instead of state management. Thank
31 you.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Rachel. Do we have any questions?
34 I'm not seeing any and my apologies. I was reading a typo on the
35 screen, Rachel. Sorry about that.

36
37 **MS. HISLER:** No worries. No worries.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Next up is Chance Seymour.

40
41 **MR. CHANCE SEYMOUR:** Can you all hear me?

42
43 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We've got you, yes.

44
45 **MR. C. SEYMOUR:** I'm Captain Chance Seymour. I'm out of Biloxi,
46 Mississippi. I own two federally-permitted charter boats. I'm a
47 younger guy in the game. I just made a big investment on upping
48 my business up to two boats, and I do not want to see the state

1 get control of our fish and mess up my investment, you know, and
2 put -- I think everything is going good right now, and so I would
3 like to keep the federal government still in control over the
4 fishery. I think you all have done a good job on managing it, and
5 so I don't -- I don't see a reason to change what's going good.

6
7 I would like if we could come up with a state or a Gulf-wide
8 reporting program, like the previous person said, to get us a
9 better -- Some more accurate numbers, but, other than that, that's
10 about all I have for you all.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Chance. Any questions? Not seeing
13 any, thank you, Chance.

14
15 **MR. C. SEYMOUR:** Thank you.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. That will conclude our public comment.
18 We're going to go ahead and break, and we'll just stay on break
19 for lunch until 12:30. The food will be brought in for council
20 members and staff here shortly, and so we'll reconvene at 12:30.
21 Thank you.

22
23 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on April 9, 2026.)

24
25 - - -
26
27 April 9, 2026

28
29 THURSDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

30
31 - - -

32
33 The Full Council of the Gulf Council reconvened at The Battle House
34 Renaissance in Mobile, Alabama on Thursday afternoon, April 9,
35 2026, and was called to order by Chairman J.D. Dugas.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right, folks. If we can reconvene and get
38 started. We have a lengthy agenda ahead of us this afternoon, and
39 I know some folks are trying to leave. My plan here is to work
40 down the agenda in the order it is printed, unless there is a
41 committee chairman or that we need to rearrange some of the
42 committee reports, and let me know. If not, we're going to start
43 right now with Shrimp, and I'm going to turn it over to Mr.
44 Schieble.

45
46 **COMMITTEE REPORTS**
47 **SHRIMP COMMITTEE REPORT**

48
84

1 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Shrimp
2 Committee report, the committee adopted the agenda Tab D, Number
3 1, with the additions of Update on Shrimp Futures Initiative and
4 Update on the Shrimp cELB and Shrimp Moratorium Documents under
5 Other Business. The committee then approved in November 2025
6 meeting minutes, Tab D, Number 2, with the correction of "Mr.
7 Hanson" to "Mr. Anson" on page 4, line 13.

8
9 Review of SEDAR 87 Gulf Penaeid Shrimp Stock Assessments and SSC
10 Recommendations, Tab B, Numbers 4(a) through (e) and Tab B, Number
11 10(b), Mr. Moncrief, the SSC chair, presented an overview of the
12 information received by the SSC at its February 2026 meeting and
13 the subsequent recommendations.

14
15 He noted the SSC discussed the possibility of a trigger for
16 reevaluating the status determination criteria when landings are
17 within 90 percent of the maximum sustainable yield.

18
19 A committee member inquired if it would be feasible for Southeast
20 Fisheries Science Center staff to rerun the models and provide a
21 periodic review. Dr. Porch stated that empirical dynamic modeling
22 could be rerun with updates updated indices, such as catch history
23 and SEAMAP abundance, as needed.

24
25 **The committee recommends, and I so move, to direct staff to develop**
26 **a document that updates status determination criteria and**
27 **considers modifying the permit threshold of penaeid shrimp.** The
28 motion carried unanimously. Mr. Chair, we have a committee motion
29 on the board.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble, and so we have a motion
32 on the board. Is there any discussion on the motion? **Not seeing**
33 **any, is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the**
34 **motion carries.** Mr. Schieble.

35
36 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Review of the Texas Closure, Tab D, Numbers 4(a)
37 through (d), or I'm sorry. Numbers 5(a) through (c). Dr. Liese,
38 from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, presented on prices
39 of Gulf shrimp by size and then specifically for brown shrimp and
40 white shrimp. He noted the price premium received for larger-
41 sized shrimp.

42
43 Dr. Lowther presented a review of the 2025 Texas closure. A
44 committee member asked for clarification that the Texas closure
45 was not a good idea. Dr. Lowther responded that the 2025 data
46 alone did not make a compelling case, but that the biological
47 justification remains valid.

1 Council staff referred to Dr. Lowther's presentation to the Shrimp
2 AP in March of 2025 and noted that it presented a clear picture of
3 the positive price effects of the Texas closure. A committee
4 member suggested that future presentations on the Texas closure
5 include a five-year timeframe of price information as well as total
6 landings by size categories, both before and after the Texas
7 closure.

8
9 Another committee member stated that the Texas closure has been in
10 place for a long period of time and inquired if the annual
11 timeframe for the closure should be examined to see if different
12 dates may improve the economic benefits.

13
14 A committee member stated that the June 1 to July 15 season closure
15 dates in Texas state water are written in the state regulations,
16 but earlier, later, or longer seasons can be provided, not to
17 exceed sixty days. He added that an evaluation with more recent
18 sampling streams to maximize the profitability from larger-sized
19 shrimp would be useful to the shrimp industry.

20
21 Council staff reviewed the Shrimp AP's recommendation to continue
22 the Texas closure in federal waters in 2026. Ms. Bosarge, the
23 Shrimp AP chair, commented that the Shrimp AP was generally
24 supportive of continuing the Texas closure. She noted that AP
25 members discussed the recent increase in fuel prices, which would
26 make the price premium even more important for shrimpers.

27
28 **The committee recommends, and I so move, to request that National**
29 **Marine Fisheries Service continue with the Texas federal closure**
30 **in the coming year in conjunction with the State of Texas closure**
31 **in 2026.** That motion carried unanimously, Mr. Chair.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. We have a committee
34 motion on the board. Is there any discussion on the motion? **Not**
35 **seeing any, is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none,**
36 **the motion carries.** Mr. Schieble.

37
38 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** All right. The Remaining Items from the Summary of
39 the March 9, 2026 Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting, Tab D, Number
40 5(c), council staff noted that the Shrimp AP made two additional
41 motions. He stated that the motion regarding the Fiscal Year 2026
42 \$850,000 appropriation was similar to a motion from the AP in 2024,
43 which the council passed at its April 2024 meeting.

44
45 Ms. Bosarge noted that, in the presentation received by the AP on
46 the Early Adopter program expenditures, it was projected that more
47 than 800 cELB devices would be purchased and installed on vessels.
48 She added that the AP was informed that cloud storage is sufficient

1 for current data transmission from approximately 120 vessels, and
2 additional storage would be needed as more devices are installed
3 and additional data are transmitted. A committee member then
4 requested more information on the data storage capacity.

5
6 Another committee member stated that the rulemaking for the shrimp
7 cELB framework action is underway and that data storage capacity
8 would be ensured.

9
10 Council staff noted that Agenda Item VIII is the update to the
11 Early Adopter Program, and so the committee may wish to delay
12 further consideration of this motion from the Shrimp AP until that
13 presentation. Dr. Walter, from the Southeast Fisheries Science
14 Center, stated that the presentation in Agenda Item VIII would
15 show that the third bullet from the AP's motion on covering the
16 cost of units and cellular service through the Early Adopter
17 Program should be accomplished.

18
19 Regarding the second bullet from the AP's motion, he inquired if
20 the Shrimp AP would disagree, should coverage greater than that of
21 the last ten years would be needed for statistically-robust design
22 was needed. Ms. Bosarge expressed concern that the sampling design
23 for the Early Adopter Program was not more fully considered at the
24 onset and stated that the industry recognized that the mandate
25 should be met.

26
27 Council staff then reviewed the last motion. He added that Section
28 609 of U.S. Public Law 101-162 addresses that shrimp harvested
29 with commercial fishing technology should not be imported into the
30 U.S. if that harvest is adversely affecting sea turtles.

31
32 Ms. Bosarge noted industry efforts to reduce the bycatch footprint.
33 She reported that the Shrimp AP has concerns about imported shrimp
34 and enforcement that ensures that those nations are conserving sea
35 turtles similarly to what is required in the U.S. Dr. Walter
36 stated that a presentation at a future Shrimp AP meeting on the
37 Section 609 program's Fiscal Year 2026 appropriation could be
38 accomplished.

39
40 A committee member noted that the appropriation monies are up to
41 \$600,000 and not necessarily \$600,000, and the actual fiscal year
42 2026 budget may be less. A committee member inquired how the
43 monies are used to verify how shrimp vessels are meeting sea turtle
44 bycatch standards. Dr. Walter responded that individuals inspect
45 shrimp vessels in other countries, and the State Department
46 utilizes that information to allow imports.

47
48 **The committee recommends, and I so move, to request that National**

1 Marine Fisheries Service fully utilize up to the Fiscal Year 2026
2 \$600,000 appropriation for implementation and enforcement of the
3 Section 609 program to ensure foreign fisheries are maintaining
4 the same standard for sea turtle conservation as our domestic
5 fisheries are required to uphold. To request that National Marine
6 Fisheries Service provide a presentation at future Shrimp AP
7 meeting on how the funding will be spent to carry out the
8 implementation and enforcement of the Section 609 TED program.
9 That motion carried unanimously, Mr. Chair.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. We have a committee
12 motion on the board. Is there any discussion on the motion? **Not**
13 **seeing any, is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none,**
14 **the motion carries.** Mr. Schieble.

15
16 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** All right. Lastly, Ms. Bosarge referred to the
17 AP's discussion of the SSC's review of SEDAR 87. She requested
18 that alternatives beyond status quo, or the SSC's recommendations,
19 be considered in a shrimp status determination criteria document.

20
21 Update on Early Adopter Program, Tab D, Number 8, Dr. Lowther
22 presented an update on the Early Adopter Program. The committee
23 then revisited the Shrimp AP's motion on use of the Fiscal Year
24 1026 \$850,000 appropriation for ELB development and
25 implementation.

26
27 **The committee recommends, and I move, to request that National**
28 **Marine Fisheries Service adopts the following priorities for**
29 **utilizing the Fiscal Year 2026 \$850,000 appropriation for ELB**
30 **development and implementation: 1)ensure the NMFS server has**
31 **sufficient capacity to receive and store shrimp fishery vessel**
32 **position data; 2)develop a statistically-robust design for**
33 **distributing units to a representative portion of the fleet that**
34 **would be equal to or greater than the last ten years; 3)cover the**
35 **cost of providing units and cellular service to those shrimp**
36 **vessels, pursuant to the Early Adopter Program. That motion**
37 **carried unanimously.**

38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. We have a committee
40 motion on the board. Discussion on the motion? Mr. Sanchez.

41
42 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I would like to offer a friendly amendment
43 that we change the verbiage, where it says, "request that NMFS"
44 and back to "Southeast Fisheries Science Center", and, down on
45 Number 1, the reference to "NMFS" also to "Southeast Fisheries
46 Science Center". If I get a second, then I will explain my
47 rationale for that.

1 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Sanchez has a motion, and we have a second by
2 Mr. Schieble. Go ahead, Mr. Sanchez.
3
4 **MR. SANCEZ:** The current program right now, all the data going to
5 the cloud base is going to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center
6 server, and, as we continue to expand units, and they come online,
7 we need to expand the ability of that server to hold this data,
8 but, right now, it is being used by -- It's going to the Southeast
9 Fisheries Science Center, and there seem to be some interest from
10 the industry in maintaining it going to the Science Center.
11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Levy.
13
14 **MS. LEVY:** Can we just -- So this would be a substitute motion,
15 and so just to make sure that we -- Thanks.
16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes. Dr. Porch.
18
19 **DR. PORCH:** Just to be clear, yes, right now, it's going,
20 ultimately, to an isolated laptop, but there will be no Southeast
21 Fisheries Science Center server in a couple of years. We're moving
22 to the cloud, and so it's an agency process that is going to be
23 executed in the cloud. There will not be any hardware anymore.
24 This is all part of an executive order, and so it wouldn't make
25 sense to say SEFSC here, because we're going to enterprise cloud
26 services.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Sanchez.
29
30 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Would it be -- Besides inefficient, but, just to
31 please the industry, could we leave it Southeast, and then have
32 this discussion when that change comes, and that that hardware is
33 no longer available, and then revisit this, and then make the
34 necessary language change, you know, directing it to wherever at
35 that time?
36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Porch.
38
39 **DR. PORCH:** You can, but there's not going to be a separate SEFSC
40 server, period. We have an interim solution right now that's
41 basically using a laptop, but, as soon as we get the cloud service
42 up, that's what we would migrate to, and that's happening pretty
43 quickly.
44
45 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I have a couple of hands. Mr. Schieble I
46 think was to the point, and I see Mr. Strelcheck.
47
48 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Well, I was just going to suggest a friendly

1 amendment to the substitute motion here under Number 1, to ensure
2 that the Southeast Fisheries Science data storage has sufficient
3 capacity to receive and -- Some sort of generalized description.
4 That way, no matter what they switch it to, it would apply.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** So maybe Dr. Freeman has a suggestion.

7
8 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** I appreciate that you made a suggestion. I was
9 going to make one, too. I was going to look to NMFS and ask if
10 just simply the words -- The removal of the word "server" would
11 work, and just simply saying, in short, "the Southeast Fisheries
12 Science Center has sufficient capacity to receive and store shrimp
13 fishery vessel position data", and that might leave it broad enough
14 so that, if there is a change, it would still encompass that.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, Andy.

17
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** As I shared in committee, we are working on
19 rulemaking for the ELB. We have not made final decisions on where
20 this data is going to be stored.

21
22 I recognize, obviously, the industry would like it to go to the
23 Science Center, but, for some of the reasons that Clay mentioned,
24 as well as the factors that we're contemplating in terms of
25 efficiency within the government, cost savings, we, obviously,
26 want to keep this flexible, and open-ended, and you can pass this
27 motion with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, but there's no
28 obligation that we would have to do that, right, and so, to me, I
29 don't think this is beneficial, and helpful, and I would speak
30 against the motion. It's also contrary to the amendment that you
31 have -- The framework amendment you submitted to us, which does
32 not refer to a Southeast Fisheries Science Center server directly.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Dr. Freeman.

35
36 **DR. FREEMAN:** So, just as a refresher, so, as Mr. Strelcheck
37 referenced, the cELB framework, the language of that preferred
38 alternative, references that the data would be transmitted via
39 cellular service to a non-Office of Law Enforcement NMFS server,
40 and so, in the framework, it does reference NMFS, specifically
41 non-OLE, and it does use the word "server", and so just for
42 background.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Sanchez.

45
46 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I'm agreeable to whatever gets this done. I think
47 I've expressed my concerns, and you've demonstrated that that's
48 not going to be available in the short future, and so, Matt, help

1 me out. What's the way out of this?

2

3 **DR. FREEMAN:** If that's the case, if NMFS is okay with it, then
4 maybe the best route might be just to mirror the language that's
5 in the framework and say, "ensure the non-OLE NMFS server", and I
6 guess that's technically the language it has in the framework.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

9

10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I feel like we're making this way too difficult.
11 We should just go back to the primary motion that we discussed and
12 deliberated over during committee. We all agreed to that. That
13 was unanimously passed, and why are we having to wordsmith a few
14 words within a motion we already agreed to?

15

16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

17

18 **MR. WALKER:** I mean, we've discussed this before, but law
19 enforcement has got access to this anyway, and I don't see it as
20 being that -- It's not enough of a big deal to spend an hour of
21 our last day bickering over the acronym that goes in front of it.
22 Enforcement has access to this data, whether you say non-
23 enforcement or not, and so you can't hide it from them. They can
24 look at it if they want to, and so I don't see the purpose for
25 going around and around on a minor detail like this.

26

27 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Freeman.

28

29 **DR. FREEMAN:** I'll just make one more comment to this, and then
30 hopefully put a pin in it. I will state that the majority of AP's
31 conversation with Number 1 really dealt with the last part, making
32 sure that the capacity was there. I think that was really the
33 takeaway.

34

35 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Sanchez.

36

37 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I'll withdraw the substitute.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. **The substitute motion has been withdrawn.**
40 We'll go back to the original committee motion, and I'm going to
41 ask if there's any discussion on the motion. **Seeing none, is there**
42 **any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.**
43 Mr. Schieble.

44

45 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Presentation on Update on Working Group for
46 Shrimp Bycatch Methodology for Finfish Species, Tab B, Number 7,
47 council staff presented background information on the working
48 group for shrimp bycatch methodology for finfish species and an

1 update on its March 2026 meeting.

2
3 Committee member inquired why lane snapper was used as a proxy for
4 gray triggerfish with shrimp bycatch methodology. Council staff
5 responded that the issue is that observer data did not characterize
6 gray triggerfish and bycatch, and so a proxy species had to be
7 used. She noted that the working group has requested more
8 information on that approach. Final recommendations from the
9 working group will go to the SSC and to the council.

10
11 Dr. Walter recommended prioritization of inputs for ongoing
12 finfish stock assessments that the working group wants to address.
13 He acknowledged that the prioritization may mean some of the
14 working group's current recommendations will be addressed later.
15 NOAA General Counsel provided a reminder that the working group is
16 essentially an AP, and so meetings must be noticed and open to the
17 public.

18
19 A committee member expressed concern on a timeline for the
20 protected resources working group. Another committee member noted
21 a previous presentation on Environmental Species Act, or ESA.
22 reinitiation stated that NMFS is nearing completion of that work
23 and that there are no specific deadlines, but the shrimp BiOp may
24 need to be reinitiated if too much time passes. Council staff
25 emphasized the importance of understanding issues with finfish
26 bycatch, such as species-specific effort, prior to addressing
27 protected resources.

28
29 A committee member inquired if the South Atlantic Council addressed
30 finfish bycatch prior to protected resources bycatch. Council
31 staff noted that the data and monitoring programs for the shrimp
32 fleet in the South Atlantic and Gulf are very different.

33
34 A committee member requested Ms. Bosarge, as a member of the
35 working group, provide additional insight. She emphasized how the
36 shrimp bycatch methodology would affect various finfish stock
37 assessments and how various agencies needed to prioritize this
38 working group.

39
40 **The committee recommends, and I so move, to request that Southeast**
41 **Fisheries Science Center staff and contractors make the Shrimp**
42 **Bycatch of Finfish Working Group's recommendations and requests**
43 **from its March 2026 meeting a priority for the next meeting of the**
44 **working group. Recommendations for finfish bycatch will need to**
45 **be completed prior to and presented at the July 2026 SSC meeting.**
46 The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Chair we have a committee
47 motion on the board.

1 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Discussion on the
2 motion? Dr. Simmons.

3
4 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you Mr. Chair, and so, after
5 the committee met, staff spent a lot of time talking with the
6 Science Center and talking about timing of the SSC meeting, based
7 on the upcoming gray triggerfish review assessment, and so what we
8 would like to do is have a special SSC meeting in June to have
9 them address this virtually, ideally, and so we'll have the working
10 group meet in May, possibly two times, and that will go to the SSC
11 potentially in June, and then the council probably in August, but
12 we think July is too late, waiting to the current July meeting,
13 and so it will have to be a special, probably just virtual,
14 hopefully, a half-day meeting or something like that.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Any further discussion?
17 Okay. **Any opposition to the motion? No seeing none, the motion**
18 **carries.** Mr. Strelcheck, then Ms. Levy.

19
20 **MS. LEVY:** So a couple of things related to this. Just a correction
21 in the committee report, and it's the Endangered Species Act, and
22 then it does say that the shrimp BiOp may need to be reinitiated
23 if too much time passes, and so the issue is we have reinitiated
24 on the shrimp BiOp to address unanticipated take of manta ray and
25 sawfish right, and so that's already happening.

26
27 The issue with the timing is that NMFS is going to, at some point
28 in the near future, need to complete that BiOp, and, as part of
29 that BiOp, there are likely going to be things in there to address
30 take, and to minimize the impact of that take, and so I guess my
31 question for you is it's not clear to me why this working group on
32 the bycatch methodology needs to precede a workgroup that is
33 looking at practical ways to reduce the bycatch that's happening.

34
35 Regardless of how it's estimated, and how much there is, there is
36 bycatch of these protected species. There's take, and so the
37 motion that you passed in August was directed at workable solutions
38 that aim to reduce interactions with smalltooth sawfish and giant
39 manta ray, and I guess I would encourage you to start that working
40 group now, and I don't know why you would want to wait, because,
41 as we discussed, the South Atlantic is already going down this
42 path, and so we're already behind the ball in terms of trying to
43 come up with these practical solutions. Thanks.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I have Dr. Simmons and Dr. Froeschke.

46
47 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank
48 you, Ms. Levy, and so there's several reasons I think we should

1 wait. A lot of the same staff that are involved in the finfish
2 working group would also be involved in the protected resources
3 working group.

4
5 My understanding is the population viability analysis that was
6 requested from previous efforts on this is not yet completed yet,
7 and so that's a big part of what the bycatch working group for
8 protected resources would also be engaged in to address, and so I
9 think we're on, hopefully, the downhill efforts with the finfish,
10 and we can wrap that up very shortly, I hope, and get into the
11 protected resources group, would be my hope, shortly after the
12 June council meeting, but we need a lot of help from the Regional
13 Office and the Science Center to make that happen. Thank you.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Dr. Froeschke, and then
16 Mr. Strelcheck.

17
18 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** A couple things that we're working on in this
19 current workgroup are applicable. For example, if you think about
20 sawfish, that's really a pink fish -- Pink shrimp fishery
21 interactions, and we're still trying to understand the species-
22 specific effort estimates and how those are calculated.

23
24 When we had our recent meeting, we discussed that the trip tickets
25 were accurate at a combined or aggregated species level, but not
26 necessarily at the individual species level, and, given that
27 there's so much expansion, and that's even compounded even more
28 for these rare-event species, we need to understand that.

29
30 A second component of our request is understanding how these
31 extrapolations go all the way from the buckets to the nets to the
32 shrimp, and all those expansion factors, and so we're just trying
33 to get all that understanding, and, as I see it, those are directly
34 applicable to the endangered species stuff.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Froeschke. Mr. Strelcheck.

37
38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I certainly appreciate that, John, and
39 I know, with protected resources bycatch interactions, we have
40 even greater challenges than finfish bycatch, but, as Ms. Levy was
41 stating, right, we do have a BiOp that's been reinitiated. We've
42 been briefing the council for quite some time, and we passed a
43 motion in August to convene a working group.

44
45 My concern, right, is how soon will we be able to get to that
46 working group, and I know you want to wait until this process plays
47 out, but I think it would be advantageous if we start identifying
48 that workgroup, so that, by the time this working group wraps up

1 for finfish bycatch, that one can then hit the ground running
2 thereafter.

3
4 My recollection, and correct me if I'm wrong, Carrie and John, is
5 this would be a working group that doesn't have to be advertised
6 for, but we would internally make selections and inform the council
7 at a council meeting, and is that how the process would work, in
8 terms of composition of the working group?

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

11
12 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I'm sorry. Could you repeat that
13 question one more time?

14
15 **MR. STRELCHECK:** In terms of composition of the working group, I
16 mean, this is an advisory panel, whether we call it a working group
17 or not, and so are we advertising for it, or are we going to be
18 selecting membership to participate in the protected resources
19 working group?

20
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** It says the new working group should
22 be formed by the council chair, the Shrimp Committee chair, the
23 Regional Administrator, and Executive Director, with no more than
24 fifteen members, and then, also, Dr. Freeman brought to my
25 attention that the council passed a motion on the finfish bycatch
26 methodology working group that directed staff to proceed with
27 implementation of the workplan prior to convening the shrimp
28 working group on protected resources, and so we've lost a lot of
29 time on this to get here, and so we really need assistance from
30 the Science Center to make progress on finfish, so we can get to
31 protected resources.

32
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** To add to that, we've received your request for
34 additional information, and you've given us a timeline, and so
35 we'll work to meet that timeline with all the requested
36 information.

37
38 In terms of the protected resources working group, my ask is that
39 we would begin work on identifying people to populate that, and
40 then maybe have a brief-out, at the next council meeting, on who
41 would be on that working group, and then prepare them for meeting
42 once the finfish bycatch working group is completed.

43
44 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think that sounds like a good idea.
45 Thank you.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Dr. Walter.

48

1 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** Yes, and so I agree with the point about the
2 original formation of the working group was really to address the
3 protected species, it sounds like, and I think, right now, we may
4 be getting distracted by finfish, and knowing that my -- In terms
5 of how our staff would allocate our time, we do have some different
6 staff who would be working on the protected -- They're not really,
7 I know, doing that much related to this working group on it, and
8 so I guess my recommendation would be, if that is the intention of
9 this working group, is to get --

10
11 Is to very quickly dispense with finfish, and move on to protected
12 species, then we start thinking about how that group -- The
13 protected species could start providing what information is
14 needed, and not wait until we're done with finfish, in case
15 something comes up, and so that we actually start that process of
16 what is needed for the protected species, and so that working group
17 is also thinking that, very soon, they're going to have to start
18 dealing with protected species, because I think that's the
19 challenge that we really face, because I don't think the other two
20 are going to be -- I think we will be able to get through the
21 finfish as they work through the SEDARs.

22
23 Let's get the what's needed, and maybe after, like offline, what
24 we do is we start writing down what are the things that are going
25 to be needed to evaluate the protected species ones, so that the
26 working group can start looking for solutions, because I think we
27 can't say that there isn't a problem, and we have to find solutions
28 that could mitigate that. Thanks.

29
30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you. I guess I'm going to
31 disagree with the finfish distraction comment, but just remember
32 that the SSC tried to review the bycatch methodology, the general
33 bycatch methodology, for the shrimp fleet in May of last year, and
34 then apply it to red snapper, and then look at its application to
35 triggerfish, and there were many, many, many, many questions, okay,
36 that people didn't feel like they got adequate answers to.

37
38 That's why we asked for the -- We said, hey, we need to get this
39 working group together, not only for protected resources, but to
40 address the finfish issue, and so that's, again, how some of that
41 came about, because those SSC members did not understand that
42 methodology either.

43
44 Now, since the working groups met, I think there's a lot more
45 clarity for the SSC members that have been involved in that, on
46 what data was used and how it's been applied for red snapper, and
47 so, to me, the next hurdle is triggerfish, and then king mackerel,
48 right, and then, as you said, and I like Mr. Strelcheck's idea,

1 and we start getting together who is going to be on this group.

2
3 The council can sign off on it potentially in June, and then we
4 can start developing the agendas and materials that are going to
5 be ready, but is the population viability analysis ready and
6 updated at this time, would be one of my other questions, for
7 sawfish?

8
9 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Walter.

10
11 **DR. WALTER:** We expect to have that in the fall of this year, an
12 updated PVA. We are waiting on the close-kin mark-recapture
13 estimate, which would address the key uncertainty, which was scale
14 of the population. If you remember in the PVA, much of the risk
15 was going to be a function of what the assumed population size
16 was.

17
18 There's also some other added information that would be needed to
19 be included in an updated one, but we expect that to happen, and
20 then there is a timeframe for the -- I think, I believe, and I
21 would defer to SERO on the timeframe that we have to do the work
22 for the BiOp.

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

25
26 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, I guess I'm confused now. I mean, to me, in
27 order to deal with the protected resources, you need two
28 information, two things. You need to know how the interactions
29 are expanded to the fleet, which is all the stuff that we're
30 talking about in the other part, and then you need to know,
31 biologically, how many you can take without jeopardizing the stock,
32 which seems like that's the PVA, which we don't have, and so I'm
33 not sure what we would be doing, I guess. I'm confused now.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I'm going to look at Dr. Sweetman. You
36 had some input?

37
38 **DR. SWEETMAN:** It was a separate question, and so, I mean, we can
39 resolve this.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, John.

42
43 **DR. WALTER:** Well, I mean, we have a PVA. There was a request to
44 update it. The SSC had a number of requests, when they reviewed
45 it, to update it, one of the main things being including the
46 pending research on close-kin mark-recapture, and so we're
47 awaiting that study to provide an estimate, which would then allow
48 us to address that key uncertainty. Otherwise, we could redo the

1 PVA and get the same results, if we make the same assumptions,
2 but, again, there we are under an availability timeframe, in terms
3 of what comes available to provide something that's new.

4
5 Right now, we have a PVA. You can't say that that doesn't exist.
6 It was presented to the SSC. It requested updated information.
7 If we have -- If we get that information, we'll update it with
8 that.

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

11
12 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I think
13 it's a really good plan if we start identifying who's going to be
14 on this working group, what's going to be ready, and when, and
15 what we're asking them to do. Thanks.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I had Mr. Sanchez written down. Did you have a
18 question? No? Okay. Dr. Sweetman.

19
20 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, Dr. Walter, and this
21 is what I've been trying to get an answer to this question, is a
22 time-certain deadline that the council needs to operate on relative
23 to the BiOp, and I feel like that is the direction I feel like
24 we're being pushed on, that there is some time-certain deadline,
25 but we can't -- I feel like we're having trouble figuring that
26 out, and then the order of operations is what we're trying to
27 navigate here as well.

28
29 I'm struggling there. That's really where I feel like the rubber
30 is meeting the road here, between why we're butting heads on this
31 topic, and I just don't know what that time certain is. We know
32 that there might be something, and it seems that way, but I have
33 no idea what it is.

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

36
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Mara can maybe speak to legal risks, right, and
38 so there's no definitive timeline here, but, when you do a
39 biological opinion, right, we're evaluating the impacts of the
40 species and whether or not the continued operation of this fishery,
41 or any other action that might relate to this, will affect the
42 health, status, or extinction risk of this species, right, and so
43 there is risk, obviously, for taking an extended period of time,
44 from a legal standpoint, but, also, what you don't want, and why
45 we're trying to work through this process with you, is for us to
46 come in and make a determination before you potentially come up
47 with some ideas, solutions, ways that you can help to reduce take
48 in this fishery, right?

1
2 Our biological opinion that we did, for example for sea turtles
3 over a decade ago, looked at the actions this council took to
4 reduce sea turtle takes in the longline fishery, and, as a result,
5 we were able to continue to authorize that fishery to operate with
6 those gears in a different manner, and so that's what we're
7 essentially asking for now, is we want that input as part of the
8 process, so that, as we develop this biological opinion, we can
9 take that into consideration, in terms of the final determinations.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Sweetman.

12
13 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck, but what you're saying
14 in there is that you guys would make a determination, and that's
15 what I'm wondering, like what that timeline is for you guys to
16 make a determination would be, because it feels like that's within
17 your control there, along those lines, and so I'm trying to
18 understand like where -- I get it, and we need to -- The longer we
19 wait, the more risk there is relative to an extinction event for
20 some of these species.

21
22 I understand that, but I'm trying to figure out here like, if you
23 guys set the timeframe for making a determination, and I get we're
24 saying we need to move on this, but there needs to -- I don't know,
25 and I'll just stop there. It's confusing.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Allen.

28
29 **DR. ALLEN:** You know, I haven't gone back and looked at the minutes
30 of how it went with the SSC meeting, but my recollection is that
31 the SSC had not just some questions about the PVA, and they thought
32 that it needed to be revised and brought back for review again,
33 and so my recollection of it is that -- Based on what Dr. Walter
34 said, I think we would want to wait until the fall to be able to
35 look at that. I think it was a revision.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Allen. Andy, then Mara.

38
39 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and just one last point. Because we don't
40 work on a lot of ESA issues around the table, I think that's one
41 of the other added challenges, and so we do have an ESA-MSA
42 integration process, right, and that's where we want to work with
43 the council on addressing impacts to endangered species.

44
45 Because we don't do this very often, I think that's part of the
46 challenge, but there are procedures laid out, and that's why we're
47 going down this path of a working group, and why we're asking for
48 your input, and why we want, obviously, the council to have a

1 significant role in the process.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Levy.

4
5 **MS. LEVY:** Well, and I mean the risk is -- So there's been a
6 determination that there needs to be a reinitiation, right, and so
7 the risk is that, if the agency waits too long to complete that,
8 right, then you get an outside lawsuit that pushes you to a date
9 certain to complete that, and then you're in this like court-
10 ordered deadline scenario, which then truncates how much
11 interaction you can have with folks, right, and so I think it was
12 an attempt to --

13
14 Forming this workgroup now, to kind of brainstorm ideas about how
15 to reduce the impact of take that is happening, regardless of the
16 extent of it happening, and regardless of whether it's going to
17 cause jeopardy or not, there's still an obligation to reduce the
18 impact of any take that's happening, and it was an attempt to get
19 that process started, so the conversation could start about what
20 particular things might be able to come from the council to address
21 that.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thanks. Any other comments, or conversation,
24 before we move on? Mr. Schieble.

25
26 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Moving to Other Business, Update on Shrimp Futures
27 Initiative, Tab B, Number 9(a), Dr. Gervasi, from the Southeast
28 Fisheries Science Center, presented an update on the Shrimp Futures
29 initiative, concluding with anticipated deliverables and the
30 timeline.

31
32 Update on Shrimp cELB and Shrimp Moratorium Documents, Mr. Helies,
33 from the Southeast Regional Office, informed the committee that
34 the rulemaking package is being prepared for the shrimp cELB
35 framework action and that the agency is working to get Shrimp
36 Amendment 19 implemented before the October 26, 2026 permit
37 moratorium expiration. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Is there any other
40 business to come before the shrimp report, or committee? No. All
41 right, not seeing any, we'll move on to our next agenda item, and
42 it will be Dr. Banks and Migratory Species.

43
44 **MIGRATORY SPECIES COMMITTEE REPORT**

45
46 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The committee adopted the
47 agenda, Tab B, Number 1, and approved the minutes, Tab M, Number
48 2, of the June 2024 meeting.

1
2 Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Proposed Rule on Shark
3 Management Measures, Tab M, Numbers 4(a) through (c), HMS staff
4 provided a presentation on a proposed rule which considers
5 modifications to the commercial and recreational regulations for
6 several shark species.

7
8 Several committee members stated that a dynamic approach for a
9 size limit, ranging from no size limit up to some maximum value,
10 was difficult to interpret for the average angler. As an example,
11 for some sharks, the minimum size limit outlined in the alternative
12 would be greater than ever recorded for that species.

13
14 HMS staff replied that the goal of the action was to make shark
15 size and retention limits consistent across several species. He
16 continued that applying an individual size limit to each managed
17 shark species causes confusion for anglers, especially when those
18 species are difficult to tell apart.

19
20 A committee member noted that the recreational size limit action
21 grouped spinner and blacktip shark species together, since they
22 are morphologically similar, but separated those species when
23 proposing alternatives for retention limits.

24
25 Several committee members indicated that recreational shore
26 fishing for sharks is popular in their states. Another member
27 stated that headboats based in Texas often target shark species.
28 To reduce confusion for angler, states often adopt federal
29 regulation for sharks in state waters, and the alternatives in the
30 proposed rule could affect state rules as well if consistency is
31 maintained.

32
33 Another committee member noted that the purpose and need statement
34 included language to, quote, "optimize the ability of the
35 commercial and recreational shark fisheries to harvest available
36 quota to the extent practical", end quote, which contrasts with
37 implementing retention limits for prolific shark species such as
38 Atlantic sharpnose and bonnethead sharks.

39
40 The committee was reminded that the comment period for the proposed
41 rule has been extended to May 29, 2026. The committee was
42 encouraged to review the draft comment letter available in the
43 briefing book, Tab M, Number 4(b). Any substantial edits to the
44 letter should be provided by Full Council and presented for the
45 inclusion in the draft letter. At this time, Mr. Chair, I would
46 like to turn it over for those edits.

47
48 Okay. Bernie, will you bring up the draft letter, and I believe

1 we have some edits that were submitted, and you can scroll down to
2 alternatives for recreational shark fishery management. Scroll up
3 just a little bit. The first blue section is the largest
4 modification to the -- Keep going up. There.

5
6 This is where edits were submitted deviating from the draft letter
7 that was in the background, and so I'll give everybody a second,
8 and hopefully you've read it by now, but I'll give everybody a
9 second to look at it.

10
11 **DR. LISA HOLLENSHAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and so, just to give
12 everybody a little 35,000-foot overview, these edits that came in
13 were sort of substantial, and so we wanted to make sure that
14 council had a chance to review them, and add anything if they
15 thought, or that sort of thing, but just see what had been done.

16
17 Largely, there was a general comment section that was put in here
18 because it sort of was germane to the size limit and vessel limit,
19 and so that's why that was included. Again, as Dr. Banks had
20 mentioned, any of the changes are in this blue font, and are a
21 little bit larger font. Some of these things are actually
22 reflected straight out of the committee report, which you'll
23 notice, and so sort of to capture that.

24
25 The large view seemed to be sort of concerns that I think the
26 council has discussed, and those edits were then provided, and it
27 was sort of the lack of, you know, sort of very directed science-
28 based or biological rationale for some of these. It seemed as if,
29 for the most part, this was an attempt to sort of administratively
30 make things a little easier for not only the Office of HMS, but
31 also anglers on the water, to have some understanding of things.

32
33 However, you know, sort of the dynamic nature of what they were
34 proposing, you know, the council, or at least to some of the edits
35 here provided, suggest that those might be counterintuitive to
36 what they're trying to do. The idea that you do have a dynamic
37 range means that it could potentially change from anything, from
38 absolutely no limit to up to five for a vessel, for example, and
39 that, you know, anglers on the water -- Even if HMS gave proper
40 notice, you would still have to look every day, you know, before
41 you go out to see, is this -- Am I still good with no limit, and
42 so that that could cause some confusion for people.

43
44 It's almost like you would have to think about it all the time, as
45 opposed to being something that's a little more static. The
46 understanding, of course, also being that, you know, HMS is willing
47 to bring in -- There's a lot of shark species, and some of them
48 look very similar, and this idea, but, you know, it's an angler's

1 responsibility to sort of know what shark you've brought onboard,
2 and what those regulations are, and, if you're unsure about it,
3 you know, you let it go.

4
5 That's what most people do, even with finfish species, and people
6 get confused with things, and like the jack species, for example,
7 and so those were the sort of main take-home points that is infused
8 in this letter.

9
10 Certainly, at certain points, they've been added, as you can see,
11 throughout. At the end, there's sort of a summary paragraph
12 suggesting that like, hey, here's sort of our major points
13 associated with it. You know, again, we're not seeing a whole lot
14 of biological information here, and understanding too that,
15 especially for shark species, there's a lot of time in between
16 stock assessments.

17
18 Only one stock assessment has been done, and that was a long time
19 ago, and so the idea that the need for dynamic changes to size
20 limits is not really aligned with the timeline of when we get
21 biological information for things, and so that larger take-home
22 message.

23
24 There is a couple of strikethroughs, and so there was one paragraph
25 under the recreational minimum size limits that's been struck, but
26 it was largely reworded, and so some of the things that were in
27 there, but to be more reworded towards what the council discussions
28 and committee discussions were around the table.

29
30 There's also -- We had made mention in talking about the difference
31 between, you know, incompatible state and federal regulations, and
32 that was brought up in committee, and that's in that summary
33 paragraph that's sort of at the bottom.

34
35 I think council staff was thinking -- You know, certainly, if
36 anybody sees anything that they would also like to add, or have
37 substantial edits, we could do this now, but, if anything, you
38 know, we would probably, Mr. Chair, turn this over to the chair
39 and vice chair to just review one more time for you all's
40 discretion, with the understanding that probably there wouldn't be
41 any more substantial edits, but editing, if you all thought
42 something needed to be changed, largely that -- You know, these
43 are the edits that we have been provided now, and we just wanted
44 to make sure everybody could see them.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for the information, Dr. Hollensead.
47 Mr. Geeslin.

48

1 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, as someone that is, you
2 know, tasked with going before the commission back in our state,
3 and changing regulations, I'm constantly trying to find my safe
4 space in relation to making regulations not necessarily simpler,
5 but easily understood for any given, you know, customer base,
6 whether that's a rec fisherman, commercial fisherman, what have
7 you.

8
9 A lot of these folks, they can't tell come here from sic 'em, or
10 a bonnethead from a hammerhead with these sharks, and so anything
11 we can do to, you know, simplify not only the size regulations,
12 but make some of this more consistent, easily understood, and also
13 easily enforced, I would be in support of.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Mr. Anson.

16
17 **MR. ANSON:** Just as Dr. Hollensead said, and I agree with what she
18 said, the rationale that staff came up with for these particular
19 points and edits.

20
21 I just have maybe some suggestions or such. In that last -- In
22 this paragraph right here that's on the board, before "abundant"
23 in the third sentence down, maybe include, or add, "considered" or
24 "deemed" in front of "abundant".

25
26 Then, down in the second-to-last sentence of the paragraph, where
27 it says, "The result of dynamic management proposed in this rule
28 requires greater vigilance by the angler, which could negatively
29 impact their desire to go fishing."

30
31 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I think, Mr. Anson, we'll let Bernie add it now.
32 We'll give Bernie a chance. While Bernie is working on that, Mr.
33 Schieble.

34
35 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Kevin, are you going to address the next sentence
36 right after that, also? Did you plan to, or I can.

37
38 **MR. ANSON:** I wasn't -- I didn't have anything else to add.

39
40 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** It says, "Considering that shark species takes so
41 long between stock assessments, the dynamic approach" -- It just
42 doesn't read right when we're looking at that.

43
44 **MR. WALKER:** Should it be "take" and "takes"?

45
46 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Like, "Considering the timeframe between shark stock
47 assessments", or "the length of time between shark stock
48 assessments, the dynamic approach to the shark management does not

1 fulfill the purpose", and something -- It just doesn't read right.
2
3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Sweetman.
4
5 **DR. SWEETMAN:** While we're on vessel limits here, so I know we
6 kind of had a bit of a conversation relative to shore-based shark
7 fishing, and I know that's an important component in Florida, and
8 Karyl did highlight that, you know, or maybe it was Guy that
9 highlighted it, that the state can still manage their own waters,
10 and I kind of highlighted the issue on the Atlantic side for ASMFC
11 relative to regulatory authority.
12
13 Understood, and not necessarily relevant to the Gulf Council here,
14 but I just want to highlight it. I mean, right now, you're not
15 required to have an HMS permit to harvest sharks in federal waters,
16 but, if they ever did put that in place, that shore-based shark
17 fishing component, you would no longer be able to do that anymore,
18 because it is tied to a vessel, and it's a similar issue that's
19 been going on with tuna recently, and so I just wanted to kind of
20 highlight that for you all.
21
22 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Mr. Schieble.
23
24 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I think just add "considering", the "ing" after
25 "consider", and that will be ready to go.
26
27 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We'll give Lisa and Barnie a chance to fix
28 it. Okay. Looking around the table, is everybody okay with the
29 language? Dr. Hollensead, are you good with it?
30
31 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** I'm good.
32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Anson.
34
35 **MR. ANSON:** Since you asked about the last sentence, and so,
36 "Considering the timeframe between stock assessments, a dynamic
37 approach to shark management may not align with streamlining", or
38 "administrative streamlining", "the purpose of this action", or
39 "which is the purpose of this action".
40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Anson, do you like that? Are you good?
42
43 **MR. ANSON:** I think it's okay.
44
45 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, and staff may add some more verbiage. Dr.
46 Simmons.
47
48 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so just a

1 minor suggestion, and so, "Considering the timeframe", and maybe
2 "Considering the length of time", to be a little bit more clear,
3 "between stock assessments".
4

5 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Is Dr. Hollensead good? Everyone is good? All
6 right. We're going to move on. I'm going to turn it back over to
7 Dr. Banks.
8

9 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Update on Modifying HMS Charter
10 For-Hire Electronic Reporting, Tab M, Numbers 5(a) and 5(b), HMS
11 staff indicated that their office was working on the final rule
12 for modifying HMS electronic reporting and that it was possible it
13 could be published before the end of 2026.
14

15 She continued that part of the reason the publication is taking so
16 long is that HMS is aware of ongoing electronic reporting efforts
17 in the Southeast and is working towards the goal of one-stop
18 reporting. She will speak to others in her office about the
19 availability of budget for the electronic programs. That concludes
20 my report.
21

22 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Banks. Is there anything else
23 that needs to come before Migratory Species? All right. Thank
24 you. We're going to move on to our next agenda item, and it's
25 going to be Data Collection, and Captain Walker is going to lead
26 us through.
27

28 **DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE REPORT**

29
30 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Data Collection Committee
31 adopted the agenda and approved the minutes of the January of 2026
32 meeting. The first discussion was on exploring alternative methods
33 for estimating recreational landings for rarely-encountered
34 species, which was a discussion on deepwater by Dr. Allen. He
35 presented a method for collecting recreational data from the deep-
36 drop fishery.
37

38 A committee member asked about the feasibility of having each Gulf
39 state provide an endorsement for anglers targeting deepwater
40 grouper. Another committee member replied that the state
41 commissions are usually hesitant to implement new requirements on
42 anglers, especially in the case of the deep-drop fishery, which
43 has very few participants. That was what we had for deepwater
44 discussion, and I believe Mr. Frady has some input on that part of
45 the discussion.
46

47 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Mr. Frady.
48

1 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this time, I think I would
2 like to go ahead and make a motion that is based upon this first
3 paragraph right here, and, Bernie, do you have that motion? I'll
4 just go ahead and read it.

5
6 **Motion to direct staff to begin a document to create a federal
7 recreational deepwater grouper landing permit for the targeting
8 and retention of species in the deepwater group complex.**

9
10 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a motion on the board by Mr. Frady.
11 Is there a second to the motion? Mr. Sanchez seconded. Discussion
12 on the motion?

13
14 **MR. FRADY:** May I give some rationale?

15
16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, sir.

17
18 **MR. FRADY:** To define the universe of recreational anglers
19 targeting and harvesting deepwater grouper species and improve the
20 precision of the harvest projections to apply accountability
21 measures specifically to those anglers fishing for those species,
22 and, if a permit system is acceptable for HMS, then a similar
23 system for deepwater groups is also justifiable. Thank you.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Frady. Is there any
26 discussion? Mr. Anson.

27
28 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so, Captain Frady, what in this motion is
29 going to help with the data, and the getting better data? All I
30 see is a permit, or at least to create document for establishing
31 a landing permit, but there's no associated special data collection
32 points with this motion.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Anson. To answer that, I'm going
35 to have to defer to my fellow colleagues here in my peer group to
36 help give you a better answer, other than giving you a fisherman's
37 answer. In the first paragraph there, basically everybody said we
38 don't want to get this data, and it's not important to us. It's
39 just only a small user group. Therefore, nobody seemed to want to
40 take ownership of the data collection of it.

41
42 My thoughts are, if nobody wants to manage the data, collect the
43 data, I believe it's imperative going forward to today, with the
44 number of people moving to the Gulf coast, and the population
45 increasing, and boat sales are increasing, and I think it's
46 imperative to at least to identify the universe of those fishing
47 for it, and we may be surprised, and that deepwater grouper is not
48 really overfished, and there's not a problem with it.

1
2 It may be only a few people doing it, but what if we find out,
3 through the HMS-style permit, that there may be 1,500 to 2,000
4 people harvesting these fish, and that's going to put a whole new
5 dynamics in the importance of implementing some kind of a better
6 data collection system. In the meantime, the HMS permit style
7 would give us the ability to identify the universe.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I have a couple of hands. Dr. Banks.

10
11 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you, Troy. I guess my question is are you
12 planning on both private and for-hire being a part of this, and,
13 if so, are you planning on -- Like HMS's permit, since that's the
14 example you're suggesting, there is a private permit that they
15 have to purchase, and then a for-hire is separate, and so are you
16 planning on two separate motions that way, because there's also
17 some different reporting requirements for HMS based on that.
18

19 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Dr. Banks. My vision of this includes
20 everyone other than commercial longline-type people. If you're a
21 recreational, or charter-for-hire, you know, it doesn't matter,
22 and you should obtain the permit.
23

24 The decision that we need to really make around here is, is it
25 going to be required just for the boat, or is it going to be
26 required per angler doing it? If you've got six anglers, and all
27 of them are targeting deepwater grouper, do you need six permits?
28 That's going to be a decision that this council could give guidance
29 on, but I think a simple permit, if you're recreational or charter-
30 for-hire or both, which, basically, charter-for-hire comes up
31 under recreational, and I think it would help identify the
32 universe, and so a simple permit, and let's get everybody's input
33 on --
34

35 I know it's going to cost a little money, but, as long as we have
36 cost recovery, I think we would be fine, but at least our agency
37 would know exactly who is targeting those fish, whether it be by
38 the boat or by the person, and then they could go back and start
39 surveying those people, be it by mail or whatever they choose to,
40 to say did you -- Before you renew your permit, we have to take a
41 video class, and learn to identify sharks, and, anybody that knows
42 anything about sharks, half the people in the public don't know
43 how to identify the sharks, except some very special people that
44 I know that know how to identify them.
45

46 If we had a simple little thing before you renew your fisheries
47 permit, your HMS-style permit for the deepwater grouper, and you
48 just simply said did you catch any of these last year, and did you

1 keep them, and what species did you keep, and that could be done
2 simply in the renewal of the permit process, and we would get a
3 whole lot more information out of this unknown universe of anglers.
4 Thank you, Dr. Banks.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Banks, to that point, and I do have a list.

7
8 **DR. BANKS:** Yes. To that point, and so I think what I'm trying to
9 ask you is this -- I'm for this idea of exploring it, but just
10 remember HMS, the permit on the private side, is per person, but,
11 for the for-hire, it's per vessel.

12
13 You're also going to have some things with the for-hire side in
14 the eastern states, and Kevin and C.J. and the General can correct
15 me if I'm wrong, but visiting anglers do not need licenses. The
16 captain covers their license. In Louisiana and Texas, you are
17 required a non-resident license. Some of those inconsistencies
18 are going to play into your data collection is all I'm saying,
19 just as we move forward with this.

20
21 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Dr. Banks. At this point in time, I would
22 not want to burden the customers of a charter boat who are going
23 fishing to do that. It would be great if we could, and we may
24 evolve into that, but, to start with, if you're on a private boat,
25 and you're going out and catching your fish, you should have one
26 probably, and I could go either way, with the boat or for every
27 passenger on the boat, but we're all downplaying the deepwater
28 groupers like, well, it's not a big fishery, and it's not a big
29 effort, but these fish live to eighty years of age, and they don't
30 change sex until forty, and I'm more concerned about the long-term
31 health of this fishery, and I'll do whatever it takes.

32
33 If you all require, or the agency requires, us to do one per
34 person, then we'll do one, but, for a charter boat, federally-
35 permitted, it would be easier for me to get one permit a year for
36 the boat, and I wouldn't want to put that on the private angler,
37 but, if the private angler, who has a registration for a vessel,
38 whether it be documented or a state number on it, just have one
39 permit for that whole boat, but, before he renews, make that person
40 -- Or make them report, and give an estimate of the number of each
41 species that they harvested before they renew, but I'm deferring
42 to my peer group here. I think this can be done, and it would
43 collect some data that nobody is willing to really step up and do.
44 Thank you.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I have a list of hands. We're going to
47 start with Captain Walker, and then Mr. Geeslin.
48

1 **MR. WALKER:** Okay, and so, to Kevin's question, I believe that
2 identifying the universe would be the first -- That could be
3 considered data, to answer your question about data collection,
4 and, you know, obviously, after that, we could expand on more
5 specific data, but I think that's an important data point, and, to
6 the rest of it, where, you know, how would it apply to charter
7 boats, and all these technical parts, I think maybe we could modify
8 the motion to ask staff to explore creating a federal deepwater
9 grouper landing permit, and that would include all of these
10 technical things that we're not going to iron out today that are
11 just going to keep coming up.

12
13 If we keep talking about this, we're going to think of more, and
14 it's going to expand, and so maybe if staff just explored what
15 would be involved in doing this, we could have a more effective
16 discussion on it at a later time.

17
18 **DR. SWEETMAN:** A friendly amendment?

19
20 **MR. WALKER:** Sure. A friendly amendment if --

21
22 **MR. FRADY:** To Captain Walker's point, if he wanted to amend it,
23 I'm welcome to some other language in there, and to have the
24 council staff weigh-in, and or-the agency weigh-in on the details.
25 I've put a lot of brain power just to coming up with this, all
26 right, and the details is kind of like -- It's above my pay grade.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We hear you, Troy, and I have a list of hands,
29 and these folks can probably help the situation. Mr. Geeslin,
30 then Mr. Strelcheck.

31
32 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Troy, I'm all for collecting
33 better data on these, and, at least in Texas, for the rec sector,
34 are pretty rare species. However, I do -- I do see some struggles
35 taking this back home and trying to get enforcement behind this,
36 and so, if it's strictly for identifying the universe, to follow-
37 up in some type of survey instrument, I think it can be pulled
38 off, but I just wonder what, from a state agency, state resource
39 agency, perspective this would involve, in terms of passing this
40 through a commission action, passing this through and getting buy-
41 in from our law enforcement. If it doesn't have any of that, full
42 steam ahead, but I'm interested to hear your thoughts on that.

43
44 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. To my point, if the states
45 wanted to manage deepwater grouper, they would have already done
46 it if they thought it was a problem. I'm just trying to come in
47 at 30,000 feet and get something that identifies the universe,
48 more than using it as a tool to punish anyone.

1
2 I'm not wanting law enforcement to have to pull somebody over and
3 say you've got deepwater grouper, and just be a jerk to them.
4 However, if they did, if they did pull them over, and they said,
5 do you have your HMS permit, just like, you know, that you do with
6 HMS, then they -- Then they have a right to go, oh, you've got
7 deepwater grouper, and here's your endorsement, and you're good.
8
9 I mean, I wouldn't want to get into details of penalties or
10 anything like that. It's more -- I envision this as just nothing
11 more than a way to circumvent and get data coming from the big
12 guys being put down to where law enforcement goes, oh, if you've
13 got your permit, and here it goes, because HMS -- There are people
14 who have been written tickets at tournaments that didn't have an
15 HMS permit, but they had a tournament and didn't have one. I don't
16 want to be punitive to anybody. I just want to be data collection
17 driven. Thank you, Mr. Geeslin.
18
19 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We're going to go to Mr. Strelcheck, then
20 Mr. Marquez, and Mr. Anson.
21
22 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Captain Frady, and I appreciate,
23 obviously, you trying to keep the momentum on this. I guess the
24 first question is what are you envisioning in terms of a document,
25 since it's a very generic word?
26
27 **MR. FRADY:** If I were the benevolent dictator, I would print a
28 document and have a weblink on the NOAA website where you renew
29 permits, and it would be just like it says to renew your HMS
30 permit. It would look like a pretty piece of paper that the
31 government prints that has your name.
32
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** That's not what I'm asking. I'm asking, for the
34 staff, what are you envisioning for a document that staff is going
35 to develop? Is it a white paper? Is it an amendment? Is it a -
36 - What are you wanting them to develop right now?
37
38 **MR. FRADY:** I want the simplest government move. I would like for
39 this right here to move from this paper to get printed out and
40 mailed to you, and you said let's make it happen. I don't care
41 about -- I don't know about all these white papers and comments
42 and stuff like that. I'm going to keep this simple.
43
44 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Troy, let me help you. Just get a white paper.
45 A white paper.
46
47 **MR. FRADY:** I've been saying all along that it needs a white paper.
48 I just didn't know what to call it.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you.
3

4 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I was doing that for the benefit of staff,
5 obviously. I feel like, if we're going to do this, we ought to do
6 this right, and so Mike set this up nicely. You know, as Kevin
7 just noted earlier, you know, there's challenges with both knowing
8 the effort, but there's also challenges just collecting biological
9 samples and information from the fishermen.

10
11 You have two parts of the equation, that we had to solve both of
12 those. This solves one side of it, but not the other side of it,
13 and so I want to be able to look more holistically at pros, cons,
14 lessons learned from other fisheries on deepwater grouper, and
15 really kind of dig in further from what Mike has started us down
16 the path of to fully understand options. I know that's not the
17 expedient process that you're thinking of, but I feel like it might
18 provide a more holistic solution.
19

20 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck.
21

22 **MR. FRADY:** Mr. Strelcheck, can I ask you a question? Did HMS
23 have a white paper when they first got started? What was their
24 process, because I don't want to do anything that's going to
25 disrupt anybody.
26

27 I want the simplest form of let's get something started as fast as
28 we can, and if it means editing a white paper, or full-blown
29 amendment, whatever it takes, and I just want the easiest. I mean,
30 I don't -- I want to reduce your government burden.
31

32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just in response to that, I do not know what the
33 process is for HMS. I think the question is expedience over the
34 quality of the end product and trying to come up with a solution
35 we need that's going to be lasting.
36

37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you.
38

39 **MR. FRADY:** I think we have enough brainpower in here to help guide
40 this in a quick and efficient manner, where it may not take two
41 years before it's implemented. I mean, the stroke of the pen is
42 pretty amazing if we don't have to do all these white papers, but,
43 if it requires a white paper, we've got people on this staff and
44 the agency who could say, oh, that would work, and that won't work.
45

46 I just don't want to get into a data collection system like we had
47 from the charter-for-hire industry, and, all of a sudden, we start
48 getting these personal questions like, well, how much does your

1 mama make, and I don't want that. I don't want to get something
2 where someone gets in there and says, well, if we can get some of
3 this additional information, and it just it convolutes the whole
4 process.

5
6 I want the simplest form, and, if we can use it for data collection,
7 and I don't want to use it for law enforcement, but just to get
8 going, but I thank you for anybody who has got any guidance on
9 this right here. This is just my brainpower kicking in, and it's
10 not -- I'm done, and I need help.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you. All right. Give us a minute. Sit
13 back for a second, and we're going to help you. Mr. Marquez, then
14 Mr. Anson, then Mr. Walker.

15
16 **MR. MARQUEZ:** Just two comments. This came up under these rarely-
17 encountered species, and so is the intent really just to go after
18 the deepwater grouper complex, or do you want to get data on, you
19 know, queen snapper, or tilefish, and, I mean, the people that are
20 in that ultra deepwater fishery, or is it just the groupers?
21 That's one thing.

22
23 Then just my other second comment was, you know, rather than going
24 this HMS route, is, you know, there perhaps a better way to do
25 this coordinated through the state, and so we have several states
26 that already have, for example, an offshore recreational landing
27 permit, you know, where you could have some sort of endorsement
28 like that. If you're really just trying to get, starting out,
29 trying to get a handle on what the effort is, who is going out and
30 doing that, and, you know, maybe there's a better way to do that,
31 working it through the state system, than this federal permit.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Marquez. Mr. Anson, then Mr.
34 Walker.

35
36 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so I had a similar question that Mr. Marquez
37 had about the breadth of the species here, because it is kind of
38 a specialized group of anglers that could be targeting multiple
39 species that are of interest, potentially, to the council besides
40 deepwater grouper, but the challenge with that is that, if you
41 have it under one permit, then your precision, as far as the amount
42 of effort, potentially may go down as well.

43
44 Going back to my previous comment, Troy, relative to this motion,
45 and I think Andy was trying to get at a little bit too, is provide
46 a little bit more clarity as to what your intention is with the
47 white paper that the council staff would bring back to the council,
48 and so you talk about identifying the effort, which would be

1 through the landing, but there's no mechanism in this motion for
2 council staff to have direction towards the analysis of that data
3 that you get in.

4
5 I appreciate your comment about that they would just report it at
6 the end of the year, when they go to renew, but, from what I've
7 heard, the federal government has had that style of reporting for
8 duck stamps for many years, and I've heard many people comment
9 that that data isn't really worth the paper it's written on,
10 because people will just fill in a number, because they have to go
11 into the website and fill in a number somewhere, and they just
12 don't recall accurately what their level of -- You know, how many
13 ducks they killed for a duck stamp.

14
15 That's why I'm saying, if we're going to go into this, I think we
16 need to kind of look at, again, the breadth of species, who is
17 going to be required, because that has an impact on the data
18 collection processes, whether it's vessel or angler-based, and
19 then, you know, we can give some latitude to staff as far as what,
20 you know, data collection system could be implemented, or
21 suggested, but that's what I was trying to get, and this motion,
22 to me, only reads that you're going to establish a permit, and
23 that's what I was trying to get at.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Anson. Captain Walker, and then
26 we have Dewey.

27
28 **MR. WALKER:** All right. I think I'm getting the gist of where
29 we're at, and if I could suggest a friendly amendment to have your
30 motion say to direct staff to begin a -- I guess a white paper is
31 the words we're using, and exploring the feasibility of a deepwater
32 species or complex endorsement, permit, or license.

33
34 That might at least get us the first part, which is identifying
35 the universe, which I think is a really big deal, and, with this
36 information, then we can go towards where Mr. Anson was talking
37 about actual reporting, once you have this permit, and how many
38 are reporting, and if it's even worth it, but at least we'll have
39 the data on how many people are accessing this fishery, but, again,
40 all of these things are a long discussion to iron out all the
41 kinks, and I don't see that happening today, but, to me, this right
42 here would start the ball rolling, and, you know, get us to
43 probably iron out some of the things that we're going to end up
44 talking about at the table over and over again, and back and forth,
45 and so maybe eliminate some of that and get right down to the part
46 we need. Are you okay with that friendly amendment, Captain Frady?

47
48 **MR. FRADY:** Yes, sir. That's a good start right there. Yes, sir.

1 Absolutely.
2
3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Captain Walker, before I get to Dewey, talking
4 with staff, at this point, it seems to me that it would be much
5 easier -- The path of least resistance would be the way it was
6 written before, and it would be more broad, and let staff start to
7 develop the white paper, come back with some options, and we can
8 add to -- We might add species, and we might add some other
9 things, but, to get this going, and to keep it on our schedule,
10 the first motion was sufficient.
11
12 **MR. WALKER:** To that, I would add that this says deepwater grouper,
13 and the other says deepwater complex.
14
15 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I'll ask Dr. Hollensead to pick a word, and we'll
16 put it in there, and it will be fine. Dr. Froeschke.
17
18 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So, if we were to write this paper, the purpose
19 would be to better identify the universe of anglers like targeting
20 and harvesting the fish, the purpose?
21
22 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** That's what I understood from Mr. Frady. Dewey.
23 Dr. Simmons.
24
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Just real quick, just a suggestion on
26 the licensure and endorsement. I think that's more terms that the
27 states are using, and I don't know if there could be confusion
28 there, which was why I think permit, and following along with what
29 HMS had, and like I think some of the states have to go through
30 changes in order to change a license, and so, even though it's
31 federal, I just -- I didn't know if we want to stay away from that
32 terminology, to try to make a clear distinction, since like the
33 State of Florida has a reef fish endorsement. Just a suggestion.
34
35 **MR. FRADY:** Yes.
36
37 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Then I like exploring the feasibility.
38 I think that gives staff more flexibility, and so that part I think
39 is helpful, and, also, I think we should keep federal, and, if
40 it's recreational, keep recreational there. Thank you.
41
42 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Dewey.
43
44 **MR. HEMILRIGHT:** Sitting here listening to deliberations, I think
45 you finally got to what you were asking in the infinite stages,
46 and I would also maybe have your staff reach out to HMS and the
47 Mid-Atlantic Council to see just how they -- How they've done
48 stuff.

1
2 Even though they might be a little further along, and I'm not
3 saying it's successful, but I see where you're looking at to
4 identify your universe, and you also might be able, once you start
5 identifying your universe, to tie it in with other state permits,
6 or something else they have, so you can see the track of the
7 fishing they do, or something like that, but I think you finally
8 got to the motion, and where you need to be. Thank you.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you. I have Mr. Schieble, and then Mr.
11 Sanchez.

12
13 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, just to follow up on what Mr. Marquez
14 said earlier, you know, in Louisiana, we have the ROLP, right, the
15 recreational offshore landing permit. It covers these species.
16 They're included in that, along with, you know, the nine other
17 species complex that's in there.

18
19 A good example of this, and how to get this done right, I would
20 suggest that we make this an individual-angler-level permit,
21 whatever is going to come out of this, a permit or a license, and
22 not a vessel level.

23
24 So, for example, we were looking to determine what the level of
25 reporting is going on with swordfish in Louisiana, because we
26 noticed like dockside intercepts were going up, and more were being
27 caught, and so I contacted HMS. They gave me the results of the
28 reported swordfish that were being landed in Louisiana, versus
29 what was coming out of our actual LA Creel survey with the
30 recreational landing permit, and it was about half of what we had
31 was actually being reported through that system, because that
32 vessel-level system does not accurately get the effort on the
33 backsides.

34
35 If you've got a charter boat full of six guys, right, the charter
36 captain has to report that, but, if you have just a recreational
37 boat with six guys, who do you contact for the effort on that,
38 right? Those other five are probably not getting contacted, and
39 so it's not reflected in that effort survey on the backside, unless
40 it's individual-level anglers recreationally, and so I would
41 suggest that going forward with this.

42
43 I think what Dr. Simmons was saying, you know, having that as a
44 permit, more so than a license, would be helpful, because there
45 would be duplicity with the existing state permits that cover this
46 already, and so we don't need double the effort taking place.

47
48 A good example in Dr. Allen's presentation is he had that table of

1 the landings in there, and it showed the LA Creel landings of
2 deepwater grouper. Those are number of intercepts. That's not
3 extrapolated by the effort on the backside.

4
5 When you look at our landings after that, it's orders of magnitude
6 higher, once the effort survey takes place, right, and so two
7 things are trying to happen with this. One is identify how many
8 anglers are actually going after this, right, and that's your big
9 goal, to figure out that user group, even more refined from the
10 saltwater offshore angler group, which is what the recreational
11 landing permit does, and so we have to figure out a way to get
12 that, and that can be something that Dr. Hollensead gets in here
13 as a way to do that, but then make sure that effort on the backside
14 is being applied appropriately, right, and so that's where it's
15 individual-angler-level.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Mr. Sanchez.

18
19 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I have the utmost confidence in staff that they'll
20 put together a white paper, and they know what we're trying to do,
21 and they'll present us with all these things that we have to deal
22 with, and so we don't have to do this right now. I thought I
23 screwed Shrimp up.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Okay, and so I'm going to go back to
26 Mr. Frady and Mr. Sanchez, to the motion that's highlighted right
27 now, that Bernie has highlighted, and ask Mr. Frady if you are
28 okay with this being your motion.

29
30 **MR. FRADY:** Yes, sir.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Sanchez seconded, and are you okay with the
33 changes? Okay. I'll read it into the record, and we'll take a
34 vote. **Troy's motion is to direct staff to begin a white paper**
35 **exploring the feasibility of identifying the universe of**
36 **recreational anglers targeting deepwater grouper using a permit.**
37 **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion**
38 **carries.** Captain Walker.

39
40 **MR. WALKER:** Wow, we're only halfway through Data Collection, and
41 it was only one page. Okay. The committee discussed other
42 mandatory recreational reporting programs in the Gulf. Several
43 committee members mentioned the program run by the HMS species
44 could be used for deepwater grouper.

45
46 Specific to the State of Alabama, Mr. Anson provided recent
47 reporting rate information for red snapper, greater amberjack, and
48 gray triggerfish. He added that the reporting rates have declined

1 over time.

2
3 The South Atlantic liaison mentioned that there is mandatory
4 recreation reporting for tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic. The
5 committee directed staff to investigate the recreational reporting
6 program for tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic. The committee requested
7 that the council staff speak with those knowledgeable with the
8 tilefish data collection program and determine if a presentation
9 would be beneficial for continued committee discussion. Mr. Chair,
10 this concludes my report.

11
12 **FULL COUNCIL CLOSED SESSION REPORT**
13 **ANNOUNCEMENT OF 2025 LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER/TEAM OF THE YEAR**
14

15 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Is there any other
16 discussion for Data Collection? Not seeing any, give us a moment
17 here. I'm going to look for a report. I'm trying to go to Item
18 E, if we can complete that real quickly, and then we'll take a
19 break. Bear with me. Okay. Thank you.

20
21 Full Council Closed session report, myself as the chair, and
22 Selection of Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP) and Red Drum Advisory
23 Panel members. The Full Council was convened to review applicants
24 for the Coastal Migratory Pelagics and Red Drum Advisory Panels.
25 The council discussed the applicants and made preliminary
26 appointments for each advisory panel. Appointees will be announced
27 at the June 2026 council meeting in Tampa, Florida after a
28 completion of background checks for fishery violations.

29
30 Selection of 2025 Law Enforcement Officer Team of the Year, the
31 council reviewed the nomination information and recommendations
32 received from the Law Enforcement Technical Committee. The council
33 selected FWC's Kyle Yurewitch, Officer Specialist, and Matthew
34 Rubenstein, Officer Specialist, as the 2025 Law Enforcement Team
35 of the Year. The team will be honored at the next council meeting
36 held in Florida. This concludes my report. Let's take a fifteen-
37 minute break, and we'll reconvene at 2:15. Thank you.

38
39 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)
40

41 **GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE REPORT**
42

43 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Welcome back, and so I'll go through
44 the Gulf SEDAR Committee report, and then we'll do the Reef Fish.
45 All right. The Gulf SEDAR Committee report was April 7. I am the
46 chair. The committee adopted the agenda, Tab I, Number 1, and
47 approved the minutes, Tab I, Number 2, of the August 2025 meeting
48 as written.

1
2 Update on MRIP Fishing Effort Survey (FES) Pilot Results, Tab I,
3 Number 4, Dr. Richard Cody, NOAA Office of Science and Technology,
4 provided an update on the 2026 pilot results of the Marine
5 Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey (MREP-FES)
6 and timing for the release of the calibrated historical time series
7 by species. A council member asked how the updated calibration
8 ratios would be used to correct historical landings data. Dr.
9 Cody replied that the ratios would be applied to each species by
10 area and time.

11
12 Mr. Trevor Moncrief, the SSC chair, reviewed SSC discussions about
13 the same presentation from the SSC February 2026 meeting, which
14 focused on differences in observed results between states, months,
15 and other data strata.

16
17 Dr. Cody then reviewed the Recreational Angler Partnership
18 Improvement Directive. This is a re-envisioned partnership
19 between federal and regional data collection partners for
20 collecting recreational fishing data that is more partner-driven,
21 as opposed to federally-driven. All right. Moving on.

22
23 SEDAR Steering Committee Assessment Schedule Updates and Meeting
24 Outcomes, Tab I, Number 5, council staff reviewed the outcomes
25 from the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting held on February 11 and
26 12, 2026 in Charleston, South Carolina, and a detailed update of
27 the Gulf stock assessment schedule based on SEDAR Steering
28 Committee discussions and requests.

29
30 A council member asked about the king mackerel assessment,
31 specifically about limiting factors for conducting an operational
32 versus a benchmark assessment. The council member identified
33 concerns about start date and shrimp bycatch. The Southeast
34 Fisheries Science Center replied that the stated concerns were
35 either being discussed or could be discussed as topical working
36 groups of the current stock assessment effort. The council member
37 offered to make a list of his concerns for the Southeast Fisheries
38 Science Center.

39
40 A committee member asked about assessing the other deepwater
41 grouper species, like snowy grouper, in 2029. The Southeast
42 Fisheries Science Center replied that it was investigating the
43 data available to evaluate council-managed species, and that snowy
44 grouper may need to continue to be part of a complex, but that
45 evaluation would better inform the right path forward. Next was
46 Other Business, and there was no other business discussed. This
47 concludes my report. Is there any other business? Mr. Sanchez?

48

1 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I'm going to be brief, and everybody is
2 tired. I just wanted to elaborate a little bit. I appreciate the
3 discussion we had during this committee regarding the king mackerel
4 operational assessment versus benchmark. I think we resolved that,
5 and working through the questions I had to have a more elaborate
6 discussion on during the operational.

7
8 I'm satisfied, if working groups is the way to do it, that that's
9 how we do it. I just want to make sure that that letter that I
10 mentioned, and it was circulated, but, you know, I don't see it
11 reflected here, and so I want to just mention the additional topics
12 that were in that letter besides start date and shrimp bycatch.
13 It was looking at new ways to estimate natural mortality as well,
14 and fish weight versus fecundity, as per recent practices, and, of
15 course, updating the MRIP estimates, and s, I just wanted to make
16 sure that we're all on the same page for what we're asking to be
17 discussed by the working groups, if that's the case.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. Anything else for
20 The SEDAR committee? No. Okay. We're going to move on, and Dr.
21 Sweetman with the Reef Fish Committee report.

22 23 **REEF FISH COMMITTEE REPORT**

24
25 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you Mr. Chair. All right. Reef Fish Committee
26 report. The committee adopted the agenda, Tab B, Number 1, after
27 adding items under Other Business, and the minutes Tab B, Number
28 2, from the January 2026 meeting were approved as amended.

29
30 Presentations, Reef Fish and IFQ Program Landings in 2025, Gulf
31 State Private Recreational Red Snapper and Greater Amberjack
32 Landings Updates, Tab B, Number 4, Southeast Regional Office (SERO)
33 staff reviewed the status of reef fish and individual fishing quota
34 (IFQ) program landings relative to catch limits.

35
36 Notably, there were no dockside intercepts by the Marine
37 Recreational Information Program for greater amberjack during the
38 twenty-seven-day fishing season in 2025.

39
40 Council representatives from the five Gulf states reviewed their
41 2025 private angling fishing seasons for red snapper and
42 projections for their 2026 fishing seasons. Committee members
43 discussed the potential for declining growth rates of red snapper,
44 given the decreases in average lengths observed by some states, as
45 the average age of catches remain consistent.

46
47 The states also presented the same data without season projections
48 for greater amberjack. States noted substantially fewer

1 intercepts of greater amberjack over time and, thus, less data to
2 inform trends in age, length, and weight patterns.

3
4 Final Action: Abbreviated Framework Action Modification of Gulf
5 Lane Snapper Catch Limits, Tab B, Number 5, council staff presented
6 written public comments received on an abbreviated framework
7 action to modify lane snapper catch limits based on results of the
8 most recent interim analysis on lane snapper. The interim analysis
9 used a composite video index to evaluate trends in stock biomass
10 against trends in landings and suggested the stock to be healthy.

11
12 The council's Scientific and Statistical Committee recommended
13 increasing the Gulf lane snapper overfishing limit and acceptable
14 biological catch. The document proposes adopting the increased
15 catch limits and setting the annual catch limit equal to the ABC.
16 A fishing season duration analysis, assuming the pending increase
17 to a ten-inch total length minimum size limit, projects no quota
18 closure under the proposed catch limits. SERO staff reviewed the
19 codified text for the proposed regulations.

20
21 **The committee recommends, and I so move, to select Option 2 as**
22 **preferred. Option 2 is modify the OFL for the Gulf lane snapper**
23 **stock to be 1,336,443 pounds whole weight and the ABC to be equal**
24 **to -- Or to be 1,304,917 pounds whole weight for 2026 through 2028**
25 **and subsequent years. The stock ACL is set equal to the ABC. The**
26 **motion carried without opposition.**

27
28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We have a committee
29 motion on the board? Is there any discussion on the motion?
30 **Seeing none, is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none,**
31 **the motion carries.** Dr. Sweetman.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Don't go far. **The committee**
34 **recommends, and I so move, to recommend the council approve the**
35 **Abbreviated Framework Action: Modification of Gulf Lane Snapper**
36 **Catch Limits and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce**
37 **for review and implementation and deem the codified text as**
38 **necessary and appropriate, giving the staff editorial license to**
39 **make the necessary changes in the document. The council chair is**
40 **given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as**
41 **necessary and appropriate.** The motion carried without opposition.
42 Mr. Chair.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Yes, and we do have a
45 committee motion on the board. Is there any discussion on the
46 motion? Okay, and so this will be a roll call vote, and I'll turn
47 it over to Dr. Simmons.

1 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Captain Walker.
2
3 MR. WALKER: Yes.
4
5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Mr. Geeslin.
6
7 MR. GEESLIN: Yes.
8
9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Ms. Ballard.
10
11 MS. BALLARD: Yes.
12
13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Mr. Schieble.
14
15 MR. SCHIEBLE: Yes.
16
17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Captain Frady.
18
19 MR. FRADY: Yes.
20
21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Mr. Strelcheck.
22
23 MR. STRELCHECK: Yes.
24
25 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Dr. Banks.
26
27 DR. BANKS: Yes.
28
29 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Mr. Marquez.
30
31 MR. MARQUEZ: Yes.
32
33 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Mr. Broussard.
34
35 MR. BROUSSARD: Yes.
36
37 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Dr. Overton.
38
39 DR. OVERTON: Yes.
40
41 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: General Spraggins.
42
43 GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Yes.
44
45 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Mr. Sanchez.
46
47 MR. SANCHEZ: Yes.
48

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Osborne.
 2
 3 **MR. OSBORNE:** Yes.
 4
 5 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Allen.
 6
 7 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes.
 8
 9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Anson.
 10
 11 **MR. ANSON:** Yes.
 12
 13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Sweetman.
 14
 15 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes.
 16
 17 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Dugas.
 18
 19 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes.
 20

Names	Vote		
Capt. Walker	yes		
Mr. Geeslin	yes	yes	17
Ms. Ballard	yes		
Mr. Schieble	yes		
Capt. Frady	yes		
Mr. Strelcheck	yes		
Dr. Banks	yes		
Mr. Marquez	yes		
Mr. Broussard	yes		
Dr. Overton	yes		
Gen. Spraggins	yes		
Mr. Sanchez	yes		
Mr. Osborne	yes		
Dr. Allen	yes		
Mr. Anson	yes		
Dr. Sweetman	yes		
Mr. Dugas	yes		

21
 22
 23 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** The motion carried unanimously, Mr.
 24 **Chair.**
 25
 26 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Okay. We'll move on,
 27 Dr. Sweetman. Thank you.
 28
 29 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. All right. Next item.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Sorry, C.J. My fault. Mr. Strelcheck.
3

4 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Sorry, and we moved past it very quickly. I
5 wanted to go up to the section about the summary of landings, and
6 so we state there were no dockside intercepts by MRIP for greater
7 amberjack during the twenty-seven-day fishing season. There were
8 no dockside intercepts for the private sector off Florida during
9 that time period, and so I just wanted to correct that.

10
11 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and thank you, Andy.
12

13 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, Dr. Sweetman.
14

15 **MR. SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. All right. Moving
16 on, the next topic here is Public Hearing Draft: Reef Fish
17 Amendment 63: Modifications to Gulf Red Grouper IFQ program, Tab
18 B, Number 6, and we're going to have some work to do here, and so
19 just a heads-up.
20

21 Staff presented management actions for Amendment 63. In Action 1,
22 the commercial quota pool for Gulf red grouper, a committee member
23 suggested that alternatives considered would allocate too many
24 pounds of red grouper allocation to the quota pool and noted that
25 a pilot program could be established with smaller amounts.
26

27 **The committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 1 to add an**
28 **Alternative 4. Alternative 4 would establish a three-year**
29 **commercial quota pool for Gulf red grouper beginning in 2027. If**
30 **the commercial quota is at or below 4.28 million pounds gutted**
31 **weight, the quota pool is set at zero percent of the commercial**
32 **quota, zero pounds. If the commercial quota is above 4.28 million**
33 **pounds gutted weight, the quota pool would hold, and these are the**
34 **options as followed, and I'm not going to read those out there.**
35 The motion carried with one opposed, Mr. Chair.
36

37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We have a committee
38 motion on the board. I'll open the floor if there's any
39 discussion. Mr. Strelcheck.
40

41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I was the committee member that opposed
42 this. I still have a lot of concerns, obviously, with including
43 it, just simply because it's going to be a very small amount of
44 quota, if it's ultimately selected as preferred. I don't think
45 it's going to be helpful, in terms of achieving some of the purpose
46 and need and objectives that we're trying to lay out for this quota
47 program, and I feel like we could accomplish this through the other
48 alternatives in the amendment. Thanks.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Is there any other
3 comments on the motion? Mr. Walker.
4
5 **MR. WALKER:** I think Andy is right that there's not going to be
6 enough quota here. I mean, there's no scheduled thing to have an
7 increase above \$4.2 million, right?
8
9 **DR. SWEETMAN:** There is.
10
11 **MR. WALKER:** How much is that?
12
13 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Diagne.
14
15 **DR. ASSANE DIAGNE:** Perhaps it could be helpful to discuss now the
16 table that Mr. Strelcheck recommended that Dr. Stephen and I work
17 on, because it will put, you know, the numbers on this. Those
18 tables are available in your report, but at the end of the section,
19 and so, Bernie, please scroll down until you see the tables. The
20 first set of tables would say "Quota Pool Amounts by Alternative",
21 and in the committee report, yes. Just keep going down.
22
23 Okay, and we can stop here, and so, essentially, on this first set
24 of tables, on the top, we have the amount of quota that would be
25 withheld in Alternatives 2 and 3, and, at the bottom, the amount
26 of quota that would be withheld under the proposed Alternative 4
27 that you are discussing right now.
28
29 As Mr. Strelcheck and Captain Walker mentioned, if we were to use
30 that proposed Alternative 4, you see that, at the 15 percent above
31 the increase, the amount would go from 306,000 pounds to 82,500,
32 which is, you know, really small, and the maximum here would be,
33 under 30 percent, 327,000 and, in the other case, the maximum is
34 774,000. We have subsequent tables that would show, you know,
35 scenarios for distributions, just for your consideration, but we
36 can stop here for now.
37
38 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne, for that. Mr. Sanchez.
39
40 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I would also note that you're only looking
41 at the 15 percent. If we were to, as a group, go to the higher
42 percentage, even the highest, the 30 percent, the numbers do
43 increase, and, in my mind, again, as I mentioned when I made this
44 action item request to add it to the document, we're doing this as
45 a pilot study. It's kind of an experiment.
46
47 There are impacts, which I don't think have been fully evaluated,
48 on the other side of this equation from the existing shareholders

1 and allocation owners that are not going to be receiving that which
2 we set aside and wait to distribute. That's not exactly what they
3 signed up for before, and so this is kind of a middle way approach,
4 if we select the higher percentage, to allow for this experiment
5 to take place, but just to use a lower quantity of fish to do it.
6 That's all I'm trying to accomplish here.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. Any further discussion?
9 Mr. Walker.

10
11 **MR. WALKER:** I think, if we're going to go this route, maybe we
12 should -- If we're going to wait until we go over the 4.2, instead
13 of the 2.7, and wait until everything -- Everybody has got back to
14 where they were, or maybe not where they were, but got the full
15 increase, and then taking it from everything above that, then
16 perhaps we could consider a higher percentage, if we're going to
17 bother with this program at all, because even the most, you know,
18 optimistic option here right now is still barely worth doing,
19 especially with low prices and all, but that's just a thought.

20
21 Maybe -- If we're going to wait until everybody has 4.2 million
22 back in their account, and then take it off the increase, then it
23 seems to me it would make more sense to have a higher percentage
24 of that go into the program.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Dr. Diagne.

27
28 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To Captain Walker, I guess
29 there's not waiting until 4.28. 4.28 is the quota for 2026 in
30 Amendment 62, and so, when that is implemented, de facto, that is
31 going to be there, and so there's no additional waiting, if you
32 would.

33
34 **MR. WALKER:** Right, and I'm sorry, but we were -- Before, we talked
35 about either taking it off of the 2.7 or the 4.2, but, yes, and I
36 see what you're saying. We don't have it yet, actually, and that's
37 why, in my mind, we haven't gotten it yet, but it is coming this
38 year, and so we'll apply it this year. Thank you.

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

41
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, I mean, if you want us to analyze it,
43 we'll analyze it. You know, from my standpoint, I've asked my
44 team to look at the effects a little bit more, and one of the
45 things that I think is not fully understood is, based on the quota
46 pool, if you're a shareholder, yes, you have to contribute to the
47 quota pool, but then you can also benefit by receiving allocation
48 from that very quota pool, right?

1
2 Jessica has done some additional analysis, which I think we can,
3 you know, further have ready for the AP, but what it's showing is
4 that, for some shareholders that are participating in this program,
5 in fact about approximately 50 percent who would qualify, they
6 would actually get equal to or maybe more allocation if we
7 implement the quota pool than if we didn't use the quota pool,
8 because we're going back to distributing it based on their landings
9 history.

10
11 Then, for the non-shareholders, obviously, they're going to get a
12 direct benefit, but they've had skin in the game. They've
13 contributed to the program by leasing that quota to qualify for
14 the program, and so that's why I keep going back to I really feel
15 like, to have a meaningful pilot program, and not just a small-
16 scale test, we need at least a more substantial amount than what's
17 being proposed here, but certainly we can analyze this. I just
18 don't think this is going to align well with the objectives if we
19 move forward with the quota pool program.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Ms. Levy.

22
23 **MS. LEVY:** Yes, and just a comment. I mean, obviously, you can
24 add whatever alternative you want, and there was kind of a comment
25 during committee that it's just adding an alternative, but, I mean,
26 just a reminder that every alternative that you add increases the
27 workload for everybody who is trying to get the document ready for
28 you and ready for public hearings and all of that.

29
30 Then we talked about the idea that these documents are so long,
31 and so, again, everything we add adds to that, and, if it's not
32 really going to accomplish the goal of the pilot project, then I
33 guess I would just ask you to consider whether it's worth the time,
34 effort, and staff time to actually add an alternative like that.
35 Thanks.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. Mr. Sanchez.

38
39 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I would say we leave it in, and I would say
40 because we heard some support from it from during public testimony,
41 from the industry people that will be having to live with it, and
42 if we can't, as a body, come up and add something to the document,
43 then you're leaving me feeling with the only ones you want to leave
44 in there are the ones you guys created, and I'm not happy with it.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. Do we have any other
47 comments, or concerns? Mr. Strelcheck.

1 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I will just say that it's not you guys that
2 created it. We as a council approved this document, and, John,
3 you're a part of this council, and you have just as much as
4 decision-making -- You're recommending this alternative, and I
5 might not like it, but I'm still part of the council, and, if we
6 adopt it, we will analyze it, and work through it, and so I'm just
7 expressing, obviously, some of the limitations I see with the
8 proposed alternative.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Understood, Mr. Strelcheck. Any other comments?
11 Mr. Anson.

12
13 **MR. ANSON:** I'm still struggling with the comments made relative
14 to the amount of pounds that would ultimately be available under
15 a pilot program, and so, looking at the two tables here that are
16 in the report with the proposed Alternative 4 related to the other
17 two alternatives under the 2.79 million pounds, you're roughly
18 looking at anywhere from almost a third to a half of what would be
19 available, depending upon which percentage you select and such.

20
21 I recognize the comments that were made during the public comment
22 period about, you know, the pilot program, and how big, you know,
23 should a pilot program be, and it probably should represent a
24 smaller side than a larger side, but, inasmuch as trying to, you
25 know, get out of it what we would like to get out of it, with as
26 many different participants in it, it just makes more difficult
27 the smaller you go down, and drill down, and so I don't know, and
28 just a general comment to that issue. Thank you.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Anson. I'll take a moment and
31 look around the table one more time. Is there any other comments?
32 Not seeing any, Bernie, can we go back to the motion? Okay. I'm
33 going to try this. **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing**
34 **none, the motion carries.** Dr. Sweetman.

35
36 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. A committee member
37 supported helping fishermen access red grouper quota, but
38 questioned whether this amendment would be effective, due to the
39 current low price of red grouper quota. The committee noted that
40 the quota pool would lower the cost of harvesting red grouper for
41 eligible participants.

42
43 In Action 2, eligibility criteria for participation in the red
44 grouper quota pool, the committee expressed support for a 500-
45 pound minimum landings required.

46
47 **The committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 2 to make**
48 **Alternative 2, Option 2b the preferred. Alternative two is, to**

1 receive annual allocation from the quota pool, IFQ account holders
2 must possess a valid or renewable federal commercial reef fish
3 permit and have a minimum red grouper landings during a two-year
4 reference period of at least Option 2b, 500 pounds gutted weight.
5 The motion carried without opposition, Mr. Chair.
6

7 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We have a committee
8 motion on the board. Is there some discussion on the motion? Not
9 seeing any, I would like to make a comment regarding the motion.
10 I had a conversation with a fisherman in the hall this morning,
11 and he's concerned about this.

12
13 He's a commercial fisherman. He bought a boat, and bought a
14 permit, and it came with red grouper shares. However, it's not
15 his primary focus. It's his, I would say, Plan B, or C, or D,
16 right, and so he doesn't always fish his red grouper shares, and
17 so this is going to affect him when he doesn't land them, if I'm
18 understanding it correctly.

19
20 He's going to be penalized for the simple fact that he didn't go
21 out and land red grouper shares, because, financially, around his
22 business model, he didn't need to in X year, whatever year that
23 may be, and so I have a little concern with this, and I questioned
24 it in the committee as well, and so I just wanted to put my comments
25 out there for maybe folks to think about, because that's an
26 unintended consequence.

27
28 We say it all the time, and so we're going to hurt this fisherman
29 just because he's not going to fish red grouper, and he's focusing
30 on red snapper, and king mackerel, and we're going to hurt him,
31 and he has a lot of it. He has, I think, north of 15,000 pounds,
32 and so Mr. Strelcheck.

33
34 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so this would prevent him from accessing
35 the quota pool, but he's still going to have his shareholdings,
36 and he's still going to benefit from a large increase in the red
37 grouper quota. He just won't receive as much, because some of the
38 quota that he would have received now is going to be redistributed
39 through this quota pool, and so I agree he is being impacted, but
40 it's not like we're taking all his quota away. He's just not able
41 to access the quota pool under the scenario you're describing.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for clarifying that, Andy. Captain
44 Walker.

45
46 **MR. WALKER:** Well, I kind of think that you just described just
47 what -- I mean, the guy hasn't fished red grouper in two years,
48 and that's not the guys we want to help out in the red grouper

1 fishery, I think. You know, maybe he did before that or whatever,
2 but the whole idea here is to help out the guys that do participate
3 in red grouper, and, if he is not participating in it, then he
4 doesn't qualify, and that's okay. You would -- There are guys who
5 do participate in it, that should get it, and, the guy who doesn't,
6 doesn't, and that's kind of the design here, in my mind.

7
8 It's his choice not to participate, but, if you didn't fish the
9 last two years, why should we give you red grouper quota, when you
10 didn't even fish it the last two years? You might have an idea in
11 your mind that someday I'm going to go red grouper fishing, and
12 that's fine. Use your shares, but you don't qualify for trying to
13 help a guy make a living in red grouper fishing if you don't even
14 fish for them, in my opinion.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Walker. I have Mr. Osborne,
17 and then Dr. Diagne.

18
19 **MR. OSBORNE:** Yes, and just want additional red grouper.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Diagne.

22
23 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and just to point out that, given that that
24 commercial fisherman is already aware that the council is
25 developing this, all they have to do is to go harvest 500 pounds
26 between today and December 31. That's all, and so as an incidental
27 catch, if they have the shares, and just that will make them
28 qualify for the pool, because it's two years rolling, right,
29 starting from January 1, 2025 to December 31 of this year, and so,
30 at this point, they are still in it.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** So a question, Dr. Diagne, and so, if we would
33 have chosen, just for an example, the 300 pounds, he would have to
34 land, at minimum, 300 pounds a year, and he would be okay?

35
36 **DR. DIAGNE:** 300 pounds for a two-year period. Two years, and so
37 half of it per year, if you would, or a lump sum.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you. Dr. Banks.

40
41 **DR. BANKS:** Andy, I think you gave us numbers for trips, on average,
42 when we had this original discussion, and do you have those handy,
43 just for reference to this poundage? I think like one trip was
44 less than 500, but right at it, and then the other gear was closer
45 to like 3,000.

46
47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Correct. Yes, and it was 417 pounds average for
48 vertical line trips, and a little over 3,400 pounds for longline

1 trips.
2
3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Thank you, Andy. Any other thoughts?
4 Mr. Osborne.
5
6 **MR. OSBORNE:** I'm wondering if we should add in the words
7 "additional quota pool", just to prevent any confusion from folks
8 that are not hearing this part.
9
10 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** That would be a substitute motion, Mr. Osborne?
11
12 **MR. OSBORNE:** Correct.
13
14 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** If the committee so wishes, let's do it. If not
15 -- Ms. Levy.
16
17 **MS. LEVY:** This is to pick a preferred alternative. Are you
18 talking about changing the wording of the alternative?
19
20 **MS. OSBORNE:** Yes. Correct. What I'm trying to do is avoid
21 anybody that's not listening to this today. If they see this,
22 they're going to know right away that we're talking about the
23 additional quota, and not be confused and say, wait, I have -- To
24 J.D.'s point, this is going to impact the 15,000 pounds that I
25 have right now, and I'm not going to get any of that if I don't -
26 -
27
28 **MS. LEVY:** Right. Well, I mean, it does say from the quota pool,
29 and that's fine. You can modify the language, but the current
30 motion is to get a preferred, and so I think you have to vote up
31 or down on whether you want this as the preferred alternative, and
32 then you can tweak the language if you want.
33
34 **MR. OSBORNE:** That's fine. Whatever, you know, we end up deciding
35 to do, but I just think we should probably be as clear as possible.
36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Levy and Jason. Dr. Diagne.
38
39 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you. To your point, perhaps we can go back and
40 read the document, and, as we are editing to finalize, to make
41 sure that we put it front and center and re-emphasize that this
42 distribution is, I guess, separate from what it is that you get
43 from the percentage of shares that you own. We thought that is
44 clear in the document, but we can go ahead and read it and make
45 sure that it's front and center, so there's no confusion.
46
47 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Osborne, are you good?
48

1 **MR. OSBORNE:** Maybe for those folks from Auburn, we should put
2 pictures, so they can understand it better, but, yes, I'm good.
3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Any further discussion on this motion?
5 Okay. **Any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion**
6 **carries.** Dr. Sweetman.
7
8 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In Action 3, distribution of
9 quota pool among eligible IFQ accounts, the committee discussed
10 the equal and proportional distribution of quota pool allocation
11 among eligible recipients. Committee members acknowledged the
12 need to select preferred alternatives during this meeting.
13
14 Dr. Jessica Stephen, SERO, discussed features of the quota pool
15 and the expected timeline for implementation, and then we have
16 several tables below illustrating quota pool amounts and
17 alternative distributions that are provided. I'm not going to go
18 through those, but, at this time, we've selected a preferred
19 alternative for Action 2, but we're going to need -- If we want to
20 move this document forward for a public hearing draft, we need to
21 select preferred alternatives for Action 1 and Action 3, if that
22 is the will of the council, and so I would ask Bernie if she could
23 potentially bring up the document here, and we could potentially
24 have a discussion, but, Mr. Chair, if you want to facilitate.
25
26 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, and thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Mr. Strelcheck,
27 you had your hand up?
28
29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I'll float a motion. **I would like to,**
30 **in Action 1, select Alternative 3, Option 3b as the preferred.** If
31 I get a second, I'll explain.
32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Mr. Strelcheck has a motion.
34
35 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I'll second for discussion.
36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Dr. Sweetman seconded. We'll that
38 Bernie pull that up, if there's any discussion, or Mr. Strelcheck
39 wants to go ahead.
40
41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, I mean, so, first, I want to acknowledge
42 that we have an AP meeting coming up, and I think it's important
43 that we have a preferred for them to react to. We can always
44 change this preferred at the next council meeting. They,
45 obviously, are going to have a lot of input, I'm sure on this.
46
47 In terms of like what John has been talking about with the 4.28
48 million, I think that they alleviate some concerns if we say the

1 quota pool is zeroed out if the quota goes back to 4.28 million
2 pounds or less, and then, in terms of the quota pool amount, the
3 3b is 20 percent, which, based on my calculations, I think is
4 somewhere between about 8 and 9 percent of the overall red grouper
5 quota, which I think is a really good starting place for a pilot
6 program, something that could result in, obviously, a good test of
7 evaluating some of the metrics around the quota pool program, and
8 it kind of balances the shareholders getting their quota increase
9 from the red grouper quota going up with also trying to achieve
10 some of our objectives for distributing quota to those that are
11 truly landing the fish.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Do we have any other
14 comments for the motion on the board? Mr. Sanchez, and then Jason.

15
16 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Well, if I had my druthers, obviously, I would pick
17 another alternative, but you know what? I'm tired of fighting
18 this week, and so let's let the AP meet, and then hopefully we
19 will listen to them, and then we will hash out which preferred we
20 should name.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. Anyone else have any
23 comments? Mr. Osborne.

24
25 **MR. OSBORNE:** So, just to help Captain Frady, the 20 percent would
26 equal, by my math, that's, what, 4.28 minus 2.79 times 20 percent.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Diagne, have you got it?

29
30 **MR. OSBORNE:** It's almost 450,000 pounds.

31
32 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and I'm not good at math, but we did provide the
33 numbers in the presentation, and so 20 percent in 2027 would bring
34 about 408,000 pounds. In 2028 and 2029, 516,000, and so very close
35 to the number you had.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Mr. Walker.

38
39 **MR. WALKER:** I'll speak in favor of the motion, in that it will
40 get us something for the AP and keep the ball rolling. The AP can
41 weigh-in on it. There has been -- The one thing that's missing is
42 what Andy started to mention.

43
44 I think a lot of commercial guys, myself included, aren't really
45 thinking that -- You know, they're looking at the takeaway from
46 what their increase they feel like they should get, but they're
47 going to get it back too, but, in some cases, according to the
48 analysis, some are going to get more, and I don't think a lot of

1 guys realize that, and so maybe go with this one, and let it sink
2 in a little bit. The AP are all commercial IFQ guys, and let them
3 weigh-in on it, and we can take this back up at the next meeting,
4 with everybody understanding what it is we're talking about and
5 how it's going to benefit certain people.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Walker, and I would echo and
8 agree that with as well. Let's pick some preferreds, and let the
9 AP take a look at it. Any other comments? All right. **Is there**
10 **any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.**

11
12 I think we'll move to Action 3, Bernie, and pick a preferred.
13 Okay. Action 3 is on the board. I'll open the floor for
14 discussion, if someone wants to make a motion to pick a preferred.
15 Mr. Strelcheck.

16
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, in the spirit of compromise, since John said
18 he doesn't want to fight any longer, I would ask him to offer a
19 motion for us.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** So how about this? Dr. Diagne, do you want to
22 give us a little explanation of what we're doing? It might help
23 some folks.

24
25 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and, you know, I'm sorry I don't have the picture
26 that I brought last time, with the circles, but here, essentially,
27 you know, we have two groups, the groups of the folks that have a
28 red group of shares and those that don't, with the understanding
29 that everyone participating here would have a permit, and would
30 also have landings.

31
32 Between those two groups, the alternatives would either split the
33 amount in the quota pool in the middle, 50-50, and that's
34 Alternative 3, or it would tip the balance towards that do not own
35 shares, and that is Alternative 2, and so 60-40, and so that is
36 the first decision, is do you want to split it 50-50 between those
37 with shares and those without, or do you want to tip more towards
38 those who don't have shares, and so 60-40, and then we can address
39 there, after you discuss that part.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you. I have two hands, Mr. Sanchez and Dr.
42 Sweetman.

43
44 **MR. SANCHEZ:** In the interest of picking a preferred and moving
45 forward, I select -- **I'll make a motion that we select Alternative**
46 **3, and 50-50 sounds fair, as the preferred, and, if there's a**
47 **second, hopefully we can just move on.**

1 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Sanchez has a motion. We'll let Bernie
2 put it up on the board. Dr. Sweetman, did you second it? Okay.
3 Mr. Sanchez.
4
5 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you, Andy. If you extend an olive branch,
6 I'll take it.
7
8 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Sweetman.
9
10 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just kind of process question here, and so,
11 obviously, there's more in this alternative. There's different
12 options, right, and so I'm not sure we need a motion just to talk
13 about the 50-50. I think we probably need to go into more detail
14 here for the motion, right, John? Dr. Diagne, and so it sounds
15 like -- All right.
16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Diagne can help us.
18
19 **DR. SWEETMAN:** My suggestion here, John, would be to withdraw this
20 motion for the time being, until we can discuss the other
21 components of this, and the options, and then we can put something
22 forward with the 50-50 alternative that you put out there.
23
24 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Withdraw.
25
26 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** The motion is withdrawn.
27
28 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so why don't we just talk about that at
29 the table, and so John put out there the 50-50. That's what I
30 heard in public comment. Would there be any opposition to kind of
31 moving forward with 50-50, and then we can kind of discuss the
32 options there.
33
34 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Banks.
35
36 **DR. BANKS:** Not necessarily opposition, but just I also heard some
37 support for 40-60, only in the sense that, as we're going through
38 this pilot and IFQ reform, the point is to also help people, and
39 new entrants, and this might be a way to do it, and so, before we
40 jump full force into 50-50, just a reminder, and I'm not
41 necessarily opposed, but just an on-the-record reminder.
42
43 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and understood. Sorry.
44
45 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr, Sweetman.
46
47 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No, and I totally understand that, and I think,
48 honestly, just to throw something out there, you know, similar to

1 kind of what we were doing with some of the other actions here,
2 and so yes.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

5

6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, in terms of the options under
7 Alternative 3, I mentioned, earlier in committee, with
8 proportional distribution, the benefit there is going to be
9 commensurate with your landings, right, and so, the higher you
10 landed in the qualification, the more you're going to stand to
11 benefit for the quota pool, and vice versa if you land less, and
12 so I think it makes sense to choose the proportional for both no
13 shares and the share category.

14

15 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Captain Walker.

16

17 **MR. WALKER:** I agree as well. I was really kind of on the fence
18 with that one. I put a lot of thought into it, and, to be honest,
19 I was convinced by the testimony we got from the guys that -- I'm
20 pretty sure all of them said that was their preference, and there
21 was guys on different sides of the spectrum, and so they've
22 convinced me to go along with that.

23

24 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Diagne.

25

26 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, Mr. Chair, and I'm good. What I wanted to say,
27 that's what Dr. Sweetman said, that, you know, we had the one part
28 on top and then at the bottom.

29

30 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Sweetman.

31

32 **DR. SWEETMAN:** All right. I'll make the motion, since we've kind
33 of discussed this here, and so the motion would be to make
34 Alternative 3, Option 3a(ii) and Option 3b(ii) the preferred
35 options.

36

37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. We have a motion on the board. We'll
38 let Bernie get it up. Is there a second to the motion? Dr. Banks
39 seconded. Discussion? Dr. Sweetman.

40

41 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Similar to kind of -- I just want to put this on
42 the record there. We're just trying to get something for the IFQ
43 AP, you know, on the table, so they can have these discussions out
44 there, and this can be changed at a later meeting, right, and so
45 I just wanted to state that.

46

47 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes. Correct. Thank you for that. Any further
48 discussion? Dr. Sweetman, does that look good to you?

1
2 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Beautiful.
3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. We'll hold on. All right. Dr.
5 Sweetman says we're good now. Is Dr. Banks good, the seconder?
6 Yes? Okay. No further discussion on this motion? **Is there any**
7 **opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** I'll
8 give it back to Dr. Sweetman. Mr. Strelcheck.
9
10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Not to belabor 63, but I just wanted to make a
11 comment. The Shareholders Alliance, and some others, commented
12 yesterday about, or today, about the importance of metrics for the
13 program. My team has been given some thought to this, and we would
14 like to work with council staff in advance of the AP meeting, and
15 at least propose some metrics and ideas that the AP could react
16 to, and then ultimately could be built into the amendment going
17 forward, and so I just wanted to note that.
18
19 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, Mr. Strelcheck. We are thinking, you know, about
20 metrics, talking to Dr. Stephen, and others, but, I mean, there is
21 one thing that's a little bit of a puzzle to me. This is the first
22 time I've put an amendment and folks asked for the metrics,
23 although we talked about, you know, the purpose and need, and what
24 we're doing, but we are not asking for the metrics for success
25 for, I don't know, Amendment 52 or 53 that we did.
26
27 We provide an analysis of the expected effects, and we move
28 forward, and so if we have let's say additional opportunity, of
29 course, there are going to be studies to evaluate successes and
30 failures, but I don't know that, you know, if we don't have the
31 metrics at this exact moment, that would mean anything comparing
32 this to other amendments.
33
34 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.
35
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** To that point, I mean, I agree with you, and
37 that's the whole purpose of amendments. I think this is a little
38 bit unique, because it is a pilot project, and so trying to be a
39 little bit more explicit with regard to how we're going to measure
40 performance of the pilot on the frontend, so, when we get to the
41 end, we're looking at some of the effects on the fishery as a
42 whole, and whether or not it's been beneficial, would be
43 advantageous.
44
45 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. We'll move on, Dr. Sweetman.
46
47 **DR. SWEETMAN:** All right. Moving along, and we're on page 5 now.
48 Final action: Abbreviated Framework Action: Red Grouper IFQ Set-

1 Aside Quota Holdback, Tab B, Number 7, NOAA General Counsel
2 explained the procedure for requesting and taking action on this
3 framework document. SERO noted that this abbreviated framework
4 action would allow NMFS to withhold the necessary quota to start
5 the pilot program in 2027, which can be released upon
6 implementation. Taking final action on this framework at this
7 meeting is necessary to implement the Reef Fish Amendment 63 in
8 2027, would allow for testing the value of the pilot program.

9
10 Committee members inquired about implementation timelines for this
11 action and Reef Fish Amendment 63. SERO mentioned that it is
12 currently difficult to accurately predict an implementation
13 timeline.

14
15 **The committee recommends, and I so move, to add an option that**
16 **reads as follows: Option 3 is provide the NMFS Regional**
17 **Administrator the authority to withhold the percentage of the red**
18 **grouper commercial quota necessary to implement Amendment 63**
19 **during the 2027 fishing year. If Amendment 63 is not implemented**
20 **by May 1, 2027, the withheld quota would be distributed to**
21 **shareholders. The motion carried without opposition. Mr. Chair.**

22
23 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We have a committee
24 motion on the board. I'll open the floor if there's any
25 discussion. Captain Walker.

26
27 **MR. WALKER:** I speak in favor of the motion.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other comments? Okay. **Is there any**
30 **opposition? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Dr. Sweetman.

31
32 **DR. SWEETMAN:** All right, Mr. Chair, and so we've added an option
33 here, but this document is scheduled for final action, and so this
34 council would need to select either a preferred alternative that
35 would also then move this forward for final action, in order for
36 63 to move on time, if that's the direction the council ends up
37 going in. With that, we're going to need to explore that document
38 too, Bernie.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, Dr. Sweetman.

41
42 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so there was a conversation, and,
43 honestly, we see the options that are on the table. We added
44 another option here, right, and it was for May 1. I recall
45 conversation at the table during committee about even April, and
46 May was kind of a middle-of-the-road approach there, and so my
47 recommendation here I guess would be, and we already kind of
48 discussed this at the table in committee, would be to make the new

1 option, Option 3, the preferred, but I'm just going to leave that
2 here, and just trying to facilitate this discussion.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you. Is there any discussion on the new
5 motion we just added, or any others? Mr. Anson.

6
7 **MR. ANSON:** I'll make a motion then to make Option 3 the preferred
8 option.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right, Mr. Anson, and we'll let Bernie get
11 Mr. Anson's motion on the board. We do have a second by Dr.
12 Sweetman. All right. Is there any further discussion on the
13 motion? I'm not seeing any. **Is there any opposition to the**
14 **motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Dr. Sweetman.

15
16 **DR. SWEETMAN:** All right, thank you, Mr. Chair. So then, Bernie,
17 I guess the next step would be the language, since this is final
18 action, to transmit this to the Secretary. No?

19
20 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Levy.

21
22 **MS. LEVY:** Yes, but you might -- Since we didn't look at the like
23 the codified text in committee, you might just want to take a look
24 at that. It's B-7(c), and it essentially says what this
25 alternative says, that NMFS would withhold -- There's a placeholder
26 for the amount, whatever the preferred ends up being in 63, and
27 then there's a paragraph that said that, if that commercial pool
28 quote is not effective by the date, which in this preferred would
29 be May, then it would be redistributed, and so it's pretty
30 straightforward.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. Any other concerns? Dr.
33 Sweetman.

34
35 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No, and thank you for that, Ms. Levy, and I got out
36 of step with my order of operations here, but I appreciate it.
37 **Okay, and I have no questions about this, and so I will put forward**
38 **that motion to transmit this to the Secretary, if Bernie wants to**
39 **bring that up. That is my motion, Mr. Chair.**

40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Dr. Sweetman's motion's on the board. Do
42 we have a second? Dr. Banks seconds. Is there any opposition to
43 the motion? I'm not seeing any. Sorry about that. We do have to
44 do a roll call vote. It's final action. Okay. Dr. Simmons.
45 Discussion, Dr. Sweetman?

46
47 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and just really quickly, and so I recognize,
48 you know, in hearing some of the Shareholders Alliance letters,

1 and hearing from some of the public about feeling like this was
2 rushed to the table, right, and they haven't seen this, and they
3 haven't had time to review it, but this is kind of just a process
4 thing, where, at the end of the day, right, if the council doesn't
5 move forward on 63, and just because we move forward on this --
6 Like this will go away, right, and like, if we don't move forward
7 on 63, then it's a moot point, basically. I just wanted to kind
8 of highlight that, and so everything is kind of contingent on 63,
9 despite the council passing this. This is just the vehicle for
10 where 63 could operate if the council passes it.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for that clarification, Dr. Sweetman.
13 Any other comments? Okay. Dr. Simmons.

14
15 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Osborne.

16
17 **MR. OSBORNE:** Yes.

18
19 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Captain Walker.

20
21 **MR. WALKER:** Yes.

22
23 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Schieble.

24
25 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes.

26
27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Sweetman.

28
29 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes.

30
31 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Sanchez.

32
33 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Okay.

34
35 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Ms. Ballard.

36
37 **MS. BALLARD:** Yes.

38
39 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Allen.

40
41 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes.

42
43 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes.

46
47 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Broussard.

48

1 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Yes.
2
3 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Captain Frady.
4
5 **MR. FRADY:** Yes.
6
7 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Overton.
8
9 **DR. OVERTON:** Yes.
10
11 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Marquez.
12
13 **MR. MARQUEZ:** Yes.
14
15 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Anson.
16
17 **MR. ANSON:** Yes.
18
19 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** General Spraggins.
20
21 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes.
22
23 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Geeslin.
24
25 **MR. GEESLIN:** Yes.
26
27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Banks.
28
29 **DR. BANKS:** Yes.
30
31 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Dugas.
32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes.
34
35 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** **The motion carried unanimously, Mr.**
36 **Chair.**
37
38 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. I'll turn back over to
39 Dr. Sweetman.
40
41 **DR. SWEETMAN:** All right. We're rolling now. All right.
42 Presentation: February 2026 SSC Summary, Tab B, Number 10, Mr.
43 Trevor Moncrief, Chair of the SSC, reviewed SSC discussions about
44 the greater amberjack interim analysis, which was informed by the
45 G-FISHER Index of Relative Abundance.
46
47 Mr. Moncrief also reviewed discard mortality for reef fish species,
48 including gray triggerfish. Committee members discussed factors

1 that make gray triggerfish vulnerable to discard mortality in the
2 31 to 35 percent discard mortality estimates from the study.

3
4 Mr. Moncrief then summarized emerging research on projecting
5 recreational fishing season duration for gag grouper, SSC
6 discussions on the economic effects of mid-year IFQ changes, and
7 a check-in about the progress of the gray triggerfish stock
8 assessment. Lastly, Mr. Moncrief discussed stakeholder
9 participatory workshops conducted by the Southeast Fisheries
10 Science Center. All right.

11
12 The next item is Draft Options: Modifications to Red Snapper
13 Private Recreational Accountability Measures, Tab B, Number 8.
14 Council staff presented draft options for recreational red snapper
15 in-season and post-season flexibility measures, beginning with the
16 history of previous carryover provision efforts and draft options
17 for an in-season private recreational red snapper ACL transfer
18 mechanism.

19
20 Council staff highlighted concerns with conducting carryover
21 provisions and regional ACL sharing concurrent with one another
22 and suggested that actions be independently analyzed. A committee
23 member stated that carryover provisions may not meet the original
24 council intent and highlighted that the options, as presented, may
25 allow for carryover in excess.

26
27 NOAA General Counsel said that, if carryover provisions are put in
28 place, it would require modification of the ACL, and subsequently
29 the ABC. As such, the SSC would need to provide a range of eligible
30 ABCs.

31
32 NOAA General Counsel also suggested that the committee could
33 consider that adjusting ABC and ACL would need to abide by sector
34 allocations. A committee member said in-season ACL transfers may
35 not be feasible, given the delay in in-season landings data.

36
37 Another committee member stated that creel survey data units only
38 have a delay of approximately ten days, and, following the
39 transition of Mississippi and Alabama to Creel, an in-season
40 transfer program may soon be feasible. A committee member wanted
41 staff to continue to analyze carryover provisions, but to be
42 analyzed with a more conservative approach.

43
44 **The committee recommends, and I so move, in Draft Action 1, Draft**
45 **Alternative 2, and add Draft Options 2c and 2d. Okay, and so,**
46 **just to read that really quickly, Draft Action 1 is establish**
47 **carryover provision for private recreational red snapper. Draft**
48 **Alternative 2 is establish a carryover provision for the private**

1 angling component of the red snapper ACL on a state-by-state basis.
2 For states that did not land a state-specific ACL, the unused
3 portion would be carried over to the next fishing year in the
4 amount of unused portion of the ACL not greater than Options 2a
5 through 2b of the previous year's state-specific private angling
6 ACL, and then, as you can see there, Draft Options 2c and 2d were
7 added. The motion carried without opposition, Mr. Chair.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We have a motion on the
10 board. Any discussion on the motion? Captain Walker, and then
11 Mr. Strelcheck.
12

13 **MR. WALKER:** Just a little bit of discussion. This is within the
14 same state, correct, because I know, after this, we talked about
15 maybe a state could flip some of theirs over to the other state,
16 and this doesn't seem -- It says on a state-by-state basis. Are
17 we saying that if, you know, it's -- We're talking about rolling
18 it over to your same state next year, and this doesn't go into
19 this intra-state trading of excess, right?
20

21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Sarah.
22

23 **MS. SARAH GARDINER:** That's correct, and so Action 1 only looked
24 at carryover provisions, and so that's within one singular state.
25 We're not looking at transfers in this action.
26

27 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.
28

29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so I'm trying to look at this kind of
30 holistically, based on how the seasons are operating, and there's
31 states like Louisiana that are achieving their quota, or maybe
32 going slightly over, and there's other states that have significant
33 underages, and I think my concern is, even looking at like Options
34 2c and 2d, you could be still talking about 250,000, or 500,000,
35 pounds of carryover for a state like Florida, and I still don't
36 think that's hitting the mark, in terms of what we're trying to
37 achieve.
38

39 The other component to this, which is missing, is, just because
40 you're under the ACL, you need to know why you're under the ACL,
41 right, and there might be reasons why effort fell off, or the
42 population is declining, and so looking at the reasons for why you
43 would carry that quota over or not is, to me, critical to any sort
44 of carryover provision, and that's not, obviously, in here at this
45 point, and, if this moves forward, I would like to see kind of
46 more guardrails built in, so that we can actually look at kind of
47 what was the cause of that underage and whether or not it should
48 be carried over or not.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Mr. Osborne.

3
4 **MR. OSBORNE:** I know we talked about this yesterday, that the --
5 If you do have a carryover for the next year, and let's just say
6 it's 50 percent, and so, if you went from 100 to 150, your ACL --
7 For the second year, you couldn't have any carryover, but how do
8 we make sure that 150 number, for let's say 2027, and you got --
9 You were at 100, and you got added another 50, and so you're at
10 150, and that, in 2028, your number is based on what your ACL would
11 have been without the carryover and the underage, right?

12
13 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead.

14
15 **MS. GARDINER:** Thank you. I think you just specify that when we're
16 looking at drafting our factual document, that carryover can't be
17 carried over in two consecutive years from 2024 to 2027.

18
19 **MS. OSBORNE:** So, just in the document, it's got to clarify -- To
20 make sure that this is what your ACL would have been without the
21 overage.

22
23 **MS. GARDINER:** Yes, and this is -- You know, bringing this forward,
24 we only had the presentation, and so we haven't fully fleshed out
25 the document. We haven't even had an IPT meeting discuss this as
26 well yet.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. General Spraggins.

29
30 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and, you know, I understand the carryover,
31 but I don't like Option 2a or 2b at all, and I don't like the
32 statement that says that it cannot exceed 2a or 2b. I would -- Is
33 there a way that we could take out something and just say that it
34 couldn't exceed 50 percent, or 25 percent, you know, and make a
35 new motion or something to that effect, because, you know, 100
36 percent is a lot. Like Mr. Strelcheck said, that's a lot
37 sometimes, and I've heard, like in Florida, they said they don't
38 want to carry 800,000 pounds over, you know, because of the
39 situation, and so maybe we need to refine this a little bit.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** General Spraggins, I think you have the option,
42 if you want to make another motion. Okay. Mr. Anson.

43
44 **MR. ANSON:** My comment was not specific to General Spraggins's
45 comment, and so I don't know if you want to dispense with his
46 comment first or not. Okay, and so I just wanted to go back to
47 Mr. Osborne and how he -- What I heard, how he was describing the
48 overage that would be applied in subsequent years, and capping

1 that, or limiting that, it's 100 percent or 75 percent, or now 50
2 percent or 25 percent, of what remained.

3
4 It's not 100 percent of the overall ACL, or 50 percent and it's
5 not like you're capping and doubling for the next year, because
6 you mentioned 150 with the 50 percent option, and so it would be
7 50 percent of what you didn't use, and so, if you didn't use, or
8 were short 50,000 pounds, it would only be 25,000 pounds that would
9 be added next year. That's all. I just wanted to make sure it
10 was clear.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, and we'll go to Dr. Sweetman.

13
14 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that's all I was going to say. I agree,
15 General, and I think there's different ways to look at this, right,
16 and I think that there -- When we finish this section here, I think
17 there's going to be some discussion to maybe look at this a little
18 bit differently, maybe along the lines of what you're talking
19 about, and so stay tuned, because I think there's going to be some
20 times here where we can discuss exactly what you're talking about,
21 and maybe put some more motions forward. Okay?

22
23 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and, with that, I'll hold off on changing
24 anything.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Any further discussion on this motion on
27 the board? I'm not seeing any. **Is there any opposition to this**
28 **motion on the board? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Dr.
29 Sweetman.

30
31 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Okay. Now just a couple more paragraphs, and then
32 we'll get to some of that discussion here. SERO staff suggested
33 that modification of the current postseason accountability measure
34 may address concerns about any annual overages, while remaining
35 under the total private recreational ACL. SERO will propose such
36 language during Full Council, and maybe here is a stopping point
37 for one of those discussions.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

40
41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, C.J. Bernie, if you could bring up the
42 information I sent you. It's a postseason accountability measure.
43 All right. While we're waiting, first, thanks to my team, Mara,
44 and also Sarah, for helping to kind of put this together.

45
46 What we did is essentially look at the current accountability
47 measures and see how they could be altered, or modified, to address
48 this issue of, if a state goes over, then -- That's an old version,

1 and so we want the latest email that I sent you earlier today.
2
3 We essentially came up with a couple of alternatives, and one is
4 essentially status quo, no action, and the other would be, if a
5 state's red snapper private angling component landings exceed the
6 applicable state ACL, NMFS will reduce, at the beginning of the
7 following fishing year, the state's ACL by the amount of the
8 overage, unless the overage is less than a percentage to be
9 determined of the state's ACL and the private angling component is
10 not exceeded.
11
12 We'll, obviously, show the language on the screen here, but,
13 essentially, there's two metrics now. One is to put some
14 guardrails, so that states don't go over by some major amount,
15 right, and you kind of cap the amount of overage that they would
16 have. You're getting closer, Bernie, and it's the other file.
17 Thank you.
18
19 You kind of cap the amount of the overage before you have to --
20 They're required automatically to have a payback, and you have to
21 have the whole private angling component quota be exceeded in order
22 for the payback to apply, and so I hope that makes sense, and then
23 the percentages were built in based on what I heard from Troy the
24 other day, but they're certainly subject to modification, and let's
25 see if I explain that okay. If people have questions, I'm happy
26 to answer them, or get a second right now.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right, Mr. Strelcheck has got a motion on the
29 board. Is there a second? Captain Frady.
30
31 **MR. FRADY:** I'll second it.
32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Discussion on the motion? General Spraggins.
34
35 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Strelcheck, I guess the question I'm asking
36 is, when you use a number of 10 percent, or whatever the numbers
37 you were using there, and they moved around again on me, but is
38 that the calibrated, or is that what the -- You know, in our
39 situation, that would be 50 percent of that.
40
41 You know, in Mississippi's situation, if you said that we could go
42 10 percent, and I think you showed like 16,000 pounds, but it would
43 really be -- If it's calibrated, it would be 50 percent of that,
44 and is that -- I just need to know, you know, which one is it.
45
46 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, and Sarah might want to weigh-in on this,
47 because we went back and forth, and we actually have it presented
48 in both ways, right, but we know you're monitoring the catch limit

1 in your survey units, but we ultimately have to determine if the
2 catch limit was exceeded based on the federal equivalent for the
3 quota. I don't know, Sarah, you want to add anything.
4

5 **MS. GARDINER:** I think I'll just add that, you know, the
6 calculations for the calibrations from state-specific monitoring
7 to the CHTS units will be done when we're taking a look at, you
8 know, what that percentage is, and if the total recreational ACL
9 had been exceeded, and so there will be a calibration in there,
10 but it wouldn't change how you guys -- The state-specific would be
11 able to have some leeway there. I don't know if I articulated
12 that well, but --
13

14 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.
15

16 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so just a
17 couple questions, and so you're thinking, I guess the motion maker
18 and seconder, that this would be a separate action, potentially,
19 than the other two items we've been talking about, which is the
20 carryover and quota transfer, and this perhaps maybe could be moved
21 along a little faster than some of the other action items we were
22 looking at yesterday?
23

24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I hadn't given thought to the vehicle, or
25 how quickly it would move along. I mean, we do think it's a lot
26 less complicated than the carryover provision, or even the transfer
27 provisions.
28

29 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** General Spraggins.
30

31 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and, once again, I understand what Sarah
32 was talking about, but I guess, in our case, maybe we should put
33 that it's for the calibrate, you know, and, if we did that, that
34 would let us know exactly where we're at, and the reason I say
35 that is because, if our calibration stays at 55, or whatever, then
36 that's 55, but, if it goes to 1.0, then, you know, we at least
37 know where we're at, and if I -- I don't know. I was just thinking,
38 if we have something, to be specific on it, and we have what we
39 would be -- Us and Alabama, and I would like to have Kevin weigh-
40 in on this more, because Kevin would be affected the same way.
41

42 **MR. ANSON:** I'm sorry, General, and I wasn't -- I wasn't paying
43 attention.
44

45 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** What I was talking about is if the calibrated
46 is what we're talking about. I mean, in a situation like mine, it
47 shows that we got 150,000 or 160,000 pounds, but, when you come
48 back to it, we only have 82,000 pounds, and so 10 percent of the

1 total is 16,000, which is a large amount, which is really double
2 that, but 10 percent of the calibrated would be 8,000.

3
4 In your case, me and you are the only two, I think, that have that
5 effect, and I just wanted to know how you felt about it. I feel
6 like we ought to go with the calibrated, and put it in there, and,
7 that way, we don't have to worry about any question as to where
8 somebody exceeded 10 percent.

9
10 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so I don't know where you want to put in the
11 word "calibrated" or "calibration", but in my mind, the way that
12 I see this working is that everything -- Because it's stated in
13 the Federal Register, that the states are provided their allocation
14 in CHTS units, and then so, when you and I are looking at our state
15 seasons, and trying to determine those, or monitor those, we're
16 monitoring those in Tails 'n Scales or Snapper Check, and those
17 are calibrated numbers to what the Federal Register says, right,
18 and so I'm speaking for Alabama, because I'm more familiar with
19 it.

20
21 We have 1.12 million pounds, roughly, of allocation to us, in CHTS
22 units, and that's what is in the Federal Register, and so our
23 calibration is around roughly two-to-one, or half, and so we have
24 the 650,000 pounds, is what we monitor, and what we're, you know,
25 using as our basis for setting the season and such.

26
27 If you would go over 650,000 pounds, and we go over 650,000 pounds
28 by 50,000 pounds, then that's going to, in reality, be 100,000
29 pounds in CHTS, and so that would be 10 percent of the total
30 overall allocation to Alabama, in CHTS units, but 50,000 pounds
31 would be a little less, if you're looking at 650,000 pounds in
32 Snapper Check, is the way I kind of interpret it, but, relative to
33 your question, I don't know whether or not that needs to be --
34 That might, in my mind, might provide more confusion, but anyways.

35
36 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Well, I understand, and I'm just trying to --
37 I just want to clarify this, because, you know, I expect this to
38 go on for quite a while, and this not to be changed every other
39 meeting, and so the situation being I know what I would do in the
40 State of Mississippi, and I don't know who's going to replace me,
41 and what they would do, and that's what I was worried about. I
42 just wanted to make sure that it was clarified.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Levy.

45
46 **MS. LEVY:** Okay, and so, in the codified regulations, there's the
47 state catch limit in the state units and a federal equivalent,
48 right? They're both codified. You manage, based on your data

1 collection systems, to your state-calibrated catch limit.

2
3 I would read this as saying it's 2.5 or 5 percent of your calibrated
4 catch limit, right? The reason we need the CHTS, or the federal
5 equivalent, is to determine whether the total private angling
6 component has been exceeded, and so that's what we would use the
7 federal equivalent for. The idea of whether you needed to pay it
8 back would be based on the percentage of your state-specified
9 calibrated catch limit.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. Okay. Captain Walker, and
12 then Dr. --

13
14 **MR. WALKER:** I feel like I need some clarification on Alternative
15 2 here, and I've read it I think fourteen times now, and, as
16 written, I don't see how it applies. It doesn't mention anything
17 about carryover, or rollover, and this just looks like it gives
18 you the option to go over by 10 percent, or 5 percent, and that's
19 it, right?

20
21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

22
23 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so it's not carryover. It's a postseason
24 accountability measure, and, essentially, it's intended that, if
25 a state happens to go over by a small amount, whatever that small
26 amount is, it doesn't automatically trigger them to then have to
27 pay it back the next year, as long as they didn't go over by
28 whatever the percentage is listed there, and the private angling
29 catch limit has not been exceeded Gulf-wide, right, because what
30 we're trying to do is constrain harvest to under the annual catch
31 limit as a whole. This is not requiring a payback every time
32 there's an instance of one pound or more of an outreach.

33
34 **MR. WALKER:** I was just confused, because I thought we were in a
35 carryover conversation, and I didn't see how this that could --
36 But my bad, I guess.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Dr. Simmons, and then Dr. Sweetman.

39
40 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thanks, and that's what I was trying
41 to, I guess, get out earlier, when I was saying this is a separate
42 document, that we're directing staff to look at, that would just
43 focus on the postseason accountability measures, and not
44 considering what we talked about yesterday, which is the potential
45 carryover or the quota transfer provisions.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes. Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Dr. Sweetman, and
48 then Mr. Anson.

1
2 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I like where you're
3 going with this, Andy. I think I would speak in favor of the
4 motion, and I guess I'm wondering, and this is also part of -- I
5 think we want to put up maybe some more guardrails here, and I
6 don't know if they need to be in the motion. I think one thing
7 that I'm considering here is like states can have consecutive years
8 of overage, you know, and it can't be a pattern. I don't want to
9 see a pattern where this is just continuously happening, right,
10 and so, I mean, I don't know if that needs to be part of the motion
11 or if it's -- Since we're just creating a document here, if this
12 is something that Ms. Gardiner can incorporate into that.
13
14 **MS. GARDINER:** I don't think we need a separate motion. I think
15 we can just incorporate it as we build out the document.
16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Anson, and then Mr. Schieble.
18
19 **MR. ANSON:** I too have read it a couple of times, and I'm a little
20 confused under Alternative 2, or it just need some more clarity,
21 potentially, and so, on the last sentence, where it says Options
22 2a and 2d, percentage of the state-specific ACL and the private
23 angling component quota, should we add -- Does it need something
24 in front of "private" that says "the state's respective private
25 angling component" or "the overall private angling component"? I
26 just want to make sure to put a tie-in there as to the state or
27 the overall.
28
29 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, Andy.
30
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and this is where, if you actually went to
32 50 CFR, that lengthy link, that's specific to the overall Gulf-
33 wide private angling component ACL, and so that's the intent, that
34 you're not going to go over the private angling ACL, and not the
35 state-specific one.
36
37 **MR. ANSON:** So, just so people don't have to go look at that CFR
38 language, can we add "overall" in front of "private", as just a
39 friendly suggestion?
40
41 **MS. LEVY:** I would put "total". I mean, we can do that when we
42 build out the document, too.
43
44 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.
45
46 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so I had some similar concerns with the
47 way it was written, but I think you guys cleared that up. Secondly,
48 Andy, I would like to speak in favor of this motion. I think it's

1 good, and I agree with that.
2
3 I was thinking we need something similar in the original document,
4 and so do we feel that having a separate document here is going to
5 be expedited, versus adding this into the accountability measure
6 one that you already have? Is that the best way to do this?
7
8 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Gardiner.
9
10 **MS. GARDINER:** We don't have a document for the information I
11 presented earlier this meeting, but I would say that this motion
12 appears to be less complex than carryover or transfer provisions.
13
14 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So adding this into what you would develop for the
15 accountability measures wouldn't be any quicker than doing this by
16 itself, right, theoretically?
17
18 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Froeschke.
19
20 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I think it would be quicker, because this seems
21 fairly straightforward, whereas, those other ones, I feel like
22 we're going to get stuck for a long time figuring out how to do
23 those.
24
25 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I'm good with that.
26
27 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Any other comments or further discussion on
28 the motion? I don't see any. Just for clarification, I thought
29 that Captain Frady had seconded the motion, or did Captain Walker?
30
31 **MR. WALKER:** I don't remember doing it, but I'm running on about
32 50 percent right now, and so cut me a little slack.
33
34 **MR. FRADY:** This all stemmed from a conversation we had yesterday,
35 and, instead of having me explain it, Mr. Strelcheck took it and
36 ran with it, with Sarah, and they helped me lead to this, and so
37 thank you all for taking the lead.
38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** So, Troy, did you second the motion?
40
41 **MR. FRADY:** Yes.
42
43 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you.
44
45 **MR. FRADY:** Do you all have hearing impaired?
46
47 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.
48

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** So, just to make sure everyone
2 understands here, again, so I believe one of the things you came
3 up with, with Mr. Anson, that didn't get into a form of a motion
4 yesterday, was different than the post-season accountability
5 measure. I believe that was directed -- That conversation was
6 directed at a potential carryover option for the states, and so,
7 if that's still something you want to consider in the carryover
8 action, we could consider that, but that is not what is being
9 proposed here, and so I just want to make sure everyone understands
10 what the motion is.

11
12 This is just to have us start looking at this, but this is slightly
13 different. It's using similar percentages than what were
14 discussed, but slightly different intent, right, because this is
15 a post-season accountability measure we're looking at.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Is everyone good with
18 that? Any further discussion? Mr. Anson.

19
20 **MR. ANSON:** Troy is going to tell me if I go off the rails here,
21 but, to answer your question, yes and yes, and so, yes, the motion
22 that Captain Frady was trying to get at yesterday was specific to
23 carryover, and so this does not address carryover, but the
24 elements, and the way he was going to approach it, by percentage
25 of ACL is incorporated into this motion.

26
27 I would be in favor of this motion, since I've got the microphone,
28 in light of the expedited process, as was just previously discussed
29 and then Captain Frady is going to address whether or not he wants
30 to include his motion in the carryover document that will go along
31 at a different pace.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Anson. All right.
34 We're going to take a vote. **Is there any opposition to the motion**
35 **on the board? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Dr. Sweetman.

36
37 **DR. SWEETMAN:** All right. A committee member recommended including
38 analysis of state-specific ACL overage frequency and percentages
39 for future discussion. Another committee member suggested the
40 addition of an action to limit carryover to a percentage of the
41 state-specific ACL, rather than unused quota, to reduce annual
42 variability. A committee member wanted post-season and in-season
43 quota transfers to be analyzed.

44
45 The committee recommended the proposed actions be analyzed by staff
46 independently, and so, Captain Frady, we might pause here to see
47 if this is a -- This would be an opportunity for you if you wanted
48 to discuss carryover.

1
2 **MR. FRADY:** Yes, sir. I seconded it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
3 I'm glad we got that out of the way, because I got really confused
4 when I saw the other document come up there, and I saw the same
5 percentages that we were working on in a motion about carryovers.

6
7 Therefore, what we need to do is make them -- I would like to make
8 a motion, and this motion will be addressing the carryover
9 provisions that are similar to what Mr. Strelcheck had already
10 done. Thank you all for your patience.

11
12 All right. **My motion is, in Action 1, establish a carryover**
13 **provision for the private recreational red snapper and add draft**
14 **Alternative 3. Draft Alternative 3 would establish a carryover**
15 **provision for the private angling component of the red snapper ACL**
16 **on a state-by-state basis. For a state that did not land its**
17 **state-specific ACL in the fishing year, that unused portion would**
18 **be carried over to the following fishing year. That amount carried**
19 **over would be capped and equal to no more than a percentage of**
20 **that state's ACL, based on Options 3a through 3d below. Under**
21 **Draft Option 3a, up to 2.5 percent of the state-specific private**
22 **angling ACL would be carried over to the next year. Draft Option**
23 **3b, up to 5 percent of state-specific private angling ACL to be**
24 **carried over to the next year. Draft Option 3c, up to 7.5 percent**
25 **of the state-specific private angling ACL can be carried over to**
26 **the next year, and, finally, Draft Option 3d, up to 10 percent of**
27 **the state-specific private angling ACL can be carried over to the**
28 **next year.**

29
30 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. We have Captain Frady's motion on the
31 board. Is there a second to the motion? Seconded by Dr. Overton.
32 Discussion on the motion? Mr. Osborne.

33
34 **MR. OSBORNE:** Okay. So, just playing this out, and I'm not opposed
35 to it, but I'm just trying to think what happens in the scenario
36 where we have to decrease the ACL because of lack of snapper,
37 right, and so one year you may go under, and you're carrying over
38 two-and-a-half percent, but we've had to decrease the ACL for that
39 area, for that state, or region, and how do we protect on that?

40
41 **MR. FRADY:** I don't really think you do. My vision of this, when
42 I was thinking this through, is each state manages itself against
43 this Gulf, and I was like what a wonderful way to reward a state,
44 if they didn't go over, to set aside a carryover provision where
45 they can basically -- Yesterday, we were talking about reserving
46 for loan losses, or reserve for losses, and we could set aside --
47 The carryover is basically a reserve, where we can set a certain
48 percentage of that state did not go over that year ahead to use in

1 case they do go over the following years.
2
3 That was the only intent, was to protect the states, and the
4 states, if they had unused quota, they could carry over a certain
5 percentage to protect them in case something happened next year,
6 and even the General was talking about -- You know, maybe we're
7 having a hurricane, or have something environmental happen, that
8 caused us not to be able to do that, and my goal was to get the
9 states a tool to help themselves, and to have a protection, and
10 not that habitually overfished, but to reward them if they stay
11 under.
12
13 **MR. OSBORNE:** So why -- I guess, and let's take the scenario then
14 of if Alabama is a half a percent under their ACL. Under this
15 scenario, they would be rewarded with anywhere from two-and-a-half
16 percent to 10 percent of the ACL, regardless of the fact that they
17 were only under by a thousand pounds.
18
19 **MR. FRADY:** If I can think this through, the words "up to". If
20 they only come under a half a percent, they're able to carry that
21 half a percent over, up to a maximum of 2.5 percent, and that would
22 just be --
23
24 **MR. OSBORNE:** So it would be a percentage?
25
26 **MR. FRADY:** I mean, it's based on -- The percentage stays the same,
27 no matter what. It's your actuals that you come under, is what
28 you get to carry over, and not additional --
29
30 **MR. OSBORNE:** Okay. All right. That's it. Thanks.
31
32 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I've got a list. Andy, did you need to
33 clarify something there?
34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I was just going to suggest, given it's
36 been a long day already, that staff can wordsmith afterward, but
37 I think the intent is there that you can carry over up to a certain
38 percentage, and not to exceed the amount of the underage from the
39 prior year, right? That's the intent.
40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you. I have Captain Walker, then Dr.
42 Sweetman.
43
44 **MR. WALKER:** So I'm all for letting the people fish, and giving
45 them the most access we can, but we've heard, from across the Gulf,
46 that people's stocks are declining, and this is going to give more
47 allocation to places that cannot reach their ACL, if I'm not
48 mistaken.

1
2 We're not rewarding them for staying under. They're not staying
3 under on purpose. They're being forced to stay under, because
4 their stock has declined, and we had one charter boat guy after
5 another come up here and say that you all might have given us a
6 little too much here, and we're -- State to state, a lot of people
7 are complaining about the status of their red snapper fishery, and
8 so I don't know that finding a way to give more allocation to
9 somebody that can't fill their current allocation is the right
10 thing to do for the fish.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** General Spraggins.

13
14 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Okay, and maybe I'm just kind of crazy here,
15 but I don't understand the 2.5 and the 10, or, you know, the
16 variables of it. Are we supposed to pick one of those, or we have
17 all five, or four, options there every year, because, if you go to
18 10 percent, and you say up to, the other three are in there, and,
19 as long as you don't exceed the ACL of the state, but you can't in
20 any one of them, and so you can't exceed it at 2.5, and you can't
21 exceed it at 10. I'm not sure -- Maybe I'm missing something here,
22 and I think Sarah may have an answer for me.

23
24 **MS. GARDINER:** Thanks, General, and I think staff, as they're
25 developing a document, would analyze all four of these options,
26 2.5 to 10 percent, and then, as we move through the normal council
27 process, the council would select what their preferred is, and
28 they would just pick one.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Captain Walker.

31
32 **MR. WALKER:** Just to let you know, I've already had a commercial
33 guy text me and say, if they can carry their quote over, why can't
34 we?

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other comments? Mr. Sanchez.

37
38 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I agree with Ed, in the sense that, if this fishery
39 is showing signs of decline, and it's heading in the wrong
40 direction, one can assume the likelihood of not meeting your ACL
41 is going to increase over time, and then, to create a scenario
42 where the fishery is already hinting that it's in trouble, to
43 continue to allow opportunity to catch more, it doesn't make sense.

44
45 I think we're killing the goose that lays the eggs, at some point,
46 and I don't know if there's a way to arrive at that in this, to
47 have some analysis where we go, wait a minute, we're trending in
48 the wrong direction, and maybe we shouldn't be doing this, and I

1 don't know if we're addressing that in this.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. Dr. Banks.

4
5 **DR. BANKS:** To Ed's point, I don't know that that's comparing
6 apples to apples. We're not talking about going over the private
7 rec ACL here. We're talking about a state-specific one that is
8 still staying under the entire private rec Gulf-wide ACL, and so
9 a commercial guy, that has a red snapper quota and goes over, he's
10 got to go buy quota, and so, essentially, this is kind of the same
11 thing, without going through the formal purchasing process, in my
12 mind. Maybe I'm not thinking about that correctly, but we're still
13 staying under that sector's ACL.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Sweetman, then Captain Frady.

16
17 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think we're starting to see here the
18 challenges with carryover, right? I mean, there's some real
19 concerns here that would need to be worked out, and I will say, I
20 mean, I think this option is better than the other one.

21
22 It's more straightforward, but I'm still not -- I mean, I still am
23 concerned about carryover in general, and so, I mean, I'll just
24 throw that out there. That's why I kind of was opposed to it right
25 from the get-go.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Captain Frady, and then we're going to try to
28 bring it in.

29
30 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My intent, when I was working
31 with Sarah to draft this motion right here was, you know, I come
32 from the highly regulated banking industry from years ago. We had
33 opportunities to set aside earnings from this year to next year,
34 in case someone filed bankruptcy or did not pay their note off.

35
36 This was more of a way to handle, in a polite way, to give
37 professional courtesy to a state who was not habitually
38 overfishing, but to reward a state for staying under their quota,
39 but it says for one year, that they didn't use it for one year.
40 It cannot -- It would only be carried over for the following
41 fishing year.

42
43 The intent was not to just give you carte blanche and let you spend
44 it every year. The intent was, if we had something, heaven forbid,
45 the General, the State of Mississippi, went over, for example, but
46 the purpose is to where, for that one year, you were a good steward
47 of your resource, and we allowed you to carry over to a certain
48 percentage, and not to use how you want, but, if you did mess up,

1 and had something to where you did blow your quota by 8,000 pounds,
2 or 6,000, or 4,000, or whatever it may be, you have that reserve.

3
4 This, to me, is a reserve, to bail you out in case something were
5 to happen that were out of your control, and that was the only
6 intent of this right here, was to throw a bone to incentivize
7 states to stay under their quota. Thank you, sir.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Anson.

10
11 **MR. ANSON:** Captain Frady, I appreciate you thinking about this,
12 and developing this motion, but, in practice, I don't know if it
13 will work the way you just described, because what that would mean,
14 the way I interpreted your description of this reserve, is
15 essentially like a -- We would go to a target, the state would go
16 to a target, harvest rate, and that harvest rate would be either
17 2.5, 5 percent, seven-and-a-half, or 10 percent less than what the
18 state's allocation is.

19
20 The potential result of that would mean, if they were 100 percent
21 accurate on meeting their target, then they would end up being
22 two-and-a-half percent less, 5 percent, seven-and-a-half, or 10
23 percent less than their allocation, and then they would not be
24 hitting it.

25
26 I'm just -- It may be semantics, but I just -- I see this as a
27 state does its best to try to manage such that they maximize and
28 get as close to without exceeding their allocation, and, in a
29 circumstance when they did not, because the weather was bad, or
30 participation was less, because some other factors were involved,
31 then they would have the ability to carry over up to whatever
32 percentage of their ACL into the following fishing year. Just,
33 again, it may be semantics.

34
35 **DR. FRADY:** Well, I can't spell "semantics", but the goal here is
36 not to create a lower target than what you are. The states have
37 already proven that, come November, or December, if they've got
38 allocation left, they pull in the left lane and mash the
39 accelerator until they think their quota is going to be caught,
40 and, if you're so precise where you can pick out two weeks, the
41 last two weeks, out of December, to where you could think you're
42 going to reach your target on December 29th at 9:15 p.m., I think
43 we can manage this, and it may be semantics, but I think the states
44 have -- I have enough faith in the states to do what they can to
45 stay under their quota, and it's proven every year.

46
47 I mean, by staying in the left lane, it's not disrespectful, and
48 it's just like the states feel confident enough that they can pull

1 out the left lane and hit it, and mash that gas until they're going
2 to hit exactly their quota, and then they shut down that season.
3 I have faith enough in the states to go, you know what, we're going
4 to hit our quota, and we're not going to go over.

5
6 That person that does go over, I want to give that person an
7 opportunity to bail themselves out without relying on another state
8 to bail them out. The goal is for each state to be rewarded by
9 this process in my mind and reward them if they do come in and say
10 -- All of a sudden, for Louisiana, for the 200 days, and, what did
11 we hit, one-ninety-something today? If you hit it, and let's say
12 you missed it by 5,000 pounds, throw that 5,000 pounds -- Don't
13 open the season back up.

14
15 Close that 5,000 pounds out, and throw it in your reserve, up to
16 a certain percentage, and you've just built yourself a little
17 buffer for the future, but the buffer is not meant to bail you
18 out. It's just I have enough faith in the states to manage your
19 fishery to the pound, and that's what I'm trying to do, is figure
20 out a way to where the states would go, you know what, that's not
21 a bad idea, and we go under every year by 1 percent, you know,
22 30,000 pounds, or 5,000 pounds, and I want to reward the states
23 for being good stewards, and that was the purpose of this.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Frady, and so I have a list of
26 folks' hands, but just a reminder there's not a document developed
27 at this point for this. This is very early stages, and I would
28 like for Dr. Simmons to say a few words on some details regarding
29 it.

30
31 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair, and
32 so, I mean, basically, do you want staff to look at this or not?
33 I mean, the carryover part of this process is in its very early
34 stages. You received a presentation with some different scenarios.
35 You passed a motion earlier about, you know, looking at some of
36 the other ways you could use that -- Take that unused quote and
37 carry it over, and so, essentially do you want staff to look at
38 something like this when we bring back the carryover document, and
39 so I think we've had a lot of discussion, and we kind of understand
40 what you would like us to look at it. It's do you want us to do
41 it or not, basically, when we bring this back.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Next on my list is Dr.
44 Sweetman, and then Dakus.

45
46 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Call the question, Mr. Chair.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. **Is there any opposition to the motion?**

1 **We have one opposed. The motion carries.** Mr. Geeslin, did you
2 have something to say? Okay. Dr. Sweetman.

3
4 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. All right. Moving on, the
5 next item is Presentation: Delegate Federal For-Hire Red Snapper
6 Management to Gulf States, Tab B, Number 9. Council staff
7 presented the purpose and need and discussed the management actions
8 for delegating the federal for-fire red snapper management to the
9 Gulf states (Action 1), allocating the federal for-hire components
10 amongst the states (Action 2), and permitting states to close
11 federal waters adjacent to their state waters (Action 3).

12
13 In Action 2, a committee member thought a longer landings time
14 series should be considered. Another committee member suggested
15 the average landings per for-hire vessel could also be an
16 allocation criterion.

17
18 **The committee recommends, and I so move, to add Alternative 4 in**
19 **Action 2 to allocate the federal for-hire red snapper quota between**
20 **the Gulf states based on the Amendment 40 sector separation**
21 **formula. That formula is listed there, along with the table for**
22 **what the landings would look like, the allocation percentages.**
23 That motion carried eleven to three with three abstentions, Mr.
24 Chair.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We have a committee
27 motion on the board. I'll open the floor for discussion on the
28 motion. Captain Walker, and then Dr. Sweetman.

29
30 **MR. WALKER:** As I did before, I speak against the motion. I don't
31 need to go over why again, I don't think, but I definitely don't
32 agree with the years chosen.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ed, I didn't hear, and you said the years?

35
36 **MR. WALKER:** It's called a time series, and I think it's a
37 selective, self-interest time series here, and, again, I'll go
38 into, if we're dividing up sector separation in the for-hire
39 sector, then we should use the sector separation years.

40
41 Also, it's of note that, a long time ago, there weren't as many
42 red snapper in the eastern Gulf as there are in the last ten or
43 fifteen years, and so, in my view, this does not capture the
44 reality of the fishery in the Gulf of Mexico right now, and so it
45 should not even be added as an alternative. That's my opinion.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Thank you, Captain Walker. Dr.
48 Sweetman.

1
2 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that was honestly what I was going to say,
3 too. I speak in opposition to this motion as well. In addition
4 to the timeframe that we're talking about here, this was when the
5 red snapper fishery was completely depleted in the eastern Gulf,
6 and it is not representative of what's going on. The situation
7 has completely changed since then.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Any other comments, or
10 discussion, on the motion? I'm not seeing any. Is there any
11 opposition to the motion? Three, four, five opposed.

12
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I abstain.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** One abstention. Okay. **The motion carries.** Dr.
16 Sweetman.

17
18 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. **Moving on, the committee**
19 **recommends, and I so move, in Action 2, to add an Alternative 5 to**
20 **allocate the federal for-hire red snapper quota between the Gulf**
21 **states based on 50 percent of the Amendment 40 sector separation**
22 **formula and 50 percent of each state's average red snapper landings**
23 **between 2021 and 2024 in Alternative 3, and you can see what the**
24 **allocation looks like there, and the motion carried twelve to three**
25 **with two abstentions.** Mr. Chair.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Is there any discussion
28 on the motion on the board? Dr. Sweetman.

29
30 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For similar reasons, I'm
31 going to oppose this motion as well. I appreciate the
32 consideration for adding in 2021 to 2024, but this is not a true
33 Bowtie Method, and it does not appropriately -- It still places
34 the bias on the earlier years, and so this doesn't really do much
35 there. Thank you.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Captain Walker.

38
39 **MR. WALKER:** Same, for the same reasons. I think it's a bad idea,
40 and offering somebody half of a bad idea is still a bad idea, and
41 so I'm opposed.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Ballard.

44
45 **MS. BALLARD:** Mr. Schieble, can you tell me which timeframe was
46 used when the private rec was discussed?

47
48 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

1
2 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So that would be Alternative 4, the previous motion
3 that we just looked at. It's the Amendment 40 time series, and so
4 it skips specific years, like 2010, the oil spill, and 2006,
5 because of Katrina, right after that, and this one here skips 2020
6 because of COVID.

7
8 **MS. BALLARD:** So I'm just -- I guess I'm confused why we just can't
9 use the same thing. I mean, I think that's kind of unfair. You're
10 going to pose that for private rec, but we can't pose it for the
11 for-hire, and I just think that's unfair, and kind of rude, but
12 I'm private rec, and so that's where I stand, and so I would want
13 to use the same data, the same information, to make one decision
14 as we are for the other.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Ballard. I have Ms. Levy, and
17 then Dr. Sweetman.

18
19 **MS. LEVY:** Thanks. I don't know if this is what I heard from a
20 couple of people, and I don't know, Chris, if you said this, that
21 the Alternative 4, whatever the alternative was with the sector
22 separation, was also used for the state management stuff, and I
23 heard a couple of people say that, but that's not correct.

24
25 When Amendment 50 was put into place, the allocation was based on
26 the EFPs that the states developed, and the percentages they got
27 there, plus the little extra going to Alabama and Florida. It was
28 not based on the time series at all, and so I just want to make
29 sure that that's understood.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Sweetman.

32
33 **DR. SWEETMAN:** That was exactly what I was going to say. Ms.
34 Ballard, these are not the allocation percentages that are set for
35 private recreational, and so your information is incorrect there.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

38
39 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So we had to decide on allocation to do our EFPs,
40 and this is the formula that we used, the Amendment 40 formula, to
41 do the EFPs.

42
43 **MS. LEVY:** No.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Levy.

46
47 **MS. LEVY:** Sorry, and that's not correct, because each state
48 decided on their own to present how they were doing their state

1 landings. I think Alabama did theirs on biomass. When you did
2 your EFPs, there was a partial -- It was not based on a percentage
3 formula. It just happened to work out that we were not above the
4 private rec ACL. We could certainly go back and look at those EFP
5 applications, but it was not based on the sector separation
6 formula.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

9
10 **MR. WALKER:** So does that mean there's incorrect information in
11 both of these motions, and maybe it's just a justification, I
12 guess.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other discussion on the motion? Mr.
15 Strelcheck.

16
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So there's a sector separation formula to split
18 the percentage of the recreational ACL between private, state
19 charter, and for federal for-hire, right, but I would have to
20 double-check if this is the exact formula. I assume it is, but we
21 never partitioned it out then amongst the states.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Andy. Any other discussion?
24 Okay. Well, we have a motion on the board. We have to vote on
25 it. Any opposition to the motion? Six.

26
27 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Abstain.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** One abstention. **The motion carries.** Dr.
30 Sweetman.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. A committee member
33 suggested that only the years after sector separation should be
34 considered in allocation decisions. The committee thought the
35 structure of the actions could be improved by adding options
36 relative to the closure of federal waters (Action 3) to the
37 delegation action in Action 1.

38
39 The committee noted that future iterations of the document should
40 detail the extent of the delegation and include accountability
41 measures, and I think we have something here from Dr. Allen, and
42 it looks like Mr. Schieble next.

43
44 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and I'm backing up a little bit, but I would like
45 to make a motion here that if we make Action 2, Alternative 1, no
46 action, the preferred alternative. This is the third meeting in
47 a row that we have heard almost unanimous disapproval of this from
48 the charter fleet.

1
2 We had over eighty comments received online that were
3 overwhelmingly opposed to doing this at all, and I think, if we're
4 going to listen to the people that are in this fishery, that would
5 be affected, we should make the no action the preferred
6 alternative.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Dr. Allen has made a motion. Do we have
9 a second?

10
11 **DR. ALLEN:** Is it Action 1? I'm sorry. Action 1. Action 1,
12 Alternative 1.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Sanchez seconds. Is there a further
15 discussion on Dr. Allen's motion? Captain Walker.

16
17 **MR. WALKER:** I agree. About 90 percent of the industry say we
18 don't want this, and are we really going to vote in favor of the
19 5 percent? I mean, I guess -- I understand the regional
20 differences, and there's some things that guys behind this would
21 like to see, but there might be other ways to do that without
22 impacting what most people believe is a system that's not broken,
23 and doesn't need fixing.

24
25 Most of the guys, myself included, are happy with the current
26 system and don't want to see individual states get involved. I
27 mean, you've heard it all from literally 99 percent of the public
28 testimony we've had from each state, and so I certainly support
29 the motion.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Is there any other
32 discussion? Mr. Schieble.

33
34 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I would simply say that all we've heard from are
35 folks in the eastern Gulf, who have seen permits shift from the
36 western Gulf to the eastern Gulf, and, if you look at the recent
37 time series of landings, they've been landing 1.2 million pounds
38 of fish over the past five years, on average, where, prior to that,
39 it was less than 800,000, and we're still leaving over a million
40 pounds on the table, and so there's definitely inequity across the
41 entire Gulf, and the purpose of this is to try to balance a very
42 small portion of that in the western Gulf.

43
44 I'm going to speak against this motion, obviously, because this is
45 simply for us to start putting in alternatives into this document
46 for us to look at further down the road here, and not just can it
47 right off the start, and so I'm definitely opposed to this.

1 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I've got a couple of hands. C.J., and
2 then John.

3
4 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I would just respectfully
5 disagree that we only heard from the eastern Gulf. We heard from
6 Texas, we heard from Mississippi, and we heard from Alabama, and
7 pretty strong contention and opposition to this.

8
9 **MR. SANCHEZ:** To that point, since yesterday, I'm going to guess,
10 and I could be wrong, and maybe staff knows, but, since yesterday,
11 we probably got over a hundred comments against this, and so, you
12 know, I don't know where the will, the desire, to continue this
13 really is, when the very fleet that is going to be affected by
14 this, and fought for this, and is happy with this, has come out,
15 I mean, overnight, with over a hundred people saying, no, we don't
16 want it. You heard several people say capital N and capital O. I
17 mean --

18
19 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

20
21 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, to that point, I think, during public
22 comment, Kevin did a really good job of fielding some of the
23 questions and potential misinformation that was coming from some
24 of the public comment in there. I want to clarify certain things
25 here that I've heard, and I said this on the record back in
26 November, when we first started this.

27
28 This is no intention of trying to dismantle Amendment 40.
29 Amendment 40 will be very well sustained throughout this process
30 of this document. There will be sector separation, and states
31 cannot take that apart. That's at the federal level. That's not
32 going to come apart with this document whatsoever.

33
34 It's simply taking that and allocating a quota to a specific state,
35 so those guys can fish to better utilize what their historical
36 catch has been over the entire duration of a federal for-hire
37 fleet. That's simply what we're doing here, and adjusting a season
38 structure to benefit that, and potentially a bag limit, without
39 disrupting other fisheries, other parts of the Gulf, and that's
40 exactly what this would do. It's not going to disrupt other
41 action, or anglers, in the eastern portion of the Gulf, when you're
42 talking about, in the case of Louisiana, about 150,000 pounds. I
43 mean, that's not a whole lot.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Mr. Anson.

46
47 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I'm going to still be supportive of continuing
48 on with the document, so that we can kind of flesh out some of

1 these details, and make it very clear, and, any of them that are
2 unclear, or new issues that arise that we need to address, we'll
3 have an opportunity to do that in the document.

4
5 For those that, I guess, are concerned about this, you know, we
6 have it structured right now that a state can opt-in, or they can
7 opt-out, and I said it earlier during public comment. I've heard
8 the Alabama charter boat captains, over several meetings now, and
9 then some, as well as when I've gone to the Alabama Charter
10 Fishermen Association meetings, and there is overwhelming lack of
11 support for this document in Alabama, but inasmuch as that there
12 is support in other states, and as much as it can provide
13 flexibility to those charter boats in that state, or states, then
14 I think we ought to give them opportunity, because it provides
15 some flexibility.

16
17 You know, the benefit of this is that, for those that are going to
18 be on the outside, staying in the old system, is that Louisiana,
19 once we determine an allocation, that's what they'll be fished to,
20 and so, if they want to fish at eight fish a day, then they'll
21 still have the same pounds to fish, and so I'm having difficulty
22 trying to see it operationally be effective, or provide some
23 benefits to another state, if they choose to want to go down that
24 path.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Banks.

27
28 **DR. BANKS:** I'm going to echo a lot of what Kevin just said, but
29 I just want to reiterate that, yes, you did hear from some Texans,
30 but you did not hear from all, because I'm also fielding calls
31 from the other side, that might have been less vocal today while
32 we were in the central Gulf, but, when I go home, I get texts.
33 Sitting here, I am getting texts, and so I'm going to echo Kevin.
34 I don't know which way finally I would vote, but, right now, I'm
35 still willing to listen and explore the option for states to opt-
36 in or opt-out of this.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

39
40 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So, once we dispense of this motion, I would like
41 to talk about adding an action. I mean, I guess it would be an
42 action somewhere in this document about accountability measures.
43 I mentioned this during committee, and I'm not sure where to put
44 it, so maybe Assane can think about that for a minute, and then
45 I'll pose a motion.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Sweetman.

1 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and it's just a quick question, and this is
2 maybe for Mara, but any sort of delegation of authority to the
3 states requires a 75 percent majority vote, correct, when we come
4 to final action on this?

5
6 **MS. LEVY:** I'm going to punt that question, only because that's
7 one of the provisions that the courts have been addressing in the
8 Appointments Clause litigation, and several courts have decided
9 that that provision has been severed from the act, and so, whether
10 that means the council just does a 50 percent majority vote, or
11 whether it means the council still does 75, for their purposes, I
12 really -- I think we need to talk -- I need to talk to the Fisheries
13 Service.

14
15 I don't know exactly how they're going about implementing those
16 decisions, and they've been sort of sporadic across the country,
17 and so I also think that they'll probably want a clear path forward
18 through the whole -- For the whole nation, regardless of where the
19 court decision is.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. I have a question, maybe
22 for Andy. Andy, is there -- Could you maybe give an explanation,
23 if there is one, for -- I heard the folks today, the charter
24 captains, that have some fear with the state changing leadership
25 and so forth. Is there any protection, at your level, that would
26 maybe make these charter captains feel a little better about it,
27 and I don't know if that means a permit, or the actual allocation,
28 or anything, and is there some protection for these captains in
29 the eastern Gulf that do not want this? Actually, you know, the
30 states can opt-out, but I'm looking for some security for these
31 guys.

32
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, first, I want to caution us about making it
34 an us versus them, right, because I keep hearing a lot of eastern
35 Gulf, western Gulf, and we're hearing this, and we're hearing that.
36 Yes, there's opt-out provisions, but part of the success of the
37 state management is there was a unified front from the states
38 agreeing to state management, and I think, if we're going to go
39 down this path, and we're going to have a lot of fishermen that
40 are frustrated and angry about the discussions even happening, you
41 know, you potentially run into a situation where states are kind
42 of being forced to opt-out, because they don't want to opt-in, or
43 vice versa, right?

44
45 With that said, with the delegation of authority, it does have,
46 obviously, some guardrails, and so, if, you know, a state is
47 delegated management, but they're not abiding by that delegation
48 authority, it can be rescinded, right, and so that's part of

1 Amendment 50, and there's, obviously, guardrails that, obviously,
2 kind of limit what the states can do outside of what they've been
3 delegated, or prevent them from doing things outside of what
4 they've been doing.

5
6 That's essentially, I think, where there would be some guardrails,
7 but, yes, and I just -- I'm concerned, obviously, just because
8 there's a lot of tension around this table, and we're very early
9 in this process, and we are hearing this eastern Gulf versus
10 western Gulf, but I think every one of you probably has people in
11 your state that are going to both support this and oppose it, and
12 some states are going to have more support, and some states are
13 going to have less support, or no support, right, but the reality
14 is that this isn't just an eastern Gulf issue.

15
16 There is a charter fleet, obviously, that is very passionate about
17 federal fisheries management. The last thing I'll say, and I think
18 this is where I'm hearing a lot of concerns, and I'm getting phone
19 calls, is the accessibility, right, and so, yes, the states are
20 closer to those fishermen, but they feel like the council process
21 is more open, and transparent, and accessible to them, relative to
22 their state government, and that may be true for some states, and
23 not as true for other states, right, and I'm generalizing what
24 I've heard, but I think that's another part of the concern.

25
26 I'm not passing judgment. I'm not super excited about this action
27 right now, but I don't think it's time to kill the action either,
28 and so I think we should proceed, but with caution, and I think we
29 should be thoughtful in terms of how we're talking to one another
30 as we try to work through this process.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for those comments. All right, I'll go
33 to Mr. Osborne, and we're going to take a vote on this.

34
35 **MR. OSBORNE:** All right, and I'll try and be quick. I guess I'm
36 understanding exactly what you all are saying that are opposed, or
37 that want this action, and I'm kind of looking at it from a
38 political standpoint, and not really understanding exactly what
39 authority, or what the problems are with the transfer of authority,
40 right, specifically, as opposed to just saying at a 30,000-foot
41 level, we don't want the states to do it, and we want the federal
42 government to continue to do it, but why is that, right, because
43 I have also heard, from some of the statements that folks have
44 made, that they have a problem with the timeline of action that
45 we're taking as a council.

46
47 A lot of that timeline is taken up by the federal bureaucracy, and
48 I'm not casting any blame on the federal folks here, but that's

1 just the nature of federal government, whereas, on the state side,
2 we're able to tackle things a lot faster, and more efficiently,
3 and so, as we're moving through this process, if we could see some
4 specific examples of where the concern may lie, like on what
5 decisions a state could take that the federal government currently
6 has, I would feel a lot more comfortable supporting transferring
7 to the states if those can be hashed out.

8
9 To Chris's point, if we had some accountability measures in there,
10 I think I would feel comfortable, because, again, from a political
11 standpoint, the only transition that I've seen on the state
12 government, and the five states that are here, that's been kind of
13 night and day, and I can't speak to the fisheries, is Louisiana,
14 where it went from John Bel Edwards to Governor Landry.

15
16 In the other states, it's either been the same governor in Texas
17 for a long time, and, in Florida, you've had the same governor,
18 political party for a governor, for a long time, and, in Alabama,
19 similar, and, in Mississippi, the same. I'm opposed to this
20 preferred alternative right now, but I'm still open to being
21 opposed to the whole thing in the end.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Jason. All right. We've got two
24 comments. C.J. is not -- We'll let Mr. Strelcheck speak to it,
25 and then we're going to take a vote.

26
27 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and this would be probably much better coming
28 from Ed or Troy, or one of the charter captains in the audience,
29 but, just to kind of address your question, we sat in this room,
30 ten plus years ago, essentially voting on and debating sector
31 separation.

32
33 The charter industry, and this is just my viewpoint, but the
34 charter industry has been under limited access federally for
35 twenty-three years, right, and so they have a lot of stake,
36 obviously, in the fishery, based on that limited access, but then
37 sector separation in part came about because, at that time, the
38 states were extending their seasons in state waters.

39
40 The federal seasons were getting shorter, and the federal permit
41 holders did not have access to state water fishing. They had to
42 fish with the federal water seasons, and so, once that separation
43 happened, right, they felt -- I'm characterizing it as kind of
44 some ownership over their portion of the quota relative to the
45 overall recreational fishery, and so that's my viewpoint as to why
46 I think you hear a lot of passion around the table from the charter
47 captains, and in the audience, and why this is such a contentious
48 issue.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. All right. We're
3 going to take a vote, and so I'm going to do it different. I think
4 it may turn out different, but the numbers, and so, all in favor
5 of Dr. Allen's motion, raise your hand, six; all opposed. Is there
6 any abstentions? I am. **The motion fails six to ten with one**
7 **abstention.** Mr. Anson.

8
9 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so, recognizing that this is a contentious
10 issue for many, and to maybe assuage some of the fears that may be
11 harbored by some of those that are in opposition to this, I would
12 like to offer a motion to, and it would probably be a new motion,
13 to include a sunset provision for the program, and you would have
14 an option there of two, three, or four years, I guess. I haven't
15 crafted it, but if we can just maybe have -- A crude, rudimentary
16 motion to include a sunset provision for state management of the
17 federal for-hire, and then have Option a of two years, Option b of
18 three years, and Option c of four years.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We'll let Bernie get Mr. Anson's motion on the
21 board. Is there a second to Mr. Anson's motion? We have a second
22 for Mr. Schieble. Mr. Anson, you have a second by Mr. Schieble.
23 Do you want to provide some rationale?

24
25 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so I'll elaborate a little bit, a little bit
26 more, but you know, again, there's people that are concerned about
27 this, and so, maybe with a sunset provision, there will be a
28 defined period of time and that people can, you know, anticipate
29 how long this would be open, and then, after that, you know, we
30 can maybe incorporate some sort of analysis, and the state, or
31 states, that choose to opt-in would provide some documentation,
32 and they could do that as part of their report that they provide
33 here to the council for the recreational private rec red snapper.

34
35 Maybe they can provide periodic reports, and maybe a final report
36 at the end of the period, to kind of, you know, do the before and
37 the after effects, if you will, of what the program provided, in
38 as much as, you know, potentially satisfaction, or, you know,
39 angler satisfaction, charter owner-operator satisfaction, that
40 type of thing, but, again, just trying to take into account those
41 that may be saying no just because it's permanent, and there might
42 be some folks that would say, well, sure, yes, let's give it a try
43 too, if they know that it's a relatively short-term.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Anson. I have Mr. Geeslin, and
46 then Chris.

47
48 **MR. GEESLIN:** Yes, and much to the -- I guess my feelings are

1 similar to the previous motion, in it's maybe a little early to
2 strangle this motion in the crib, but I don't know that I would
3 want to go through this every two years, and, with the opt-in and
4 out provision, I think you could -- If a state is -- Let's just
5 hypothetically, and I hate playing that what-if game, but states
6 take on charter for-hire management, and we establish a system,
7 and we work to build trust, and we repair some relationships, and
8 we adjust and modify to suit their needs.

9
10 Within two years, we're re-evaluating, and I think -- One, I think
11 we should always be re-evaluating, but with that opt-in and opt-
12 out provision, I think you have that flexibility there. I'm not
13 going to speak out against this, but I'm just -- In my mind, I'm
14 already thinking, wow, hold on, and we've invested a lot, and we're
15 going to -- We're going to go down this trail again, but I like
16 where you're going with it, Kevin.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

19
20 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, obviously, I support this motion, and
21 I seconded it. I think what it sets up here is that we are trying
22 to show the doubters, or those who don't think this is a good idea,
23 that we're making as many guardrails as possible for, if this goes
24 way wrong, we have a way to get out of it, right, and the next
25 motion I'm going to make is along the lines of this, but, Kevin,
26 would you be amicable to adding an Option d of five years to this?

27
28 My thought process on that, before we vote on it, is I would like
29 a decent time series to be able to look at landings that come in
30 if we have a year with multiple hurricanes, or consecutive years
31 of multiple hurricanes, and they're going to impact those numbers
32 pretty bad, and we're not going to get a good series of landings
33 in two or three years if that takes place, and so I'm looking at
34 five.

35
36 Worst-case scenario, we get that, and then LA Creel will give us
37 those numbers, and, by that time, we should have SEFHIER in place
38 at the same time, and we'll have a side-by-side with SEFHIER that's
39 reporting, and the LA Creel that's also monitoring the federal
40 for-hire fleet at the same time.

41
42 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I don't have a problem with that adding the
43 five years in.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I have Mr. Sanchez.

46
47 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I appreciate what you're trying to do, to give this
48 -- You know, potentially people a chance to see if this works or

1 not, and be able to pull the trigger, but I feel the same way I
2 did the last time this and sunset provisions were brought up. If
3 you like sunsets, go to Key West. They celebrate them every night.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.
6

7 **MR. WALKER:** I'm not even going to vote on this, because, you know,
8 how many years do you want something that you don't want, but, to
9 answer Mr. Osborne's question, and we can talk about this on the
10 side for a while, but just one issue, from a Gulf for-hire permit
11 holder, is you're going to delegate the counting of the fish to
12 each state and their own particular fish counting method. Am I
13 wrong? Is each state -- The states that do get to count their own
14 fish, right? Can you see my issue with that?
15

16 If we say, oh, we didn't really catch that many, we can keep our
17 season, but we haven't caught those fish yet, and so we can go
18 another three months in our state, because we don't have any data
19 that shows we actually caught these fish, and so, to me, that's an
20 issue delegating everybody count your own fish and tell us when
21 you catch the quota. Right now, we're all under the same umbrella,
22 and, you know, as you heard, most of us like to stay -- There's
23 other issues, but that's just one off the top of my head, since
24 you asked.
25

26 **UNIDENTIFIED:** Well, if we promise not to do the one for us and
27 two for you, would that be okay?
28

29 **MR. WALKER:** You've identified my concern, actually.
30

31 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck, then Mr. Anson.
32

33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and my perspective is this is premature right
34 now in the conversation. We're so early, but I will point out, at
35 least with Option a, that we would probably have to start an action
36 right at the beginning of the program in order to renew it,
37 because, by the time we get a rule in place, it will be two years
38 later, and so I think two years is probably a little short. Three
39 years could be a little short as well, because you may only have
40 one year of data before you have to start looking at renewing the
41 program.
42

43 **MR. ANSON:** Just to Captain Walker's point about, I guess, cooking
44 the books, for lack of a better term, I mean, the states are
45 providing that data now, and certainly there wouldn't be the
46 allocation, you know, assigned to them, but, I mean, the states
47 are collecting data now, and I don't know, and I take a little bit
48 of offense in that we would alter the data in order to provide

1 more days, or more benefit, to the state. That just -- I don't
2 know, and it took me -- It shook me the wrong way.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Mr. Schieble, we want to wrap it up.

5
6 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, to that same point, you know, we
7 present our landings data twice a year here, and all the states
8 do, with the private recreational landings. Louisiana includes
9 the federal for-hire every time, and then we discuss how the weight
10 methods are done, but they're very close to each other with what
11 the federal landings are showing.

12
13 Can Andy speak, and where do the federal landings come from that
14 are reported across the entire Gulf? Do you use the state systems
15 to calculate the number of fish, right, that are landed, and then
16 apply an average weight to those, and so those are reported,
17 currently in the first place, right now, from the states. Am I
18 wrong?

19
20 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, you're wrong, and so Louisiana and Texas
21 provide charter landings. The other three eastern Gulf states
22 provide landings through MRIP. As of right now, that's going to
23 now transition to Mississippi and Alabama Creel, which we don't
24 even have landings estimates for charter until this year, and
25 Florida will remain under MRIP, unless they decide to expand SRFS
26 to include charter at that point.

27
28 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So exactly. Louisiana is providing the landings to
29 you in LA Creel units already, is what you just said, and that's
30 exactly what your point was, Captain Walker, that the states would
31 report those landings. We're currently doing that now.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, and I'm trying to bring this to a vote.
34 All right. **Everyone that opposes the motion, is there any**
35 **opposition to the motion?**

36
37 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I abstain.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Raise your hand if you oppose. Five opposed.
40 Any abstentions? Two. **The motion carries.** Okay. Mr. Schieble.

41
42 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So one last motion on this, and we can hopefully
43 move on. I'm tired of generating fake news that gets re-
44 perpetuated here. Bernie, I sent a motion, and I don't know
45 exactly where we need to put this in the document, and so maybe
46 Assane can help out with it.

47
48 **The motion is to add an action in the document with an alternative**

1 to include post-season accountability measures for managing
2 overages of the respective federal for-hire sector state-specific
3 allocated ACL by reducing the state-specific federal for-hire ACL
4 in the following year by the full amount of the overage.
5

6 I don't know if that's worded correctly, and Andy can maybe help
7 me with this, but it's to essentially make sure that, whatever
8 state or states end up with their allocation for their federal
9 for-hire sector, and they manage it, if they do go over, that they
10 have to pay that full overage back, just like we have in Amendment
11 50.
12

13 Now, in Amendment 50, we had this under the state-specific
14 components of Amendment 50, and I believe Mara can help me with
15 that. I don't know where it would go here. Maybe it would be up
16 in perhaps in Action 1, or its own action in the document.
17

18 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We'll let Bernie get Chris's motion on the
19 board. Chris.
20

21 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** While we're looking at this, I'll speak, and
22 hopefully I can get a second on it, but it's designed to add more
23 guardrails, just like Kevin's intention with the sunset, right,
24 and so let's say Louisiana is the only one that opts into this.
25

26 Everyone is worried about what we're going to do, and we just heard
27 some comments about potentially, you know, not being able to count
28 fish correctly, which I take offense to, and, in the years we've
29 been doing LA Creel, it seems to be pretty good, but, here, let's
30 say we go over for some reason, and we don't get it right, just
31 like this year in the private recs. We went over by 52,000 pounds,
32 and let's say we go over. The next year, they would take that out
33 of their allocation that's already predetermined from Louisiana's
34 federal for-hire fleet and fish to that, minus that overage.
35

36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Thank you, Chris. Do we have a second
37 for the motion? Seconded by Mr. Osborne. Further discussion on
38 the motion? Dr. Sweetman.
39

40 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I get why you're doing this, Chris, but we've had
41 multiple hours of conversations today on the private rec side that
42 this is not working, and so -- Yes, we have. We're trying to
43 discuss carryover options, different accountability measures,
44 different quota transfer measures to account for any of these
45 issues here, and so, I mean, basically, you're putting forward
46 something that was in 50A, right and like I get it. I get why
47 you're doing that, but we literally have had discussions about
48 changing that specific component at this meeting.

1
2 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I think we're at the stage of where we were in 2020
3 developing Amendment 50, and putting it in place with this. This
4 is the infancy of a document that needs guardrails. If we're going
5 to test this for five years, up to five years, with a sunset
6 potentially, then, within those five years, there would be
7 accountability measures.

8
9 I mean, everybody seems to be making comments, in the public, about
10 what if a state just runs wild when they get this, and there is no
11 accountability measure, and then it's even worse, right, and so
12 don't we want something? I mean, I don't understand the comment.
13

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

16 **DR. SWEETMAN:** The comment is just navigating literally what we've
17 been discussing today about this not working for the private
18 recreational, in Mississippi in particular, right? I mean, so we
19 could be a few years down -- I'm not opposed to having these
20 guardrails in place, right, but trying to thread that needle there
21 relative to what you're trying to get at, because we have had this
22 discussion about how it's not working for Mississippi today, to
23 try and mitigate some of these issues, and I will say I don't think
24 we're at the same place for this. We had EFPs to evaluate private
25 recreational things, and we're not doing that here. We're just
26 kind of full force moving forward with for-hire.
27

28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.
29

30 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So I'm open to any suggestions you have to figure
31 out accountability measures post-season in the document other than
32 this, if you want to put something up, and I would probably support
33 it.
34

35 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Geeslin.
36

37 **MR. GEESLIN:** Geez, and, I mean, while we're racing this pony
38 around the track, we might as well have -- We've thrown a sunset
39 out there, and we're throwing some accountability measures out
40 there, and we need to remind ourselves that this is -- This hasn't
41 even made it into a document yet. This is -- We're at the infancy
42 here, right, and so we have a lot of swings at this moving forward.
43

44 I agree, in principle, of having some -- Again, we're all playing
45 in, you know, what-if world, hypothetically here, that, you know,
46 charter for-hire would move over to the states, which would cause
47 a significant amount of work by the states, by the way. I'm not
48 going to speak against this. I think, Chris, you're following the

1 -- You know, your train of logic here is spot on.

2
3 I agree with C.J. that we have spent some substantial time talking
4 today about the private rec sector, but this is one of those
5 fundamental management strategies you would want to have embedded
6 if we go down this road eventually.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Any other discussion on
9 Chris's motion? Okay. We'll take a vote. **Is there any opposition**
10 **to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** I'll turn it
11 back over.

12
13 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I abstain from that vote.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Sweetman abstained. Ms. Levy.

16
17 **MS. LEVY:** Just before we move off this topic, I guess, between
18 now and the next time we talk about this, I guess I kind of
19 challenge you to think about how this is going to work in federal
20 waters with states opting in and out, right, and so they fish in
21 federal waters, and, when we talked about Amendment 50, and we
22 talked about states -- Not all the states participating, we were
23 going to draw lines off each state, and, if a state didn't
24 participate, that meant that the federal -- NMFS was setting the
25 season, and you were going to fish in that section off of state
26 waters, right?

27
28 If you have some -- So, operationally, how is this going to work
29 if all the states aren't participating, and I don't expect you to
30 answer that now, but, if the idea is you're going to close parts
31 of federal waters, and say Alabama decides they are managing, and
32 they want their federal season to end on September 1, we close
33 Alabama waters, and that's closed to everybody, right?

34
35 We can't just close to Alabama residents. We can't discriminate
36 between residents in different states when we're managing
37 federally, and so I guess I just challenge you to think about some
38 of those issues as you try to move this idea forward. Thanks.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. I have Chris, and then Mr.
41 Anson.

42
43 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So to that point, Mara, I appreciate that, and I
44 know -- I understand the question, or the discussion, because it's
45 in the document. It has that map that shows the lines that we
46 used in Amendment 50 and 64 here, for those purposes, but I can
47 say that the intention for Louisiana was not to have closures off
48 our coast, right?

1
2 This is the choice we made in our document in Amendment 50 as well.
3 We don't have the ability to do that. Other states picked it, and
4 we did not, for the very reason that you're going to have a federal
5 for-hire season that's Gulf-wide if other states don't choose to
6 opt into this, and so let's say Louisiana is the only one that
7 does it.

8
9 All the other states could still fish Gulf-wide, and Louisiana has
10 a different season structure, and it's based on where the fish
11 landed. This is what I talked about earlier, and so, if Louisiana
12 starts earlier in the year than the federal for-hire season starts,
13 those captains would have to land in Louisiana. They can't land
14 in some other state if Louisiana is the only one that's open.

15
16 **MS. LEVY:** Well, and I guess I challenge you to think about that
17 as well, because private rec, no federal permit, right? They can
18 -- This is a completely different animal. These folks have federal
19 permits that allow them to fish in federal water, and so the whole
20 idea of state management was you could basically enforce it at the
21 dock for the most part, right, because there was no private angling
22 permit.

23
24 There was no like you had to fish in this particular water, and
25 so, I mean, I hear what you're saying. I just think that this is
26 going to end up being a little more complicated, because of the
27 federal permit link and kind of allowing states to opt-in and out
28 and things like that, and so it's going to require a lot of thought
29 about how it's actually going to operate.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you. Mr. Anson, and then Assane.

32
33 **MR. ANSON:** Chris brought up some of the points I was going to
34 make, and so thank you.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Diagne.

37
38 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. Along the lines of what Ms. Levy said, just a
39 hypothetical scenario. Let's say that Mississippi decided to
40 manage its for-hire fleet within federal water and everything.
41 Mississippi is kind of, I guess, boxed in by Alabama and Louisiana.

42
43 Let's say that the charter for-hire federal from Alabama and
44 Louisiana say, you know, let's go to Mississippi and fish, and so,
45 in a very short order, Mississippi's allocation would be depleted
46 by its neighbors, and then those neighbors say, okay, now we can
47 go back home and then, you know, fish on our federal season for
48 the remainder of the thing. Is that a plausible scenario? That's

1 number one.

2

3 Number two, how would we prevent those things, because folks have
4 federal permits, and a particular state would not be allowed to
5 prevent them from fishing in federal waters, and so, you know, I
6 don't know, and maybe that's one of those things that one would
7 have to think about if you divide the pie in five things, because,
8 opting in and out, that's one part of the issue.

9

10 Whether you opt-in or you opt-out, if one state decides to opt-
11 in, it would have made the decision for all the other four states,
12 because you would need to guarantee your piece of the pie, and so
13 I don't know how we would reconcile this type of scenario. Maybe
14 at the next meeting we can talk about it.

15

16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Assane. All right. Captain Walker,
17 I'll give you the last word, and we're moving on.

18

19 **MR. WALKER:** Okay. Thanks, Mr. Chair. It's a good point. I was
20 just thinking that before Assane said that, and how wide is the
21 Mississippi Coast? Isn't it like twenty-seven miles, or something
22 like that, right? Anyone from Mississippi? Okay. We'll call it
23 twenty-seven. It's a small strip. I have the map here on Dr.
24 Sweetman's computer.

25

26 How do you -- How would you close -- If Mississippi was the only
27 one that opted in, how do you close that sliver of Gulf out there,
28 with the boats going back and forth, and keep people from crossing
29 over lines and stuff, and leaving from -- In my understanding, a
30 lot of Mississippi guys come over to Louisiana to fish, and it
31 just seems like it's going to be complicated to me.

32

33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** The way I understood it, it was -- It's where the
34 vessel lands.

35

36 **MR. WALKER:** Not necessarily what it says on his permit, and so,
37 if you leave from Louisiana -- It's kind of where you land, right?

38

39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Dr. Diagne.

40

41 **DR. DIAGNE:** Sorry, Mr. Chair, and I don't want to belabor the
42 point. I know, the last meeting, Mr. Schieble said that the
43 monitoring would be done based on where the vessel lands, and so
44 one of the things would be what assumptions are you going to make
45 for your season length?

46

47 Are you going to assume that all federal for-hire would come land,
48 or are you going to assume that only vessels that are homeported

1 in Mississippi are the ones that are going to fish on the
2 Mississippi quota, because you cannot prevent, let's say as we
3 just said, a vessel from Louisiana or Alabama to come and fish on
4 the quota, and so what assumptions are you going to make for the
5 season lengths, to say, okay, charter-for-hire, this is going to
6 be your length in Mississippi, not knowing whether some vessels
7 from Alabama and Florida are going to come in and join the party,
8 and so I guess, you know, there are some technical things we have
9 to think about as we move forward.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes. Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Dr. Sweetman, you
12 ready for gag grouper?

13
14 **DR. SWEETMAN:** More than ready. All right. Discussion of 2026
15 Gag Grouper and Greater Amberjack Recreational Fishing Seasons,
16 SERO staff reviewed recreational fishing season duration
17 projections for gag grouper for 2026. Recreational landings from
18 the 2025 fishing season did not exceed the recreational ACL.

19
20 Current 2026 season projections by SERO estimate a twenty-five to
21 thirty-three-day fishing season. Projections reviewed by the
22 Scientific and Statistical Committee estimate a thirty-four-day
23 season. SERO will announce a final season duration at a later
24 date. The gag recreational fishing season opens on September 1.

25
26 SERO staff discussed the 2026-2027 recreational fishing season for
27 greater amberjack. Based on past fishing seasons, SERO estimates
28 approximately a forty-five-day fishing season and will announce
29 the final season duration for fall 2026 by early May. The greater
30 amberjack recreational fishing season opens September 1.

31
32 Discussion of 2026 Federal-For-Hire Red Snapper Fishing Season,
33 SERO staff reviewed the projected fishing season duration for the
34 federal-for-hire component for red snapper for the 2026 fishing
35 season. The season will open June 1 and close October 26. SERO
36 expressed concerns about the ever-increasing duration of the for-
37 hire season projections.

38
39 Other Business, Greater Amberjack Exempted Fishing Permit, Mr.
40 Chris Schieble noted no dockside intercepts of greater amberjack
41 across states in 2025 through MRIP. He identified key goals of a
42 proposed exempted fishing permit for greater amberjack to allow
43 states to take the lead in locally managing fishing by the
44 recreational sector.

45
46 Mr. Schieble noted that Louisiana's goals included improving the
47 timeliness and accuracy of landings data and to use the experience
48 to better prepare for future state management of the species. He

1 expected Louisiana to submit its EFP by summer 2026 and thought
2 Louisiana would open their fishing season earlier in the calendar
3 year, when Louisiana's anglers are more likely to want to fish for
4 greater amberjack.

5
6 A committee member from Texas indicated their state support for an
7 EFP for greater amberjack, as did one from Mississippi. A
8 committee member asked about the process of allocating catch
9 amongst the states.

10
11 Mr. Schieble said that his state's EFP currently uses a two-month
12 fishing season commensurate with the current fall fishing season
13 duration for the recreational sector. The EFP would allow Louisiana
14 to re-specify when those two months of fishing occur for both
15 private anglers and the federally-permitted charter-for-hire
16 fleet.

17
18 All right. Gag grouper exempted fishing permit, Dr. C.J. Sweetman
19 discussed the 2025 gag grouper fishing season and said that Florida
20 is preparing an EFP to propose state management for gag grouper.
21 The EFP is estimated to be submitted to NOAA Fisheries in the near
22 future and will be presented for consideration at the June 2026
23 council meeting. Dr. Sweetman noted that, based on public
24 feedback, the gag EFP will only include private angling and state
25 for-hire vessels and would not include the federally-permitted
26 charter-for-hire fleet. A committee member from Louisiana voiced
27 their support for Florida's efforts in this regard.

28
29 Okay. Reallocation of private recreational red snapper ACL between
30 Gulf states, General Joe Spraggins reviewed the current state
31 specific allocations of the red snapper private recreational ACL.
32 In the process of establishing these allocations, there was a 3.78
33 percent remainder that was ultimately added to Florida's state
34 specific allocation. General Spraggins wanted to revisit that
35 remainder and what other options may be appropriate for
36 apportioning that percentage. He noted that the sector allocation
37 should be reviewed periodically for the council's own allocation
38 review policy.

39
40 The committee discussed a document that revisits the state-
41 specific allocations of the red snapper private recreational ACL
42 for all states. At present, the council has decided to wait to
43 reevaluate these allocations until the results of the MRIP-FES
44 pilot study are finalized and the results reviewed by the council's
45 SSC. A committee member emphasized that any reallocation must be
46 fair and equitable, as was established under Reef Fish Amendment
47 50. Council staff discussed several measures currently being
48 considered by the council on this topic, and it looks like we've

1 got some discussion here. General Spraggins.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, General.

4

5 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, sir, and I thank you very much for that,
6 and I would like to ask the staff, and if we need to have a motion
7 to do it, and I think that Carrie said we do, to move this up on
8 the agenda, and, the agenda that she has, I think is listed as
9 Number 23 now, and is that correct?

10

11 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, Dr. Simmons.

12

13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I think
14 it's Number -- It's Row 14, Reef Fish Amendment X, red snapper
15 private angling allocations between Gulf states, and is that the
16 one you're referring to? We have it as a C right now. I mean,
17 the way I thought we ended it, the last time we talked about it,
18 is that you guys were going to meet together, you guys being the
19 Gulf state folks, through the commission, and come back to the
20 council with some information that we would put in a regulatory
21 document, and I believe this has to be a full plan amendment, to
22 make any hard allocation shifts, but I'll look over to Ms. Levy to
23 check me on that.

24

25 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Okay, and so -- All right, and so maybe I
26 misunderstood here, and so we need to -- We don't need a motion to
27 move anything on this at this time?

28

29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, right
30 now, we are not planning to bring anything back to the council in
31 June on this particular item. We're going to go through the
32 workplan at the end, but it's currently not planned for anything
33 to come back in either June or August right now, as it relates to
34 changing the allocations of the states right now for the private
35 anglers and state guideboats.

36

37 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Okay, and I guess my question is, to be able
38 to have the council to bring it back in either June or August,
39 would I then need a motion? Is that what you're saying?

40

41 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think it would be helpful to have
42 a motion. We'll have to see if we can do it, and exactly, you
43 know, what are you looking for, because we talked about also in
44 the past -- You know, we have a red snapper assessment that we're
45 expecting to get here pretty soon, and we're going to have to be
46 making these changes regardless, potentially, to the state-by-
47 state apportionments, allocations, commercial allocations, all
48 those types of things, and so, you know, we need some specific

1 direction, and some priority, if that's what you want to do, yes.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, Chris, or Dr. Diagne.

4
5 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you very much. I mean, it's been a little
6 while, but we did discuss this, along with other allocations for
7 red snapper, a little while, and, at the time, the state directors
8 agreed to meet and discuss the issue, and, based on those
9 discussions, they would come back to the council with some avenues,
10 if you would, for us to explore.

11
12 There may have been preliminary discussions, and I don't know,
13 but, I mean, to date, we haven't heard anything back from such a
14 meeting, and so, to the extent that you would want this, I guess,
15 to speed to speed up, perhaps a good place to start would be to
16 have those meetings, and those discussions, amongst the five
17 states, to be able to give us something to work with, if you would.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble and Mr. Rindone.

20
21 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, in light of the motion Andy made a
22 little while ago for the additional document on accountability
23 measures, do we expect that that document would move at a faster
24 rate than this, because it doesn't require all that extra outside
25 work, and would that be a suitable replacement until this gets
26 handled, because that allows an overage in a particular state if
27 it doesn't exceed the overall Gulf-wide ACL, correct, and so then,
28 if you were to go over in a subsequent year, 2027, potentially
29 that would be alleviated, and does that make sense, in the motion
30 that Andy made earlier? Am I right Andy?

31
32 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and I understand what Andy made earlier,
33 but the point I'm getting at is these allocations is not being
34 used out there, and we know that, and it's, you know, in the states
35 that need it, this is not alleviating, and this is asking the state
36 to go over and then ask, and I don't want to go there.

37
38 I don't want to be the one that just says, hey, because you didn't
39 give me any additional, I'm going to go over 20,000 pounds next
40 year, and ask you to give it to me. No, I'm not going there.
41 That's not the way to do it. I think we need to be able to address
42 this.

43
44 We've beat this can down the end of the trail a long time, and, if
45 it means that I ask that we have the five directors have a meeting
46 between now and June, and then bring something back to the staff,
47 maybe that's the way to go about it, and I don't know, and that
48 might be the way to do it. We could do it a Zoom call. We don't

1 have to do it, you know, in a meeting, but maybe that's where we
2 need to go.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

5

6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so I agree with, obviously, General
7 Spraggins. It only addresses, to me, a small part of the issue,
8 and the main issue is, obviously, needing more quota, if you're
9 going to have more than a forty-five-day season.

10

11 Based on, Chris, the way you described it, I think that's partly
12 the concern, and why there's guardrails needed, because we don't
13 want states to be intentionally going over their catch limit and
14 trying to game the system.

15

16 With that said, I mean, my suggestion is -- We are going to, before
17 the end of the day, go through the priorities. You're going to
18 see what's on the priority list. We're going to have to decide,
19 from a staff perspective, what needs to get done between now and
20 June, and June and August, and where this could or couldn't slot
21 in, and, if we're going to slot it in, what comes off the priorities
22 list that we can't work on, right, and so I would recommend that
23 we maybe wait for that conversation, and we can talk about bringing
24 this back, and what it would look like.

25

26 The other aspect of this is we have the assessment coming up, and
27 we've got the FES changes, and so I don't know how -- You know,
28 how much you want to get out in front of that and try to make
29 allocation decisions, versus wait for that, and I recognize you
30 having more of an urgency to address this than other states.

31

32 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Andy. Go ahead, General.

33

34 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and I understand that, and the point is
35 I've been waiting five years, and we haven't got there yet, you
36 know, and it's to the point that I'm not I'm not confident that MS
37 Creel is going to bring -- Or going to do anything, and get into
38 effect between now and next year. No, I don't think so. Will it
39 even get in effect next year, and I don't even know that.

40

41 How long does Mississippi have to keep taking it? How long do we
42 have to keep getting hit before we step up to the plate and know
43 that there's allocation out there not being used, and yet we're
44 just sitting here and letting one state suffer for no reason, and
45 I just don't agree with it.

46

47 I think we need to -- I understand what Andy is saying, and I don't
48 mind asking to bring it up when we get to that point, but I think

1 we ought to get together, as a five directors, and sit down and
2 have a meeting, and do this before the next meeting.
3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.
5
6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I certainly would support you doing that,
7 and also maybe talking amongst yourselves, whether changing the
8 allocation, versus working on some sort of transfer provision, and
9 prioritizing that, would be a better avenue to address concerns in
10 the short-term versus long-term.
11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Andy. Mr. Rindone.
13
14 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you. Andy addressed what I was going to
15 say.
16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Dr. Sweetman.
18
19 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.
20
21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. However, Dr. Simmons
22 would like to bring this back to 63.
23
24 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, sir, and so we have some
25 procedural things we would like you to consider, and so, for
26 Amendment 63, you have preferred alternatives for all the actions.
27 We're taking that to the Ad Hoc IFQ AP here in the next couple of
28 weeks.
29
30 We're planning to hold virtual public hearings, but it would be
31 wise for you to go ahead and say you're comfortable with that
32 document going out with those changes to hearings, and so we would
33 need a motion to approve Draft Amendment 63, blah, blah, blah,
34 blah, for virtual public hearings, please, if you would consider
35 that.
36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I'll look around the table for consideration. I
38 see some heads nodding. Does someone want to make a motion? No?
39 Not feeling it? Want to have a discussion? Mr. Anson, and then
40 Andy.
41
42 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and discussion. Just for clarification, as I
43 heard Dr. Simmons just explain the process, or timeline, were you
44 saying that you want us to give you direction, through via a
45 motion, to come back with -- Or to go forward as a public hearing
46 draft to go out immediately after the AP meetings, and before the
47 June meeting, or are you asking --
48

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** What is your intent? Are you
2 approving it as a public hearing draft to go out virtual meetings
3 before the June meeting, or do you want to see it again and then
4 make that decision?

5
6 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so, to that question, I would say we probably
7 ought to wait until the June meeting, so that we can get feedback,
8 you know, from the AP, and use that for tweaks we may want to make,
9 in my opinion.

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

12
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** We are going to, obviously, review the schedule.
14 We're slated for final action, and I agree it's important to get
15 AP input. I think we can go out to public hearings between now
16 and June, and then decide in June whether we want to take final
17 action or not, based on the input we receive from both the AP and
18 the public, and that could inform, obviously, our decision about
19 final action, and so my preference is to keep this moving.

20
21 We, obviously, took action on the framework earlier today, and so,
22 the longer we get into the 2026 year, the later it gets implemented
23 in 2027, and so, Carrie, if you could help with some language, I'm
24 happy to make a motion to request --

25
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** To approve Draft Amendment 63: Program
27 to Establish a Commercial Red Grouper Quota Pool for virtual public
28 hearings. I think we discussed before, if I could, Mr. Chair,
29 that those would be virtual, and we would do a couple of them.

30
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** All right, and so, just to be crystal clear, we'll
32 add "for virtual public hearings". **All right, and so my motion is**
33 **to approve Draft Reef Fish Amendment 63: Modification of the Gulf**
34 **Red Grouper IFQ Program for virtual public hearings.**

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Mr. Strelcheck's motion is on the
37 board. Do we have a second? Seconded by Captain Walker. Further
38 discussion on the motion? Mr. Anson.

39
40 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so, just to follow-up on a comment I made
41 previously, so I better understand, after Mr. Strelcheck
42 underscored the opportunity, if we decided not to in June for final
43 action, that we could not do final action, and so that's fine,
44 even though it's not mentioned in this particular motion, but so
45 I'm supportive of the motion.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other discussion on the motion? **Is there any**
48 **opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. All**

1 right. Sorry about that, and that will conclude Reef Fish. Thank
2 you, Dr. Sweetman. I'm just going to move down the list, folks.
3 Supporting Agencies Update, the first up is South Atlantic. Mr.
4 Dewey.

5
6 **SUPPORTING AGENCIES UPDATES**
7 **SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL LIAISON**
8

9 **MR. HEMILRIGHT:** Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. My report is
10 under Tab R, Number 1, and I encourage you all to read that. Given
11 the time, we'll continue on, and I also want to thank you all for
12 having me here this week. It's been interesting, and I enjoyed
13 the conversation and spiritedness as you worked through fishery
14 management. Thank you.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for being here. Any questions? Thank
17 you. Next up, we have the Alabama Law Enforcement Efforts. It's
18 Tab R, Number 2, and Major Downey.

19
20 **ALABAMA LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS**
21

22 **MAJOR JASON DOWNEY:** Jason Downey, Chief of Enforcement for Alabama
23 Marine Resources. I have a slide show up there, and I've got a
24 bunch of numbers and stats, but I know we're so far behind that
25 I'm going to skip over to a case I want to talk about that's
26 interesting, and so if you just fast-forward our slide show to the
27 joint operation marine mammal detail.

28
29 We worked a joint detail with NOAA OLE, utilizing some of the
30 marine mammal funds from our JEA contract, and so, this past
31 summer, officers from Marine Resources had their opportunity to
32 work a joint detail with NOAA OLE drone operators to investigate
33 interactions between dolphin cruise boats and dolphins.

34
35 AMRD officers assisted NOAA regional drone operators in conducting
36 aerial surveillance of certain dolphin cruise vessels operating in
37 the Orange Beach area. The primary objective was to obtain video
38 documentation of potential dolphin harassment by recording dolphin
39 behavior before, during, and after interactions with these
40 vessels.

41
42 Certain vessels were targeted due to their practice of operating
43 two vessels in tandem to intentionally generate wakes that
44 encourage dolphins to jump or ride alongside. These type of
45 interactions negatively impact dolphin behavior by disrupting
46 natural feeding patterns, social communication, and the bond
47 between mothers and calves.

1 AMRD officers deployed our unmarked vessel to transport and
2 position drone operators along the intercoastal waterway in
3 locations that offered the greatest opportunity to capture clear
4 visual evidence of interactions between dolphin cruise boats and
5 local dolphin pods. According to NOAA OLE, General Counsel is
6 very motivated to prosecute these types of cases, and these cases
7 are the first of their kind for the agency.

8
9 During the first operation, each vessel involved received a summary
10 settlement offer of \$200. It was their first offense. We
11 conducted a second operation a month later. Two more violations
12 were observed, this time involving a mom and calf pair. Since
13 these vessels had previously been contacted and educated, a Notice
14 of Violation and Assessment was submitted to General Counsel, and
15 these offenses can be up to \$12,000. We were excited that we could
16 be part of this groundbreaking operation, and I'll conclude it
17 right there. If you have any questions, I can take them.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Major Downey. Do we have any
20 questions?

21
22 **MAJOR DOWNEY:** Thank you.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Not seeing any, and thank you for being here all
25 week. Next up is the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) report
26 and presentation. Mr. Walia, are you online?

27
28 **MR. MATT WALIA:** Yes, sir. I'm here. Can you hear me okay?

29
30 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, sir. Go ahead.

31
32 **NOAA OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT (OLE)**

33
34 **MR. WALIA:** All right. Appreciate it. I'll be brief too, and you
35 heard Major Downey, and so I'll wait for it to come up there, but
36 so if you can go to the protected resources slide, and we,
37 obviously, rely on our partnerships. It's a placeholder, and I
38 usually have that as the first slide, and we'll go to the next
39 one, please.

40
41 We have really good rapport with Major Downey and his folks. Our
42 local officer is able to get a lot of stuff done with them. We
43 recently had a charter referral NOVA from the state, and what I
44 want to highlight, and we can still go to the next slide, is so,
45 protected resources, just to give some highlights of where we are,
46 and I have our council report in there, our latest one, and the
47 council just ended, and so this is October to December.

48

1 It's a lot of effort. This is during the shutdown, and we were
2 still all working, and so it's still a lot of work that got done,
3 but the shrimper case I want to highlight is this was a TED case
4 from Alabama.

5
6 They ended up doing a boarding in the bay, and came across a
7 shrimper. They had sewn TEDs, and so when they started the
8 inspection, the captain started becoming a little confrontational.
9 They took their information, and they got their measurements, and
10 they got what we needed for our referral. They actually removed
11 the twine that was on there, on the sewn TED, and so the guy was
12 in compliance afterwards, and referred it over to us, and so they
13 did everything they needed to do on site. It was great.

14
15 That was referred over for a \$23,000 NOVA for their Office of
16 General Law Enforcement. They recently settled, and admitted
17 guilt. It did get brought down, but it does count as a prior, and
18 so that was a great example of us working together, and we're doing
19 a lot of other outreach in protective resources, too.

20
21 What I wanted to highlight, just real briefly here, and I know
22 we're short on time, but the next two slides is something we --
23 This actually came up during the week too, but IUU. Our goal is
24 we're tasked with trying to level the playing field, right, between
25 domestic fishermen and seafood producers in the U.S. We don't
26 want them at a disadvantage, and so this is a priority for us
27 nationally and divisionally.

28
29 This is a snapshot from our council report. You can see,
30 nationwide, we're always going around inspecting seafood
31 containers coming in through various entries, whether it's through
32 the ports, land crossings and coming in, and so, there, you can
33 see predominantly it's about 88,000 kilograms of imported seafood
34 from five countries. The majority of it was shrimp that was coming
35 in, and that also ties into there was the talk about Section 609,
36 TED enforcement, and so this is something that we work with as
37 well with the State Department and our Office of Trade.

38
39 We regulate and monitor imports from countries that meet those
40 requirements, and so we're inspecting those as they come in.
41 That's part of what we do to help enforce Section 609. We've gone
42 overseas before to do the trainings, and we actually just recently
43 had a story that got put online today that I was going to highlight.

44
45 We even go to other countries, to training facilities, and teach
46 countries how to build case packages, how to effectively monitor
47 their seafood before it comes over here. We were just over in
48 Botswana, and so check out our online story. There's tons of links

1 and info to IUU that I don't have the time to get into here.

2
3 The icon on the right is a picture of a tuna shrimper, or I'm
4 sorry, excuse me, of a tuna purse seine. They imported mislabeled
5 tuna into the U.S. They tried to say it was healthy and safe, and
6 it was not, and so those were two successful cases of us also
7 regulating IUU, and so please check out that story.

8
9 Just in general, this is what we take lead on, and we work a lot
10 with federal partners and state partners. We're watching
11 everything and anything coming in. That picture on the right, we
12 came across that down in Mexico recently, and so we worked with
13 U.S. Fish and Wildlife and referred that case over, but we're
14 looking a lot for tracking and accountability on this, and so I
15 just wanted to highlight the work we're doing and tie it into the
16 Section 609 comments.

17
18 We can jump ahead, and I think that's -- The other stuff you can
19 see in there, and I have a couple of reminders. I always have our
20 toll-free hotline in there, but, yes, I just definitely wanted to
21 highlight the trade enforcement, and please check out the stuff at
22 your leisure. We're happy to get contacted. If you have any
23 questions, follow-up with me afterwards, and so thank you for my
24 time.

25
26 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you very much. Is there any questions for Mr.
27 Walia? Seeing none, thank you. We'll move back to the room, with
28 Mr. Donaldson for the Gulf States report.

29
30 **GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION**

31
32 **MR. DONALDSON:** Thank you, Madam Vice Chair, and so I've got --
33 There's a presentation that's in your briefing book, but there's
34 a couple of things that I just want to highlight. A lot of it was
35 covered at the last meeting, and one has to do with the IMTA
36 project using the Aquafort technology in a site off of Fort Morgan
37 here in Alabama.

38
39 The site has been deployed, and red drum have been placed in the
40 pens. The oysters and seaweed were supposed to be put in this
41 week, but I think the weather may have prevented that, but they
42 will be in shortly, and so we'll have -- It will be fully deployed
43 here in the next week or so.

44
45 Another big issue is we've had the Infrastructure Improvement
46 Agreement, where we're focusing on improving the data management
47 systems, and doing red snapper research, and at-sea sampling, but
48 we also -- One of the biggest things we've been working on recently

1 is developing a site to centralize the state recreational data,
2 data here at the commission office. That system will be live next
3 week, on the 15th, and we should be able to provide access here
4 shortly.

5
6 Then the last thing I wanted to touch on was the Gulf
7 Interjurisdictional Finfish Research, where we've got -- We got
8 money through Congress that directed NMFS to work with us, and a
9 grant has been awarded to the University of South Alabama
10 Consortium, and work should begin this spring. I got word this
11 week that the actual funding, funding document, was approved, and
12 so work should begin shortly, and I look forward to providing some
13 results in late 2027, or early 2028, and so, with that, I'll answer
14 any questions.

15
16 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you. Any questions for Dave? Seeing none, we'll
17 move on. Lt. Morton, are you on the line? You're up next. Hold
18 on. Lt. Morton, are you there? We're ready for the Coast Guard
19 update, if you're there. We can't hear you if you're speaking.

20
21 **LT. JACKSON MORTON:** Hello. Can anyone hear me?

22
23 **DR. BANKS:** We've got you now. We lost you. We still can't hear
24 you, Lt. Morton.

25
26 **LT. MORTON:** Hello. Can anyone hear me? For some reason, I think
27 my sound cut off right at the end of Mr. Walia's speech, and so
28 I'm not -- I don't know if you can hear me or if you're talking.

29
30 **DR. BANKS:** We've got you now. Can you hear us? Go ahead. We
31 can hear you.

32
33 **LT. MORTON:** I think I've got sound. Can you hear me now?

34
35 **DR. BANKS:** Yes, we can hear you.

36
37 **U.S. COAST GUARD**

38
39 **LT. MORTON:** I'm so sorry about that. I have no idea what happened.
40 Of course, right as I'm about to speak, but I'm sorry about that.
41 Sorry, again, everyone for not being there. Hopefully I can be
42 there in June, when we all meet up again in Tampa, but I'm Lt.
43 Morton with the Coast Guard, giving our supporting agency update.
44 All right.

45
46 So, for the Economic Zone Enforcement, thus far this year, we've
47 got twelve interdictions, resulting in 270 pounds of red snapper.
48 The trend is continuing. We love to see that, since the

1 implementation of Lacey Act prosecutions, we are seeing a lot less
2 lancha incursions. Through the end of March of last year, we had
3 131 total, and, this year, we're only at sixty-eight, but we were
4 able to refer two cases of prosecution this year, and the
5 Department of Justice has even expressed interest in potentially
6 additional charges stemming from, you know, jettison of catch, and
7 things like that during pursuits of these lanchas.

8
9 Then a case I wanted to highlight, that was really great, right at
10 the end of March, was the Coast Guard Cutter Yellowfin saw a couple
11 lanchas setting gear eight nautical miles north of the maritime
12 boundary line. They chased them back south.

13
14 Unfortunately, we were unable to interdict, but they were able to
15 go ahead and recover all that gear, six nautical miles total. It
16 took them a very long time, but they got it all up out of the water
17 and ended up releasing eighty red snapper and twelve sharks, and
18 then I've got a picture on the next slide, and then that's all of
19 it there, bundled up on the back deck, and so great work by them.

20
21 All right. For domestic fisheries, we've done 177 boardings
22 through the end of March, and found violations on six of those
23 boardings, and so a little bit less, about 30 percent less, total,
24 than the same time last year, but just prioritizing different
25 missions throughout the Coast Guard, in a state of flux, but we're
26 still committed to doing it, and we've done 177 thus far.

27
28 For our marine protected resources, it's still the same stats from
29 last meeting, and just the case in December, and so no new updates
30 there, and then next slide, Bernie, please.

31
32 Then, real quick before I open it up to questions, just to touch
33 on the Starlink, we heard some good comments in public comment.
34 I'm glad that folks are out there, and still sticking with the
35 program, and trying to get this thing pushed through.

36
37 The official position of the Coast Guard is that Starlink, at this
38 time, still doesn't meet the carriage requirements for commercial
39 fishing vessels, or commercial vessels in general, but we're still
40 working on it, and hopefully we can get some good final resolution
41 on that, and so, with that, I'll open it up to any questions.
42 Thank you.

43
44 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you very much, Lt. Morton. Thank you for being
45 here. Any questions for Lt. Morton? I am not seeing any. Thank
46 you.

47
48 **LT. MORTON:** All right. Thanks.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. The next agenda item is Mr. Helies'
3 Update on Documents Transmitted for Rulemaking.
4

5 **UPDATE ON DOCUMENTS TRANSMITTED FOR RULEMAKING**
6

7 **MR. HELIES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm in the way of happy hour
8 here, and so I'll try to be quick. We had a final rule publish.
9 Everybody please clap. As you may be aware, the for-hire regs
10 that were vacated by the Fifth Circuit are actually still on the
11 books, and so this rule is going to update them back to what they
12 were prior to the court decision. That rule published on March
13 25, and it will be effective April 24.
14

15 The shallow-water grouper framework proposed rule published on
16 March 18. Comments are due on April 17, another week-and-a-half
17 of comments. We've received four so far. We'll be working on the
18 final rule as expeditiously as we can.
19

20 Reef Fish 58B, deepwater grouper management, the comment period
21 for comments on the amendment, the NOA published on March 3, and
22 those comments are due May 4. That's a sixty-day comment period
23 for NOAs. We've received six comments to-date. The proposed rule
24 is still in review. We hope to have that published soon.
25

26 Reef Fish 62, red grouper management, the NOA published on April
27 2. Comments on that are due June 1. We've received one comment
28 so far, and the proposed rule for that action is in Headquarters
29 awaiting review and publication as well. The CMP Framework 14 was
30 transmitted by the council. We're working on that proposed rule,
31 and we hope to get that up to Headquarters maybe next week. That's
32 all I got.
33

34 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Helies. Do we have any questions?
35 Dr. Sweetman.
36

37 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Frank. Just a real quick question for
38 you, and so, relative to the shallow water grouper framework,
39 right, and so I guess I'm asking this question just relative to a
40 timing component, because part of that sets a recreational fishing
41 season, right, from July to December, and depending on, I guess,
42 the timing of this, you might have to close those fisheries if
43 it's before July, and just kind of trying to make sure that there's
44 -- At least the public is given that notification as early as
45 possible, and just kind of throwing that out there, because it's
46 just getting a little tricky with that one in particular, just
47 based on timing.
48

1 **MR. HELIES:** Yes. Understood.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other questions for Frank? Thank you, sir.
4 All right. Next up is Discussion of Council Planning and Primary
5 Activities, Tab R, Number 6. Dr. Simmons.

6
7 **DISCUSSION OF COUNCIL PLANNING AND PRIMARY ACTIVITIES**

8
9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
10 Bernie has got up what we're planning to bring for the June council
11 meeting, and so Final Action Draft Reef Fish Amendment 63, which
12 I guess we don't have the right title on there, but we'll hold
13 virtual hearings, and bring those comments, as well as the Ad Hoc
14 IFQ AP's comments.

15
16 For Reef Fish Amendment 59A, the permit requirements, we'll just
17 bring the current draft that we have of that amendment, and the
18 AP's comments on that, and we don't plan to do a whole lot of work,
19 but just bring that back to you to see where you are with it with
20 AP's comments.

21
22 Public Hearing Draft to Modify the Electronic Reporting
23 Requirements for Federally-Permitted For-Hire Vessels, you'll see
24 a draft again of Amendment 55/Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, which
25 is the yellowtail and mutton snapper management measures.

26
27 Greater amberjack consideration of state management, I'm not
28 exactly sure what all that will be, but we're going to continue to
29 work on that, and bring something back, and we'll see an updated
30 draft of the Generic Amendment to Modify Essential Fish Habitat.

31
32 Then we have another item that was in our executive workplan. We
33 would like to aim to start talking about looking at these low-
34 priority species and FMPs and considering if they're still in need
35 of federal management.

36
37 We also need to start discussion of a five-year review to
38 standardize bycatch reporting. I believe the Regional Office is
39 going to take the lead on that, and I don't know how much our staff
40 is going to be involved, but that needs to be done. We're going
41 to bring draft options for penaeid shrimp stock status
42 determination criteria and start considering changes to the
43 threshold, permit threshold.

44
45 Then we've discussed trying to bring something, a presentation
46 perhaps, or draft options, for the post-season accountability
47 measures for the private angling component, and so, again, this is
48 a draft of our workplan. This is what we'll aim to do, but, again,

1 at the end of the meeting, I'm going to talk to you all about some
2 potential funding constraints we have, and so, that being said,
3 Mr. Chair.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Dr. Banks has a question.

6
7 **DR. BANKS:** I think this is actually for maybe Andy, or Mara, and
8 so, if amendment -- It doesn't have a number, but Public Hearing
9 Draft for Electronic Reporting Requirements for For-Hire Vessels,
10 we're scheduled to take final action it looks like in August. If
11 we take final action, and it's approved, is that going to be able
12 to be implemented for the following year, or are we looking at
13 2028 before it would even begin, just with the timeline that
14 rulemaking is currently happening? Thank you.

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

17
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, there's potential for a mid-year
19 implementation. I can't predict, obviously, how long it will take
20 in terms of rulemaking, once it's approved, but, obviously, it
21 would be ideal to start at the beginning of a year, but, if we
22 started it mid-year, allow for at least a phase-in as we work to,
23 obviously, address any kinks in the new reporting system.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Andy. General Spraggins.

26
27 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I would like to ask if there's a possibility
28 of putting something in the June and August timeframe of the
29 allocation review of the red snapper recreational by state, and I
30 just ask to do it as a discussion. If we can have a discussion in
31 June, that would give us time to go together, and us put something
32 together with the five state directors, and try to work up
33 something to look at, and maybe bring it back to the council and
34 have just a discussion in June, and see where we can go from that
35 point. Is that possible to do?

36
37 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So you wouldn't need us to prepare anything? Is
38 that what you're saying?

39
40 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I think that would depend on what we get you
41 between now and that time, because I think that, just from
42 listening to you all a few minutes ago, that we need to do something
43 by the five directors, and bring you something to tell you what
44 we're looking at, and so what I would just like to have it put on
45 is as a discussion item, and whatever we can bring to you to that
46 point, and we can work it out from there. I'm not going to try to
47 tell you to put something together when you don't know which way
48 we want to go, but I would just ask if we could just put it on the

1 item.

2

3 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and I think we can do that, and
4 figure out who might want to lead that discussion. Sure.

5

6 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other questions or comments for Dr. Simmons?
7 Mr. Strelcheck.

8

9 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I guess I want to find out, for the amberjack,
10 and, I mean, it's very generic consideration of state management,
11 and what are we bringing back? What does the council want to see?
12 You know, we often put these topics on, but I feel like we want to
13 make some -- If we're going to make some headway on this, we should
14 be a little more specific, in terms of what we're bringing back,
15 and then I'll mention we should reserve at least some time, and I
16 don't know how much we'll need, for discussion of the gag exempted
17 fishing permits that Florida is considering.

18

19 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** We were going to aim for a draft, is
20 what we had on the action schedule, but we need to talk a little
21 bit more about that with your staff.

22

23 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** General.

24

25 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and I know -- This is not directed to the
26 staff, but could I make it and have something with the five
27 directors that we get together within the next thirty days by a
28 video call to be able to discuss this allocation, so we can have
29 something to send to the staff. I'll be glad to put it together,
30 but if -- I know that Robin usually does it, you know, for all the
31 directors, and, if Robin wants to do it, I'll be more than glad
32 to, you know, let him, and follow suit, but, if I could, I would
33 like to get the commitment out of the five directors that we'll
34 work on something like that.

35

36 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I think I'm going to be busy that day, General.

37

38 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Then you might get left out.

39

40 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I've seen some nodding around the table, General,
41 to answer your question.

42

43 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Well, I'm going to take it that the five
44 directors will do it. I will get with you all, and see if you
45 want to do it through Robin or me, but I think it's something very
46 important, and, if you all were in the same show I am, and if you
47 had been taking it for five years, you would understand.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you. All right. That's going to bring us
2 to Other Business, unless someone has a question for Dr. Simmons
3 regarding the next council meeting. No. All right. Other
4 Business, and we have four items. I'm going to turn it back over
5 to Dr. Simmons.
6

7 **OTHER BUSINESS**
8 **UPDATE ON 2026 FUNDING**
9

10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
11 I would like to give a quick status update on our 2026
12 administrative funding. On January 27th of 2026 of this year, we
13 received a little over \$900,000 of our administrative award
14 funding. This should be about 20 to 25 percent of our annual
15 administrative funding. We're now in the second quarter of the
16 year, and we have expended this funding supporting routine meetings
17 and activities.
18

19 The administrative award funds support almost all council
20 activities, including meetings, office space, and staff support.
21 We are currently operating on our unexpended 2025 funding, but
22 this is not sustainable.
23

24 At the CCC meeting, and in planning calls with executive directors
25 from other regional management councils, we were told that we were
26 going to receive the remaining 2026 funding in early April. We
27 are in early April now. I lost my notes, or mid-April. Okay.
28 All right. Here we go.
29

30 Now we're being told we will soon receive another pulse of 2026
31 funding, which Mr. Strelcheck told us of today, which would be
32 approximately \$300,000. While this funding is much needed, and
33 appreciated, it will leave us unfunded for the remainder of the
34 year right now.
35

36 These infrequent and limited pulses of funding put us in an
37 uncertain and difficult position of making assumptions on our
38 funding that compromise the planning and scheduling of meetings.
39

40 We have been working closely with the Regional Administrator and
41 the Southeast Grant Coordinator to determine when we will receive
42 more of our 2026 funds, but we wanted to bring this to the Full
43 Council's attention. should we need to make modifications to the
44 council meeting schedule. John and I will be working closely with
45 the council member leadership and with other regional management
46 councils through the CCC meeting to help keep the council informed.
47 Thank you.
48

1 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for that review, Dr. Simmons. Do we
2 have any questions from council members? Mr. Strelcheck.

3
4 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I certainly appreciate Carrie, and I can
5 see the frustration and lack of willingness for patience, because
6 we should be frustrated, right, and I'm disappointed that we have
7 to keep having this conversation, and I'm not going to take
8 ownership, because we're in a very similar place with the Regional
9 Office.

10
11 We're getting these monthly allocations right now. We're trying
12 to plan out, obviously, our budget for the remainder of the year,
13 but, when you're only getting month-to-month allocations of
14 funding, it's really hard to, obviously, effectively execute your
15 budget and do some planning down the road, and so we will continue
16 to try to emphasize the importance of getting the council, all the
17 councils, funding in a timely manner, and I do agree that I think
18 this is an important conversation to have at the CCC with all the
19 councils.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Andy. Any questions, comments,
22 concerns for Dr. Simmons? Not seeing any, we'll move on to the
23 next agenda item, which would be Mr. Sanchez's update on Starlink.

24
25 **UPDATE ON STARLINK**
26 **DISCUSSION: KATHY CASTOR REQUEST LETTER**

27
28 **MR. SANCHEZ:** If I could jump and get into the Congresswoman's
29 letter, because this was too good a segue into that. You know, I
30 mean, put that in your letter, that we're getting our funding doled
31 out, us, NMFS, NOAA. I mean, we can't operate like this.

32
33 We're trying to do things that it costs money to get good data,
34 and to do all the things that we're required to do, and it's going
35 to have an impact on our fisheries, and our coastal communities,
36 and everybody that depends on these resources, and so, please, you
37 guys know exactly how to detail it up and be a little more specific,
38 but, please, and we finally have somebody asking what is our
39 problem, and what do we need, and I'm hoping, you know, this goes
40 somewhere. Let's do a very nice letter to them and explain all
41 these things.

42
43 Starlink, you know how I feel. To me, it's just another option to
44 promote safety-at-sea, as a very, very up-and-coming beautiful
45 form of communication well offshore. I don't see what the problem
46 is between -- I guess what I'm hearing is the Coast Guard and the
47 FCC in acknowledging it.

1 We're not asking them to reinvent the wheel. If you need to keep
2 all these other things, then let's keep it simple. Let's add it
3 as another alternative form of communication in an emergency, and
4 we could help some people out, safety-at-sea. That's all we're
5 asking for.

6
7 So, in closing, let's keep our foot on the gas and figure out where
8 we're at between this finger pointing that was alluded to earlier
9 and what do we do, and let's push this over the finish line. Thank
10 you.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. The last item -- Any
13 comments for Mr. Sanchez regarding Starlink or the letter? Mr.
14 Anson.

15
16 **MR. ANSON:** Regarding the letter, it asks for council staff's
17 recommendation and interpretation to some of the direct questions
18 regarding impacts from the lack of certain data collection
19 programs.

20
21 I'm just wondering, Dr. Simmons, and are you -- Do you plan to
22 coordinate with the Regional Office or Southeast Fisheries Science
23 Center staff, or can you, I guess, and there's a fine line between
24 advocating -- You know, the agencies can't advocate, but maybe,
25 because it was a direct question, they could participate, and I'm
26 just curious as to how you'll interact, if you will interact at
27 all, with agency staff to answer those questions.

28
29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Anson, for that
30 question, and so I haven't formally reached out to them, but,
31 informally, verbally, I have discussed that we've received this
32 letter, and I would like to engage with them, and these are our
33 draft responses, and, you know, are we in the ballpark,
34 essentially.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other comments, or questions, regarding the
37 letter or Starlink? No? Okay. We'll move on to the last item.
38 Mr. Strelcheck.

39
40 **PERMIT SYSTEM UPDATE**

41
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and two permit-related updates. We rolled
43 out our Permits 2.0 system on March 13th. The system has been up
44 and running and functioning since then. We've had, obviously some,
45 you know, expected issues with the system, and we're working
46 through some data corrections and improvements, but, overall, it
47 seems to be running pretty well. We're continuing to work with
48 our contractor to maximize, obviously, the use of the data and

1 information that can be pulled from the system, and so I'm hoping
2 this is going to be a huge hurdle and step forward with regard to
3 getting permit data more timely for council actions and amendments.
4

5 Jessica and her team, as well as our IT team, have been doing a
6 phenomenal job of just reviewing the data, QA and QC, and flagging,
7 obviously, where there's issues, and so we're continuing to,
8 obviously, go through and clean up the data, as needed, but I think
9 it's a huge step in the right direction.

10
11 Then I know that there's been a small number of permits that have
12 been held up because of lack of issuance of Certificates of
13 Documentation. This is due to the partial lapse in government
14 funding and the U.S. Coast Guard not being able to issue CODs.
15

16 If you recall, during the government shutdown in October, we sent
17 out a letter essentially indicating we were extending the validity
18 of permits until such time that we could process complete
19 applications, and so we have not done the same in this instance,
20 because we are processing permits, and we don't want to confuse
21 matters, because it only applies to a certain segment of the permit
22 holders, but what I just wanted to emphasize is, for those that
23 may have a Certificate of Documentation that's still needing to be
24 renewed by the Coast Guard, reach out to the Permits Office.
25

26 We are working to extend the validity of those permits. We also
27 have some circumstances where we can address the change, if there's
28 a change in vessel name, or a transfer of vessel, that we'll accept
29 copies of Certificates of Documentation, but we haven't pushed out
30 anything more publicly.
31

32 We're just trying to work one-on-one with permit applicants to
33 address any issues with their permit renewal, and, hopefully, you
34 know, once the Coast Guard is able to get funding, and come back
35 to work to process those permits, then we will be back up and
36 running at full capacity. Thanks.
37

38 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck, for the update. Any
39 questions for Andy? No? All right. I think that takes care of
40 everything I had on my list. Is there any other business to come
41 before the council? I'm not seeing any. Okay.
42

43 Well, with that, I'm going to thank all the presenters that were
44 here, and Mr. Moncrief for the SSC, and council staff for putting
45 up with our crazy motions and so forth, and the council members,
46 and I would like to thank you all for staying put and working
47 through lunch. You all heard we were strapped for funding, and we
48 tried to squeeze the meeting a little bit, and it seems like we

1 were successful, and so thank you all, and we'll see you in Tampa.

2

3 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 9, 2026.)

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