

GULF COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Battle House Renaissance Mobile, Alabama & Virtual

April 8, 2026

**VOTING MEMBERS**

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

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

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

**STAFF**

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

**OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

- 47 Frank Helies.....NOAA
- 48 Dewey Hemilright.....SAFMC

1 Kelli O'Donnell.....NMFS  
2 Clay Porch.....SEFSC  
3 Jessica Stephen.....NOAA  
4 John Walter.....SEFSC  
5  
6

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TABLE OF MOTIONS

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2  
3 [PAGE 31](#): Motion to select Option 2 as preferred. [The motion](#)  
4 [carried on page 31](#).

5  
6 [PAGE 32](#): Motion to recommend the council approve the Abbreviated  
7 Framework Action: Modification of Gulf Lane Snapper Catch Limits  
8 and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review  
9 and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and  
10 appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary  
11 changes in the document. The council chair is given the authority  
12 to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and  
13 appropriate. [The motion carried on page 33](#).

14  
15 [PAGE 36](#): Motion in Action 1 to add an Alternative 4. Alternative  
16 4. Establish a three-year commercial quota pool for Gulf red  
17 grouper beginning in 2027. If the commercial quota (ACT) is at or  
18 below 4.28 million pounds gutted weight, the quota pool is set at  
19 zero percent of the commercial quota (zero pounds). If the  
20 commercial quota is above 4.28 million pounds gutted weight, the  
21 quota pool would hold: Option 4a: 15 percent of the commercial red  
22 grouper quota increase above 4.28 million pounds gutted weight;  
23 Option 4b: 20 percent of the commercial red grouper quota increase  
24 above 4.28 million pounds gutted weight; Option 4c: 25 percent of  
25 the commercial red grouper quota increase above 4.28 million pounds  
26 gutted weight; Option 4d: 30 percent of the commercial red grouper  
27 quota increase above 4.28 million pounds gutted weight. [The motion](#)  
28 [carried on page 41](#).

29  
30 [PAGE 43](#): Motion in Action 2 to make Alternative 2, Option 2b the  
31 preferred. [The motion carried on page 44](#).

32  
33 [PAGE 60](#): Motion to add an Option 3 that reads as follows: Option  
34 3: Provide the NMFS Regional Administrator the authority to  
35 withhold the percentage of the red grouper commercial quota  
36 necessary to implement Amendment 63 during the 2027 fishing year.  
37 If Amendment 63 is not implemented by May 1, 2027, the withheld  
38 quota would be distributed to shareholders. [The motion carried on](#)  
39 [page 61](#).

40  
41 [PAGE 94](#): Motion in Draft Action 1, Draft Alternative 2, add Draft  
42 Options 2c and 2d. Draft Action 1: Establish a carryover provision  
43 for private recreational red snapper. Draft Alternative 2:  
44 Establish a carryover provision for private angling component of  
45 the red snapper ACL on a state-by-state basis. For states that  
46 did not land its state-specific ACL, the unused portion of would  
47 be carried over to the next fishing year in the amount of unused  
48 portion of the ACL not greater than Options 2a-2d of the previous

1 year's state-specific private angling ACL. Draft Option 2a: 100  
2 percent of unused state-specific private angling ACL can be carried  
3 over to the next year. Draft Option 2b: 75 percent of unused  
4 state-specific private angling ACL can be carried over to the next  
5 year. Draft Option 2c: 50 percent of unused state-specific private  
6 angling ACL can be carried over to the next year. Draft Option  
7 2d: 25 percent of unused state-specific private angling ACL can be  
8 carried over to the next year. [The motion carried on page 98.](#)

9  
10 [PAGE 106](#): Motion to add an Alternative 4 in Action 2 to allocate  
11 the federal for-hire red snapper quota between the Gulf states  
12 based on the Amendment 40 sector separation formula. [The motion](#)  
13 [carried on page 110.](#)

14  
15 [PAGE 110](#): Motion in Action 2 to add an Alternative 5 to allocate  
16 the federal for-hire red snapper quota between the Gulf states  
17 based on 50 percent of the Amendment 40 sector separation formula  
18 and 50 percent of each state's average red snapper landings between  
19 2021 and 2024 in Alternative 3. [The motion carried on page 112.](#)

20  
21 - - -  
22

1 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council convened at  
2 The Battle House Renaissance in Mobile, Alabama on Wednesday  
3 morning, April 7, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman C.J.  
4 Sweetman.

5  
6 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Good morning, everyone. Before we get to Reef  
7 Fish, I'm going to turn it over to Ms. Levy if she has a litigation  
8 update for us.

9  
10 **LITIGATION UPDATE**

11  
12 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Thank you. I actually do have a litigation update,  
13 and so a quick update on one of the pending Appointments Clause  
14 challenges. Just to recap, we have two of those for this council,  
15 one that challenged Amendment 56, which was the gag, and one that  
16 challenged Amendment 54, which was greater amberjack.

17  
18 The greater amberjack lawsuit has been pending longer. It was in  
19 the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals for quite a while, and the Fifth  
20 Circuit just issued its decision on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, which  
21 basically followed the Third Circuit's decision, which said that  
22 the council's core functions are advisory, and, therefore, council  
23 members are not officers of the United States for that purpose,  
24 and then don't need to be appointed in the specific manner that  
25 the Constitution requires for officers of the United States, but,  
26 consistent with the Third District's decision, the court did find  
27 that a couple of provisions that the courts have been calling  
28 pocket veto provisions do confer significant authority to the  
29 council.

30  
31 Then the courts, both courts, have severed these provisions from  
32 the act, to the extent they do that, meaning the provision, for  
33 example, that says that a plan can be repealed or revoked only if  
34 the council approves it by three-quarter majority vote, and the  
35 courts have read that to constrain the Secretary's authority, which  
36 is not allowed unless you are officers of the United States, and  
37 so the court has severed that provision, to the extent that it  
38 limits the Secretary's authority.

39  
40 There's another one related to limited access programs that  
41 requires the council to approve it before the Secretary can  
42 actually implement it, and the court said, no, you don't have the  
43 power to do that, and so, for your purposes, what you do here is  
44 fine, and so that was a Fifth Circuit decision, and so, unless it  
45 goes to the Supreme Court, that would be the end of the road for  
46 that one.

47  
48 The 56 decision, I mentioned at the last meeting that there was a

1 trial court, district court, decision in November of 2025 that  
2 basically followed the same logic. That is now in the Eleventh  
3 Circuit Court of Appeals, and briefing is finishing up on that,  
4 and that court has set argument in that case for July, and so, so  
5 far, all the courts that have decided this have been consistent.

6  
7 There's also a case pending in the First Circuit Court of Appeals,  
8 and that came from the District of Maine, which also held the same  
9 thing, that there are these pocket veto provisions that are not  
10 okay, that the core functions are fine, and do not make you  
11 officers of the United States.

12  
13 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Levy, for the update. Do we have any  
14 questions for Ms. Levy? I don't see any. Okay. Thank you, Mara.  
15 We'll move on to the Reef Fish Committee, and I will turn it over  
16 to Dr. Sweetman.

17  
18 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**  
19 **APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2026 MINUTES**  
20 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**  
21

22 **CHAIRMAN C.J. SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let's get  
23 situated. All right, and so welcome to Reef Fish Committee. It's  
24 going to be a long day. This is the committee of the whole, and  
25 so everyone on the council, and I won't go through the names. It's  
26 myself as chair, and Mr. Schieble as vice chair.

27  
28 The first item on the business, or the first item on the agenda,  
29 is to adopt the agenda, but I know we've got some potential other  
30 business, and so I'll look around the table. Mr. Schieble.

31  
32 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** I would like to add an item for discussion on  
33 greater amberjack exempted fishing permits.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and, along those lines, I'm going to add  
36 gag grouper exempted fishing permits. General Spraggins.

37  
38 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and I would like to add an item for  
39 discussion of the reallocation of the private recreational red  
40 snapper quota between the individual states, a review of it.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Three items added onto the agenda, and  
43 we will get there towards the end. Okay, and so can I get a motion  
44 to adopt the agenda as amended? General Spraggins, do you have  
45 another one? Okay. Second from Mr. Schieble. All right. The  
46 agenda is adopted as amended.

47  
48 The next item of business is approval of the January 2026 minutes.

1 Do we have any modifications? Seeing none, can I get a motion to  
2 approve? Mr. Schieble, and second by Dr. Banks. All right.  
3 Lovely. Moving along, Action Guide and Next Steps, and I'll turn  
4 it over to Mr. Rindone.

5  
6 **PRESENTATIONS: REEF FISH AND IFQ PROGRAM LANDINGS AND 2025 GULF**  
7 **STATE PRIVATE RECREATIONAL RED SNAPPER AND GREATER AMBERJACK**  
8 **LANDINGS UPDATES**  
9

10 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, sir, and so we're going to lead off  
11 with Frank, or Kelli, and excuse me. Kelli is here today to  
12 present the status of reef fish and IFQ program landings relative  
13 to catch limits, which is an FYI, I think, to the committee.

14  
15 Also, we'll have representatives from the five Gulf states who  
16 will review their 2025 private angling fishing seasons for red  
17 snapper and talk about what their 2026 fishing seasons may look  
18 like. States will also characterize available data for things  
19 like effort, lengths, weights, et cetera, and, in addition, states  
20 are going to talk about the same information for greater amberjack.  
21 These data are part of an ongoing report to the council. It  
22 doesn't require any action by the committee, and you guys are  
23 encouraged to ask questions, as appropriate, and so, Kelli, at  
24 your pleasure.

25  
26 **REEF FISH LANDINGS AND IFQ PROGRAM LANDINGS**  
27

28 **MS. KELLI O'DONNELL:** All right, and so, currently, our 2025 and  
29 2026 landings for both sectors are still preliminary, and you can  
30 see which landings we have available so far, and, as always, the  
31 link at the bottom goes to our ACL landings page, so you can look  
32 at the landings whenever you so please.

33  
34 First, our red snapper, you can see that we have been under our  
35 quota for that the past couple of years, and it's been kind of  
36 slowly getting lower, but it's good that we're not going over the  
37 ACL. This is an updated breakdown of the for-hire landings by  
38 state. We had a little bit more landings available for Wave 6  
39 than we did for the January meeting.

40  
41 Gag recreational landings, the same thing. We've been, luckily,  
42 not going over the ACL. Last year, there's been a lot of changes,  
43 and so we made another table, up at the top, that just shows how  
44 the ACL and ACT have changed but no overage last year, and so we  
45 have no payback ACL this year.

46  
47 We've also had a lot going on with red grouper, and keep in mind  
48 the Amendment 62 proposed ACL is 2.11 million pounds, and the ACT

1 is 1.92 million pounds, and that will be inclusive of SRFs, and so  
2 you can see how that would compare to what the landings are showing  
3 on there currently.

4  
5 Greater amberjack commercial, we are in a payback this year.  
6 They're currently in their seasonal closure, and we will be doing  
7 a projection on that later this year to see when or if a closure  
8 would need to occur. Recreational landings did not go over their  
9 ACL last year, and so we do not have a payback this year, and they  
10 will be opening on September 1, and we will also be doing a  
11 projection for that sector, to see if and when a closure needs to  
12 occur before the end of their fishing season.

13  
14 As requested by the council, we did a breakdown of the recreational  
15 landings, and so, for this, we first split out private and for-  
16 hire for the different waves, and we did it over two fishing years,  
17 because one year we did have an overage of the ACL, and, last  
18 fishing year, we didn't, and we wanted to show what those  
19 differences in landings were for the different waves.

20  
21 A further breakdown, we did just for-hire, and then split it out  
22 per state, to show what those landings are between the two fishing  
23 years for each individual Gulf state. I don't know if you guys  
24 can see. That was a lot of information put in one slide, and so  
25 feel free to blow it up on your computers if you need to see it in  
26 more detail.

27  
28 We did the same thing for the private landings, and, again, split  
29 those out by Gulf state for all of the waves, and so you can see  
30 what those were, and, in the year of the overage, the landings  
31 were driven by west Florida. Last year, we have zeros for west  
32 Florida and Mississippi, because we did not have any MRIP private  
33 recreational angler intercepts that occurred during the season.

34  
35 Lane snapper, we just went over the ACL last year, by about 8,000  
36 pounds, and we will be doing a projection for them as well, in  
37 addition to continuing to work on the prior catch limits document  
38 and -- The catch limits document and the prior season, or size  
39 limit document, which we will be combining into one rulemaking and  
40 doing our best to have that implemented before the end of the year  
41 as possible.

42  
43 Gray triggerfish has been pretty standard with its landings the  
44 past few years. They haven't been close to their ACL at all. The  
45 same thing for the rec sector. They haven't really been that close  
46 for the past couple of years. They did go over their ACT in 2023,  
47 but they did not reach their ACL.

1 Gray snapper has been staying below its ACL as well. Mutton  
2 snapper, we did have an overage of the ACL last year, by about  
3 8,000 pounds, and so their accountability measure is for us to  
4 monitor the landings this year and see if a closure will need to  
5 occur before the end of the year. Yellowtail also has been below  
6 its ACL, which is not even showing on the chart, because landings  
7 have been around half of what their ACL is for the stock.

8  
9 The same thing with vermilion. They've remained below their ACL.  
10 Cubera was under the ACL last year, and so we were in a monitoring  
11 year, because they had went over the prior year, but, since they  
12 did not look like they were going to reach their ACL, which they  
13 didn't, they did not have a closure.

14  
15 The jacks complex has also remained below their ACL this year,  
16 with the majority landings for both sectors being almaco jack.  
17 Midwater snapper did go over their ACL last year, and so they also  
18 are in a monitoring this year, to see if they would be reaching  
19 their ACL and need to have a closure by the end of the year, and  
20 the species that are caught between this differ between the  
21 sectors. Silk snapper is what the majority of the commercial  
22 sector has been harvesting the past few years, while it's been  
23 kind of a mixture between queen and silk for the recreational  
24 sector, and I think that is the last slide for reef fish. Mr.  
25 Chair, did you want to see if there's any questions, or go on to  
26 IFQ?

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think it looks like we have some questions,  
29 and so I'm going to go to Captain Walker.

30  
31 **MR. ED WALKER:** Thank you. Did you say that the majority of the  
32 jacks complex landings were almaco?

33  
34 **MS. O'DONNELL:** They were. We didn't show a breakdown this year,  
35 but, for both sectors, the majority was almaco landings.

36  
37 **MR. WALKER:** Interesting.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** J.D.

40  
41 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. A question on page 10. It  
42 looks like, for the 2025-2026 season, west Florida has zero  
43 landings in August and September and October. It seems a little  
44 odd.

45  
46 **MS. O' DONNELL:** So that's what I was mentioning. If you want to  
47 go back to slide 10, so everybody can see what we're talking about  
48 here, and so we looked into this, into a little bit more detail,

1 when we saw that it was zero for west Florida and Mississippi, and  
2 that was because we had zero intercepts for MRIP for any of those  
3 states during the twenty-seven-day season.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Schieble.

6  
7 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** Thank you for the presentation. It was well  
8 put together. You may not have the immediate answer for this, and  
9 you can get it to me later, but do you know if you used the Gulf-  
10 wide average weight when you're estimating the state-by-state  
11 landings for amberjack in that table there, or the previous one,  
12 or do you use individual weights from each state to estimate that?

13  
14 **MS. O'DONNELL:** I would have to defer to Jessica's team, who put  
15 together the landings, and how they separate them out. We can get  
16 that answer to you, if you would like to get it.

17  
18 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and that's fine. I can ask her later.

19  
20 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Andy.

21  
22 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Specifically to that, so they stratify the  
23 average weights, and there's a hierarchy based on sample sizes.  
24 We can get you more detail regarding how the Science Center does  
25 that, but the average weights, for example, that are placed on the  
26 MRIP website aren't necessarily the final average weights that we  
27 use, based on the stratification, and so we do try to use the  
28 smallest area possible within a sector, within a time period, but,  
29 if we don't have sufficient sample sizes, then we expand out from  
30 that.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any other questions before we move on to IFQ?  
33 All right. Let's move on to IFQ, please.

34  
35 **MS. O'DONNELL:** All right, and so, the same as with the other reef  
36 fish, 2025 and 2026 landings are still preliminary, and the link  
37 at the bottom takes you to the landings page so you can update  
38 anytime you would like to see what the landings are.

39  
40 Red snapper, we've been right up to their quota pretty much every  
41 year, and so things have been on par for landings. Red grouper,  
42 we've had those few changes on there, which you can see, on the  
43 bottom, how the quota has changed, and, again, there is a proposed  
44 ACL change for Amendment 62 coming up.

45  
46 Gag, as mentioned before, we did not have an overage at all, and  
47 so they are not in a payback for this fishing year, and you can  
48 see landings are slightly higher the beginning of this year than

1 they have been in previous years.

2  
3 Shallow-water grouper are not close to their quota at all. They're  
4 less than half of that, although you can see what the proposed  
5 quota selected in the SWG framework action is, which they are still  
6 below, from the past couple years of landings.

7  
8 Deepwater grouper, the same thing, although, the proposed  
9 deepwater grouper quota that was in 58B, it is showing that they  
10 are averaging landings that are higher than that. Tilefish has  
11 routinely remained below their quota, and, again, about landing  
12 half of that, on average, and I think that is the last slide for  
13 that.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any questions for Kelli on IFQ landings? All  
16 right. Seeing none, thank you, Kelli.

17  
18 **MS. O'DONNELL:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

19  
20 **FLORIDA STATE LANDINGS**

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. The next item on the agenda, we're going  
23 to just start moving into the statewide landings, and it looks  
24 like I am up first, and so we're doing Gulf red snapper private  
25 recreational as well as greater amberjack, kind of continuing on  
26 what we've been doing in the last meeting.

27  
28 All right. Just as a placeholder that I put in for all these  
29 presentations, just a reminder about what the Florida State Reef  
30 Fish Survey is. It replaced the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and it's  
31 required for all fishers targeting thirteen species of reef fish  
32 from a private vessel, and a no cost designation. There's two  
33 components of it, a mail survey and dockside interviews. The mail  
34 survey is where we kind of determine our effort, and we do  
35 supplement, to increase sample size, with MRIP angler interviews.

36  
37 All right, and here's what the season structure was for the 2025  
38 season. A quota of 2.76 million pounds, a 127-day season, and I'm  
39 not going to get into the details for all of that, but there was  
40 a continuous summer component, and then the fall component, after  
41 an August break, where you can kind of see how it was set -- How  
42 the structure was set up.

43  
44 Landings for this last year, compared to the previous last year's  
45 1.649 million pounds, was about -- This is still preliminary, and  
46 not expecting this to really change that much, but it should be  
47 final at the end of this month here, and roughly 60 percent of the  
48 overall quota that was allocated to the state of Florida.

1  
2 Interesting little pattern here, where we actually saw a bump up  
3 this previous year in the weights here, and you can see the largest  
4 that we've actually had on record since 2021, both for private and  
5 for state. Similar patterns you can see relative to lengths, and  
6 nothing earth shattering there, and following a similar trend.

7  
8 Here you can see the effort that we utilize, or the effort that -  
9 - Catch per unit effort. It's quite interesting, you know, and,  
10 obviously, I'm expecting some questions relative to the number of  
11 pounds that we've landed, but I think what we're starting to see  
12 here is that we're starting to see a little bit of effort  
13 decompression, and people just not feeling the urgent need to get  
14 out every time, because the season has expanded to a certain time  
15 period here where just the effort just seems to be decompressing  
16 a little bit, and so it's kind of nice to see, but we're certainly  
17 diving into that a little bit more as well.

18  
19 Greater amberjack. All right, and so, typically, FWC, you know,  
20 when the feds closed down the fishery in federal waters, since  
21 most of this fishery is prosecuted there, we will typically try to  
22 go for consistent state and federal seasons. Similar to red  
23 snapper, this is a SRFS species, and so same deal. We supplement  
24 SRFS landings with MRIP intercepts, and 2026 landings are not  
25 available yet.

26  
27 All right, and so here's where we are, and so about -- In that  
28 2025 season, about 57 percent of the total overall quota was landed  
29 here in the State of Florida. Here, you can see the dockside  
30 sample sizes that we got. Last year, we only had one intercept  
31 there, compared to MRIP, that had six. We had nine this year, but  
32 it just kind of highlights some of the challenges associated with  
33 this fishery across that entire duration of the fishing season,  
34 and really only twelve intercepts across the entire western portion  
35 of Florida.

36  
37 Sizes, because it's kind of not -- I don't want to call it a rare-  
38 event species, but, I mean, it's certainly not a super abundant  
39 species that we get across the dock there, and so take these  
40 patterns with a grain of salt relative to sample sizes there, but  
41 you can kind of see some differing trends here relative to weights.  
42 Lengths, and then we get down to effort, and, here, you can just  
43 kind of see just the low degree that we actually capture greater  
44 amberjack relative to effort there.

45  
46 I believe that's my last slide, and this is just the overall what  
47 we utilize for Gulf reef fish private recreational effort  
48 estimates. We have to tease it apart relative to the species that

1 we're talking about there, since we're not generating efforts on  
2 each individual species. Anyways, I think that's the presentation,  
3 and I'm happy to answer any questions. Dr. Allen.

4  
5 **DR. MIKE ALLEN:** Yes, and I was curious. For the red snapper, the  
6 charter sizes were smaller than the private, and the weights were  
7 smaller, and is that what you would expect? I'm surprised by that.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, because we're talking state charter, and  
10 so they're limited to state waters, and private can get in deeper  
11 waters, right, and so you're going to typically see larger fish  
12 more offshore.

13  
14 **DR. ALLEN:** Okay. That clears it up, and so this is only state  
15 charters, when you say charters?

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That is correct. Federal for-hire is --

18  
19 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and federal for-hire is not covered with  
22 the State Reef Fish Survey. Okay. Any more questions for me?  
23 All right. I am going to turn it over then to Mr. Anson for  
24 Alabama.

#### 25 26 **ALABAMA STATE LANDINGS**

27  
28 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Highlights for the 2025  
29 red snapper season, we had 196 days, again, our season for private  
30 vessels and state-licensed charter vessels. There's the summary  
31 of the days.

32  
33 We had four-day weekends during the summer, but it's a much slower  
34 time, during July and August, compared to Memorial Day weekend and  
35 June, and so we've done that, in the past, to try to extend out or  
36 have a fish available in the fall and winter, and so we -- Based  
37 on the harvest at that point, at the end of August, we decided to  
38 go to a seven-day-a-week format from the end of August through the  
39 end of the year.

40  
41 We continued the sixteen-inch minimum size limit and two-fish-per-  
42 person daily creel limit, and we had an allocation of 664,500  
43 pounds and a final harvest of 623,000 pounds. 93.8 percent of our  
44 allocation was caught, harvested.

45  
46 This is a summary of each of the years from 2018, when we first  
47 did the EFPs for 2018 and 2019, and you can see, for the last four  
48 years, or three years, 2023 through 2025, we've been fairly close,

1 at 570,000 pounds to 623,000 pounds for our harvest.

2  
3 Here's the total length. Again, we had that aberration back in  
4 2023, based on relatively low sample size for state charter and  
5 intercepting a couple of trips where they had some special fishing  
6 activities, or behavior, going on, but generally a declining trend  
7 over time. We had a slight bump here this last year with state  
8 charter for mean length.

9  
10 Similar to mean length is the weight trends here, declining over  
11 time for private rec, and then a slight increase here for 2024 and  
12 2025 for charter, and at the bottom -- I'm sorry, and the bottom  
13 are the numbers of fish measurements and/or weights, depending  
14 upon the metric.

15  
16 Here's over the entire time series from 2018 forward for the  
17 estimated vessel trips by mode. Let's see, and we've been  
18 increasing there, and private trips is in the green, and fairly  
19 consistent, although a slight increase in state charter trips as  
20 well over the time series. To the right are the mean angler trips,  
21 or mean anglers per vessel trip, and it's declining over time.

22  
23 So I think, as C.J. mentioned about the compression of effort, as  
24 these seasons get larger, there's also a tendency not to put as  
25 many people on those boats as well, that you have less people that  
26 are on the vessels participating in those individual fishing trips.

27  
28 We have the mean harvested fish per vessel over the time series.  
29 It has been declining, as far as the number of fish that are  
30 brought, that are harvested, and the harvest includes landed fish  
31 and the fish that are reported dead, either as they're released in  
32 the water or, if they were observed to be eaten by a shark or a  
33 dolphin, and the anglers reported that, then that would be a dead  
34 fish, and it's counted toward harvest, and then the mean landed  
35 red snapper per angler trip is provided on the right, and so the  
36 landings have increased.

37  
38 This is a summary of each of the years, going back to 2018, as far  
39 as the open date, close dates, the season structure, the total  
40 days that the season was open, and our allocation for that  
41 individual year, and whether or not it was exceeded, noted by the  
42 asterisk.

43  
44 For 2026, we'll be opening on Friday, May 22, as we've always done,  
45 and we intend to have a seven-day season structure throughout the  
46 remainder of the year, or until the allocation is caught, and we  
47 have no payback, and so the allocation will be the same as 2025,  
48 and we'll be maintaining the sixteen-inch, two-fish-per-person

1 daily creel limit.

2

3 Okay, and so I did not provide any greater amberjack information,  
4 and I apologize for that, but, as we talked a little bit yesterday  
5 about the information we gather on Snapper Check for amberjack, it  
6 is a species that is mandatory to be reported in Alabama, but,  
7 either due to its abundance or what have you, we've not had much  
8 participation.

9

10 As I mentioned yesterday, in 2025, the adjusted reporting rate,  
11 after you take in the statistical weights of each of the samples  
12 for last year, was effectively a 3 percent reporting rate, and so  
13 over the four years, and we started that in 2021, mandatory  
14 reporting of amberjack and gray triggerfish, we've had -- Each  
15 year for private recreational anglers, it ranged from one  
16 observation, one validation, to eight, and so we have very little  
17 data, and then the number of fish has ranged from zero to six fish  
18 in an individual year for private rec, and so you have to do some  
19 creative math.

20

21 Andy just talked a little bit about the minimum number of fish  
22 lengths and such, and so, since we had such little weights, or no  
23 weights in some years, we couldn't get an actual, calculated  
24 actual, weight, and so, in those years that we did have at least  
25 a couple of fish that you could get a standard error from, you  
26 know, the weights of harvested fish for each of those individual  
27 years ranged from about 50,000, in the last year, it was 225,000  
28 pounds for private rec, and so quite a large disparity there. We  
29 don't fully believe the 225,000 pounds for last year, but that's  
30 what we have.

31

32 For AL Creel, and last year was our first year for dockside  
33 sampling, and so we have estimates for species in that year, and  
34 so, for the calendar year for that, we ended up with 909 fish as  
35 being harvested, and that includes landings and discarded fish, of  
36 which are 810 fish that were landed and eighty-nine fish that were  
37 reported as eaten by predators, and that was from three vessel  
38 trips, comprising eight anglers total, and five fish were observed.

39

40 Just for comparison purposes, and you saw it there on a slide there  
41 from NOAA, but there was 1,424 fish that were landed in APAIS, and  
42 so fairly similar with those two surveys. Thank you.

43

44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Kevin. Any questions? I've got  
45 Captain Walker over here.

46

47 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you. I think I'm a little confused, but are  
48 you saying that the reported through the app amberjack were really

1 small, like one fish?

2  
3 **MR. ANSON:** What I mentioned was, relative to our data that we had  
4 available -- So they don't report -- They report the numbers of  
5 fish, yes, but we did not have one fish that was from our dockside  
6 sampling, and so we ended up, in one of the years, with only one  
7 fish that was measured by our staff as part of the dockside  
8 sampling, and then, the other year, it was zero fish, and so it's  
9 just -- You know, it's such a small -- A relatively rare-event  
10 species, and it has been increasing over the last couple of years,  
11 as far as the numbers of contacts with anglers, but 2022 by far  
12 was the worst year. That's when we had the one observation and  
13 zero fish measured.

14  
15 **MR. WALKER:** So that's the validation part of it, and so do you  
16 feel like the actual reporting by people -- Is there a big  
17 difference between amberjack and red snapper?

18  
19 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so, for last year for red snapper, it was a  
20 45 percent reporting rate, is what we calculated based, again, on  
21 our methodology, and then it was 3 percent for amberjack.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any more questions for Kevin? All right.  
24 Thank you, Kevin. I'm going to turn it over to Mississippi and  
25 General Spraggins.

26  
27 **MISSISSIPPI STATE LANDINGS**

28  
29 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You can see the  
30 Mississippi season was -- In 2025, we had 79,047 pounds, which is  
31 96 percent of our ACL. We were open only forty-five days, and  
32 that was May 23 to July 6, and, just to give you an idea with that,  
33 most states were open 140-plus days, and so Mississippi was only  
34 open a third of what most states were open, and even less than  
35 that from some of the others.

36  
37 As you can see, our private recreational metrics, it shows that  
38 our anglers per trip were pretty much the same, a little over 3.5,  
39 and we did have a little bit of increase in the total number of  
40 trips this year, up to 3,000, and probably due to a little bit of  
41 difference in the cost of fuel, and that probably made a little  
42 difference in what happened there. Our CPUE, as you can see, is  
43 holding pretty much at about at four-and-a-half, and so it's  
44 holding pretty good over the last few years.

45  
46 As you can see, our average weight went up a little bit. We're at  
47 a little over five-and-a-half pounds now, and so that's a little  
48 bit of an increase, getting us back to 2023, and so we had a little

1 drop last year, and it brought it back up.  
2  
3 You can see that also the average length went up a little bit, to  
4 a little over 20.5, and so that's getting us, once again, back to  
5 2023, almost, is what we're looking at, and so everything is coming  
6 back to normal, where we were at before.  
7  
8 Just to give you an idea as far as the amberjack, we didn't report  
9 any, because we didn't intercept any, and thank goodness, because,  
10 if we had, we wouldn't have had a season, but we have very little  
11 bit of amberjack.  
12  
13 The reason for that is because the effort is so low, because we're  
14 not fishing or snapper or anything else in that September  
15 timeframe, like the other states are doing, and so it's just a lot  
16 of effort for somebody to go out just to go amberjack fishing, and  
17 it costs a lot of money for what they're doing, but if they could  
18 do both, and, hopefully, in the near future, that Mississippi will  
19 get their allocation back up to where we will be able to have a  
20 season there in the same time, that amberjack, and then maybe we'll  
21 be able to give you some type of data of what we're doing at that  
22 point.  
23  
24 Our season for next year, or this year rather, is May 22 to July  
25 5, and we'll look at it at that point. Obviously, we'll see where  
26 we're at, and, depending on the weather and whatever the effort  
27 is, as to where we're at, whether we'll have any more than that  
28 forty-five-days-plus season, again, but, with that, that's my  
29 report, Mr. Chairman.  
30  
31 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any questions for the General? Dr. Allen.  
32  
33 **MR. ALLEN:** Thank you, General. Your CPUE for the boat, is that  
34 catch per boat day? It's on the slide? Let me see. It's the  
35 CPUE graph.  
36  
37 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** You're talking about the --  
38  
39 **DR. ALLEN:** That one, the vessel CPUE. Is that catch per boat  
40 day, or is that per angler, or how was that -- Per boat? Okay.  
41 Four, averaging about four, fish per boat per day. Okay. All  
42 right. Thank you.  
43  
44 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, sir, and it's four per boat.  
45  
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any more questions? All right. I think we're  
47 going to keep moving along. We'll move over to Louisiana and Mr.  
48 Schieble.

1  
2 **LOUISIANA STATE LANDINGS**  
3

4 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For last season, 2025, we  
5 had an allocation of 894,955 pounds, but we had a payback from the  
6 previous season, 2024, of 39,632 pounds, and so that was subtracted  
7 right off the top.  
8

9 Our season opened May 1, and it ran seven days a week, with a four-  
10 fish bag limit. We will have the same season structure for this  
11 year, for 2026, and so we'll open again on May 1, seven days a  
12 week, with a four-fish bag limit, and so that was 200 days last  
13 year that we were open, through November 16. We landed 947,103  
14 pounds, which was 105.8 percent of our allocation, and so,  
15 obviously, we overfished by roughly 52,000 pounds, and so we will  
16 have a payback taken off the top of this year as well.  
17

18 I would like to point out that, within LA Creel, for that  
19 allocation of 894,955 pounds, our confidence limits are roughly 6  
20 percent, and so that equals about 33,858 pounds, plus or minus,  
21 and so the 52,000-pound overage is very close to within the window  
22 of the confidence interval within LA Creel, statistically.  
23

24 Harvest by sector, kind of a breakdown, the private recreational  
25 boats landed 841,845 of those pounds. State charter boats landed  
26 105,257, and so the federal for-hire boats came out to 147,830  
27 pounds. They're open from June 1 through September 16, and, as a  
28 reminder, that's not part of our private recreational allocation,  
29 but LA Creel is able to track that, and so, to help with that, the  
30 next slide, please, is kind of a breakdown of how that works.  
31

32 I put this in here for reference for when we get to the discussion  
33 on Amendment 64 later this afternoon, and so the federal charter  
34 allocation, when we did Amendment 40, using that formula, roughly,  
35 for Louisiana, that equals about 11.13 percent. Historically,  
36 over that time period, since Amendment 40 went into place, it was  
37 about 376,257 pounds, and so our charter fleet has been  
38 consistently landing about half of that, and it's because of the  
39 truncated season structure since this went into effect.  
40

41 You can see the difference in those landings, and the fact that  
42 we're able to track it through LA Creel I think is important.  
43 That's kind of the point I wanted to make.  
44

45 This is the graph that we send out weekly, just as a final  
46 compilation, and so you can see the difference there. It's that  
47 52,148-pound overage that's being taken off of the start of this  
48 season's allocation for 2026.

1  
2 This is similar to what you've seen with the other states. It's  
3 a comparison of the recent season structure, and so, just for  
4 reference, when you're looking at the week of the year on the  
5 bottom, the season started with Week 18, on that Thursday.  
6 Memorial Day weekend is Week 22, and you can see the different  
7 spike in the landings after that, and July 4<sup>th</sup> is Week 27, and then  
8 Labor Day is Week 36 on the graph.

9  
10 Our commission tries to get through Labor Day weekend, and that's  
11 kind of one of our goals when they set the season using the  
12 allocation that we have, and so you can see we accomplished that  
13 this year, by going through November.

14  
15 These are average weights. On the left-hand side, you've got the  
16 private and charter weights. The charter is the blue line, and  
17 the private weights are the orange color, and that should stay  
18 that way through most of the graphs, for the rest of the  
19 presentation.

20  
21 The graph on the right-hand side takes the recent time series since  
22 we had the start of state management in 2020 and looks at those  
23 comparisons equally there, because we doubled the sampling for the  
24 weight starting when state management took place, and so that's  
25 the little asterisk on the bottom of the graphic there. It's a  
26 little bit different in the time series, but keep in mind these  
27 graphics go back to the start, or inception, of LA Creel, and not  
28 the start of state management, and so LA Creel began in 2014.

29  
30 Roughly when you look at the graph, noting on the Y-axis that the  
31 difference in weight is not hugely significant. It's a small  
32 amount between the charter and the private boats, and so, once we  
33 had state management, and those charter boats were allowed to fish  
34 within state waters, the state charter boats, those weights  
35 dropped.

36  
37 It's not an artifact of the fish got smaller. It's the fact that  
38 where they were able to fish changed, and that is an average  
39 between the federal for-hire fleet and the state charter fleet  
40 included in those charter weights combined on that graphic.

41  
42 The same thing with the lengths. The graphic starts on the left  
43 from the entire time series of LA Creel. The one on the right is  
44 the recent time series since the start of state management, and,  
45 again, you see that difference, where there's a drop with the state  
46 management start, on the charter boats specifically as well, and  
47 that's the same thing that you saw with the weights.

48

1 It's because a lot of the state charter boats were allowed to fish  
2 within the state waters for a season, and those are combined with  
3 the federal for-hire lengths also, just like the previous graphic,  
4 and you're looking at about 894 charter and 1,608 private weight  
5 samples in these graphics here, just for reference of the sample  
6 size.

7  
8 I like to throw the age in, as we've talked about in the past,  
9 because I think that tells more of a story of what's going on with  
10 the fishery than weights based on spatial distribution of where  
11 people fish. The average age actually for the private recreational  
12 boats actually has gone up in the past two seasons, and the charter  
13 ages have gone down, and, again, I think that's an artifact of the  
14 percentage of state charter boats that are fishing within those  
15 state waters.

16  
17 It brings that average age, as well as the size and weight you saw  
18 earlier, down, because of where they're fishing, but, overall,  
19 that average age, if you look back to 2015 through now on the  
20 private recreational boats, it really hasn't changed. It's pretty  
21 much a straight line. It goes up some years, and down some years,  
22 but, overall, on average, it's about the same age, or slightly  
23 increasing, in the most recent time series.

24  
25 The next slide, please, I think really shows the picture, and so  
26 this is the age distribution from 2018, when we had the exempted  
27 fishing permits start, all the way through the recent time series,  
28 and you can see that we have a large number of age-three, four,  
29 and five-year-olds in the system that are being landed. We have  
30 recruitment spikes in 2021, 2022, and 2023, which contributed to  
31 that, and there's really no evidence of age truncation taking  
32 place. We're still landing fish all the way at the end of that  
33 graphic. They're up to twenty years old, and it's important.

34  
35 Next slide, please, is the CPUE comparisons, and so we have the  
36 highest charter effort in the time series, and that's what that  
37 blue line is on the bottom graphic. You can see it spike up on  
38 the end there. I think -- I really don't have a reason as to why  
39 that would have happened. We didn't change really -- The LA Creel  
40 intercepts and draws are all the same. I just think you had more  
41 state charter effort contributing to that this year.

42  
43 We have the table, on the right-hand side, showing the private  
44 recreational as well as the charter combined, state charter and  
45 federal for-hire also, on the side there for the catch effort.

46  
47 Next slide, please, is snappers per angular trip, CPUE, and so,  
48 again, we had the highest charter effort in the time series. You

1 see that blue line spiking at the top there. Half of that is  
2 coming from the state charter harvest, because they can catch a  
3 four-fish bag limit, and so that's noted in the season structure  
4 at the bottom, that table at the very bottom of the graphic.

5  
6 I think that contributes to that, because the federal for-hire  
7 boats can only catch a two-fish limit, and so you see that  
8 difference in the overall landings there. I think that's it for  
9 that graphic.

10  
11 The next one should be our landings table over time, and so what  
12 I would like to point out on this is, everywhere you see the red  
13 numbers is overharvest, and then the green numbers, in parentheses,  
14 are when we did a payback the next year, and there's underharvest,  
15 but, of the entire time series, if you average this from 2018 to  
16 2025, we actually still have underharvested compared to the total  
17 ACL that was allowed over the entire time series.

18  
19 You see there's been overages and paybacks and underages, but, had  
20 we had carryover in this entire time series, we would have had a  
21 total underage for the full time series.

22  
23 Moving on to amberjack, I believe, or one more slide there, and  
24 okay. These are the landings over the LA Creel time series. On  
25 the left, you've got the numbers of fish and on the right-hand  
26 table is pounds. The recreational weight uses that charter average  
27 for the most recent year, 2025 there, because we didn't have any  
28 recreational fish able to be weighed this recent year, because we  
29 had the three-week season in 2025, but, overall, charter landed  
30 about 14,000 pounds, and you saw, earlier in the NMFS presentation,  
31 it was about 18,000, and so pretty close, but that's the reason I  
32 asked the question about where the weights were.

33  
34 The next slide, please, shows the season structure for this recent  
35 year, 2025, and so we had the three-week season, and then that  
36 closed. We, in Louisiana, kept it open in state waters past that,  
37 but, as you can see on the table, we didn't land any amberjack,  
38 even though the season was still open, and so we encountered a  
39 total of six private intercepts and thirteen charter intercepts  
40 over that three-week season, and so similar to what Kevin described  
41 in his report with five intercepts, I think.

42  
43 The final slide for amberjack is the CPUE, and so you can see that  
44 the effort really is an artifact of recent management actions, and  
45 this is part of what I've talked about in the past, that it has  
46 become a rare-event species, and so, in 2022, you saw we had the  
47 emergency rule that adjusted the fixed closed season to really  
48 allow only harvest from two months, September and October, and

1 that's really put a major dent in the landings that have taken  
2 place since then, in that vessel trips, especially the bottom  
3 graphic, and part of why it's so difficult to get these intercepts,  
4 when I only get six intercepts, and it's really an artifact of the  
5 season structure, and so, if you have any questions, I'll be glad  
6 to answer them.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any questions for Chris? Dr. Allen.

9

10 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Chris. I really like this report. I think  
11 you gave us a lot of information, and I appreciate seeing the age  
12 data on the red snapper. I was looking at slide 8, with, you know,  
13 the general trend in decreasing size in the catch, and then trying  
14 to match that up with slide 9, which is the average age isn't  
15 changing, and so I just wanted to see what you thought about that,  
16 because that would tell me that possibly growth rate is declining,  
17 or something, because the sizes are going down, but the age is the  
18 same, and so I just wondered if there was any thoughts on that.

19

20 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so I think, when you look at these graphs,  
21 it's really hard to put a graph up that has a lot of range on the  
22 Y-axis, right, and so we're talking about a difference of 1.8  
23 inches since 2020 on that graph, right?

24

25 **DR. ALLEN:** I get that.

26

27 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** To me, in the fish world, that's not a big  
28 difference, 1.8 inches, but the age really tells the story more so  
29 than, I think, measuring length on fish does.

30

31 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and I think -- I see that. You're right that  
32 it's not -- I mean, the Y-axis is zoomed-in, and I get that part,  
33 but it's still -- I don't know. I would like to see -- It would  
34 be neat to see the length distributions of the catch between those  
35 years, you know, just like what are the highs, and what are the  
36 lows, and just see how they overlap, but, anyway, I appreciate the  
37 report.

38

39 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I agree with that. I think, you know,  
40 really breaking it out, if we could, between the state charter and  
41 the federal charter, and not just lumping those together, like  
42 they are throughout the blue line on there, would also help tell  
43 some of the story, I think, but it's difficult.

44

45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Any more questions for Mr.  
46 Schieble? Mr. Strelcheck.

47

48 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I had a similar question to Mike,

1 and so, if you go to the graphic of the ages, on I guess the next  
2 slide maybe, this shows it's very stable in kind of an average age  
3 of five-and-a-half or six years, especially the last couple of  
4 years, but then go to the next slide, which is the bar plot, and  
5 I just -- It jumped out at me, because it was such a high spike,  
6 right, that 45 percent for 2025, and it looks like 65 or 70 percent  
7 of your ages are age-three or less for 2025, and so I'm surprised  
8 that's not showing up as a lower average weight in the last year,  
9 and so I just point that out for maybe something to look at.

10  
11 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I don't have an answer for that, but I can  
12 look at it, and that's a good observation.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Any more questions for Chris? All  
15 right. Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Last, but certainly not least,  
16 Mr. Geeslin.

### 17 18 **TEXAS STATE LANDINGS**

19  
20 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to wait for  
21 the slides to come up, but you'll see no age data within my  
22 presentation. Per usual, our state water season opened on January  
23 1. Our federal water season opened on June 1. That will change  
24 this coming year, as we will be opening on that Friday before  
25 Memorial Day, similar to Mississippi, on May 22.

26  
27 We're fishing under a quota of 286,363 pounds. We ran extremely  
28 long this year, 172 days. I would love to give a few pounds and  
29 days over to Mississippi, if we could. We closed on November 20,  
30 and we kept our state-water season open for the rest of the year.  
31 We ended up landing 77 percent of our quota, just over 220,000  
32 pounds, and remember this also includes our January through May  
33 headboat landings, which is about 10,000 pounds, and our out-of-  
34 season charter-for-hire landings, which looked like it was 42,000  
35 pounds.

36  
37 We started -- Since we do run that state water season open on  
38 January 1, that put us -- When we opened on the federal water  
39 season on June 1, we were already at 74,000 pounds, and that did  
40 not include -- That did include, and I'm sorry, the headboat  
41 landings as well.

42  
43 As you'll see in the highlighted graph there, lower catch rates  
44 than previous years, and it tracked well, and we see some -- I see  
45 some spikes there in late July. In late July, we landed 23,000  
46 pounds, and then, again, in November uptick. November 1 through  
47 November 20, we landed 20,000 pounds, and pretty -- As usual in  
48 the Gulf off of Texas in June, high wave conditions, and very low

1 effort during that time period.

2  
3 Average weights, you can see a little dip here again in 2025, in  
4 both the private and charter. I will point out, and I've said  
5 this before, there is definitely a seasonal component here. Just  
6 doing some back-of-the-napkin spreadsheet arithmetic, our average  
7 weight from June 1, and pretty much the entire summer, from June  
8 1 to September 5 is 4.2 pounds, but, October and November, those  
9 two months, we had a nine-pound average, and so you definitely get  
10 a larger average as those fish move in closer to shore, and I will  
11 highlight the seasonal component there.

12  
13 Just the relative -- I mean, the snapper weight frequency  
14 distribution here. Again, lots of those smaller fish, but, as you  
15 tail out, especially into the latter fall, October and November,  
16 both sectors picking up on some of those larger fish, but most of  
17 the fish were two to three pounds.

18  
19 Similarly, a decrease in average length, and more pronounced in  
20 the charter fleet, while we're tracking, tracking right along,  
21 with some of the average weights in the last few years, and the  
22 length frequency distribution here. What I find interesting, and  
23 I would like to maybe look into our age, is those fish towards the  
24 tail-end, some of those larger fish, presumably being caught there  
25 in the fall, but a smaller dip in between that twenty to twenty-  
26 seven-inch size class.

27  
28 Vessel trips per year, you can see that the effort, in the last  
29 couple of years, in both of the sectors, private and charter, is  
30 down a little bit. Again, I think maybe this extended season could  
31 be leading to that, and fuel prices, and not the sense of urgency  
32 to get out, and we do not post an end of the season date, and so  
33 that's always, you know, a factor that anglers keep in the back of  
34 their mind, but, with these longer seasons, that may be working  
35 against some of the effort there.

36  
37 All right, and this is the CPUE, or the fish caught per angler  
38 trip, specific to that trip landing in the various sectors. You  
39 can see that most anglers are catching their -- We do have the  
40 four-fish bag limit in state waters, and two in federal waters,  
41 and so lot of those federal anglers coming back in and picking up  
42 one or two fish in state waters.

43  
44 All right. The mean catch per vessel of those that are landing  
45 snapper, and, again, you can see a decline, and a really pronounced  
46 decline, in the charter fishery, but, similarly, a less pronounced  
47 reduction in the mean catch per vessel in pounds within the private  
48 sector as well.

1  
2 Moving on into greater amberjack, our daily bag is one fish,  
3 thirty-eight inches total length, and we converted that fork length  
4 into total length, just to be consistent with our other state  
5 regulations. Season length, as everyone knows, federal waters  
6 closed on September 27, and our 2025 landings are just under 4,000  
7 pounds. 2023 was the highest we've seen in the past five years,  
8 at 21,000 pounds.

9  
10 This illustrates the year-to-year variability within both the  
11 charter and the private. I will note that these are, as we've  
12 heard today, very rarely intercepted within our private creel  
13 surveys. Charter landings, you see those asterisks in 2022 and  
14 2025, where we had zero intercepts to expand, given the -- Expand  
15 based on the fishing pressure.

16  
17 Average weights, and I don't like doing this, just especially on  
18 the low number of sample size here, but it is what it is, and you  
19 can see the average weights hovering, in the last several years,  
20 especially in the private sector, where we don't have hardly any  
21 fish, and the charter, charter fleet, coming across the creel  
22 surveys hovering between the twenty-five and thirty pounds.  
23 Similarly, the lengths of those amberjack, it is what it is. We've  
24 seen a thirty-five to forty-inch fish, and a reduction this last  
25 year. The average was 38 inches.

26  
27 All right. The expanded vessel trips, we see the private vessel  
28 trips at seventy-three, and charter vessel trips at zero. We've  
29 got no encounters to expand, based on the pressure estimates, and  
30 so it is what it is, given the low -- The paucity of the data  
31 there.

32  
33 The mean catch of vessels landing, in pounds, you can see that, in  
34 2023 and 2024, the charter landings were rather significant  
35 compared to those zeros that you see in 2022 and 2025. Again, the  
36 quality of that data, just simply based on the low encounter rate  
37 of those fish out in the creel surveys, and I believe -- Yes, and  
38 that's the last slide, and I'm happy to take any questions.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dakus. Any questions for Dakus?  
41 Captain Walker.

42  
43 **MR. WALKER:** Just for my personal knowledge, do you guys have many  
44 amberjack in state waters in Texas?

45  
46 **MR. GEESLIN:** No. No, we do not. It's really shallow.

47  
48 **MR. WALKER:** That's what -- I wasn't sure. Thank you.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any more questions? Yes, sir, Dr. Allen.  
3

4 **DR. ALLEN:** Dakus, thank you for the report. Just a comment, and  
5 I think it would be helpful if you could show some of the  
6 uncertainty around like average lengths and that kind of thing.  
7 It's just -- It would give us more information to be able to  
8 evaluate how things are changing through time and how -- You know,  
9 the level of confidence in each of those averages, so.

10  
11 **MR. GEESLIN:** Specific to red snapper or amberjack?  
12

13 **DR. ALLEN:** I was thinking about red snapper. Amberjack I suspect  
14 would be pretty high variable.  
15

16 **MR. GEESLIN:** It's off the charts, yes.  
17

18 **DR. ALLEN:** But I was thinking about red snapper.  
19

20 **MR. GEESLIN:** Yes.  
21

22 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you.  
23

24 **MR. GEESLIN:** You bet.  
25

26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Any more questions before we move  
27 on to the next agenda item here? Okay. Thanks everyone. Mr.  
28 Rindone, do you want to roll through the action guide for the next  
29 item on lane snapper?  
30

31 **FINAL ACTION: ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK ACTION: MODIFICATION OF GULF**  
32 **LANE SNAPPER CATCH LIMITS**  
33

34 **MR. RINDONE:** It can be done, and so Emily is going to start off  
35 with written public comments received on the Abbreviated Framework  
36 Action to Modify the Lane Snapper Catch Limits. The SSC had  
37 reviewed an interim analysis that used the G-FISHER composite video  
38 index and found that the stock appears to be looking pretty  
39 healthy.  
40

41 The index was on an upward trend for a good portion of the reference  
42 period, and kind of in like a stable state right now, at an upper  
43 level compared to where it was ten or fifteen years ago, and so  
44 the SSC recommended increasing the overfishing limit and  
45 acceptable biological catch, and so this document proposes  
46 adopting this increase and setting the annual catch limit equal to  
47 the accepted biological catch. We don't use sector allocations  
48 for lane snapper, and just a footnote there for you.

1  
2 We've also included, in the background information, fishing season  
3 duration projections for both sectors, assuming the ten-inch  
4 minimum size limit increase that you guys have already transmitted  
5 to the agency, and the short version of that is that, assuming the  
6 proposed catch limits, the proposed increase in the catch limits,  
7 and the ten-inch minimum size limit, no closure is expected.

8  
9 SERO will then review the codified text of the proposed  
10 regulations, and you guys should review the information, ask  
11 questions, and select a preferred option in the abbreviated  
12 framework action, and, if everything just looks awesome, recommend  
13 that the document be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for  
14 implementation.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone. We'll  
17 turn it over to Emily.

18  
19 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** All right. Thank you, and so, since this  
20 was an abbreviated framework, we did publish a public hearing  
21 video, which received thirty-seven views, and we got seven written  
22 comments on this amendment, and I'll just summarize those briefly.

23  
24 We did hear support for catch limit increases, citing that the  
25 lane snapper population is healthy. We also heard support for  
26 status quo. We heard that the population is dwindling, that 2025  
27 was the worst lane snapper year to-date, and we also heard that  
28 lane snapper are smaller than average size, and that there are  
29 less fish, and that anglers need to travel farther to target them.

30  
31 We did hear support for a minimum size limit increase. We actually  
32 heard suggestions to increase the minimum size to twelve inches.  
33 We heard that the council should allow for growth and increase in  
34 quality. We heard that eight inches is barely enough meat, and we  
35 also heard encouragement for the fast implementation of the ten-  
36 inch minimum size limit.

37  
38 Additionally, we heard support for a ten-fish per person bag limit.  
39 We heard dissatisfaction with the over-regulation of gag grouper,  
40 and concern that the short gag season is causing effort shifting,  
41 and we also heard support for increasing the mangrove snapper and  
42 red snapper size limits, and that concludes my report.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Emily. Any questions for Emily?  
45 All right. Mr. Strelcheck.

46  
47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Emily, I'm curious if you know where the commenter  
48 who said it was the worst year for lane snapper, where they were

1 located, because that's certainly not what we're hearing else --  
2 Throughout the range of lane snapper.

3  
4 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I will have to go into the comments and see if  
5 they gave me a location-based response, and so give me a second.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I agree with Andy. I've heard no  
8 concerns, really, and they're going gangbusters, from what I hear.

9  
10 **MR. RINDONE:** Did you wait on that or --

11  
12 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Well, you guys can move on, and then I'll chime-  
13 in when I find it. How about that?

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** We're just going to make it awkward and just  
16 read it.

17  
18 **MR. RINDONE:** We can pull up the document, and, Bernie, if you  
19 want to start off with just the purpose and need.

20  
21 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I can answer now. Englewood, Florida is where we  
22 got that comment from.

23  
24 **MR. RINDONE:** So noted. Okay. The purpose and need for this  
25 extremely long document, the purpose of this abbreviated framework  
26 action is to modify the overfishing limit, acceptable biological  
27 catch, and the stock annual catch limit for Gulf lane snapper based  
28 on the 2026 SEDAR 49 interim analysis, and this is the interim  
29 analysis the SSC reviewed using the G-FISHER composite video index  
30 and estimated that the stock appears to be in good shape.

31  
32 The need for this framework action is to update the existing lane  
33 snapper catch limits based on the best scientific information  
34 available and to achieve optimal yield while preventing  
35 overfishing, consistent with the Magnuson.

36  
37 If we scroll down about two-and-a-half inches, we have a couple of  
38 options here for you guys to consider. The first one, which is a  
39 viable option, is to do nothing and leave the current OFL at about  
40 1.1 million pounds whole weight, and the ABC at just under 1.1  
41 million pounds whole weight, with the ACL set equal to the ABC.

42  
43 The second option would be to modify the OFL for Gulf lane snapper  
44 to about 1.3 million pounds and change, and the ABC to just a  
45 little bit less than that, and so about 1.3 million pounds for  
46 2026 through 2028 and subsequent years, and the stock ACL would be  
47 set equal to the ABC. Option 2 would increase the stock ACL by  
48 about 216,000 pounds compared to where it is now, and Option 2 is

1 consistent with the best scientific information available, as  
2 recommended by the SSC.  
3  
4 Again, based on the -- It's in the background information, but, on  
5 the season projection analysis that's in that background material,  
6 assuming Option 2 and a ten-inch minimum size, no season closure  
7 on account of the ACL being projected to be met is expected for  
8 Gulf lane snapper. So, Mr. Chair, at this point, it would behoove  
9 the committee to consider recommending an option as preferred to  
10 the council.  
11  
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right, and good news here. We've got an  
13 increased ACL, or catch limit here, and so, overall, I will go  
14 with -- See if there's any motions or someone wants to have a  
15 preferred. Dr. Allen.  
16  
17 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and I would like to make a motion that we adopt  
18 **Option 2, and I think Bernie had some language teed-up for us.**  
19  
20 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** This one would just be selecting the option  
21 first, and so just select Option 2 as the preferred, and do we  
22 have a second? We've got a second from Captain Walker to make  
23 Option 2 the preferred alternative.  
24  
25 **MR. RINDONE:** Or just as preferred.  
26  
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Look good, Mike?  
28  
29 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes. There we go. Thank you, Bernie.  
30  
31 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. I'm going to look around the table.  
32 We got an option -- Or we've got a motion on the floor. Any  
33 discussion? We got a second from Captain Walker. Any discussion?  
34 **Seeing none, are there any objections? Seeing none, the motion**  
35 **carries.** Okay. Mr. Rindone, then do we want to entertain a motion  
36 to make this final to transmit to the Secretary?  
37  
38 **MR. RINDONE:** So, before that, you might take a look at the codified  
39 text, and I don't know how desperate Andy is to walk through that,  
40 because it's pretty straightforward. It's where it's noted in the  
41 codified federal regulations where the current overfishing limit  
42 is and whatnot, and those are updated to reflect what would be in  
43 Option 2, and so the increase that's proposed in the document.  
44 Mara, did you want to walk through that?  
45  
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Sounds good. I'm already getting ahead of  
47 myself. Ms. Levy.  
48

1 **MS. LEVY:** Well, just that we don't codify. The only thing that's  
2 codified is the ACL, and so that will change these.  
3  
4 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, and so it just goes from 1.088 million pounds  
5 to 1.304.  
6  
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Big changes. Okay. Any questions for Mara on  
8 that massive change? Mr. Osborne.  
9  
10 **MR. JASON OSBORNE:** I just have just a procedural question. When  
11 we raise the limit here, and say a state goes over the previous  
12 year, and they're penalized, are they still penalized that amount?  
13  
14 **MR. RINDONE:** Not for lane snappers.  
15  
16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Not for lane snapper. It isn't separated by  
17 state. It's just one overall Gulf-wide quota.  
18  
19 **MR. OSBORNE:** Okay. Gotcha.  
20  
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any additional questions? All right. Thank  
22 you, Mara. Now, would you like to entertain a motion to make this  
23 final?  
24  
25 **MR. RINDONE:** I sure would.  
26  
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Do we have a potential motion?  
28 Dr. Allen.  
29  
30 **DR. ALLEN:** I'm happy to make a motion to make this final.  
31  
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. I think Mara has got the language,  
33 and we have a second from Mr. Anson. Do we have any discussion on  
34 the motion on the table?  
35  
36 **DR. ALLEN:** Should I read that?  
37  
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, sir.  
39  
40 **DR. ALLEN:** To approve Abbreviated Framework Action: Catch Limit  
41 Modifications for Gulf of America Lane Snapper and that it be  
42 forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and  
43 implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and  
44 appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary  
45 changes in the document. The council chair is given the authority  
46 to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and  
47 appropriate.  
48

1 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Allen. Any  
2 discussion on the motion? We're looking good, and we're looking  
3 at no season closure. The fishery looks healthy. All good stuff.  
4 **Any objections or opposition to the motion on the table? All**  
5 **right. Seeing none, the motion carries.** Mr. Chair, I do believe  
6 we are at a breaking point here.

7  
8 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman, for that. Before we do break,  
9 I have to ask Mr. Rindone if all our future amendments can only be  
10 fourteen pages, and it would be very helpful.

11  
12 **MR. RINDONE:** It's funny that you say that, because we've done a  
13 couple of exercises of ruthlessly reducing these, and so hopefully,  
14 and we'll see.

15  
16 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you. Yes, and let's take our fifteen-minute  
17 break and come back at 10:05. Thank you.

18  
19 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

20  
21 **MR. DUGAS:** Okay. Welcome back, everyone, from the break. If we  
22 could quiet down in the back of the room, please. Thank you, and  
23 I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Sweetman to take us through Reef  
24 Fish.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Moving on  
27 to our next item on the agenda, we've got a Public Hearing Draft  
28 for Reef Fish Amendment 63: Modifications to the Gulf Red Grouper  
29 IFQ program, and it looks like maybe Dr. Diagne is going to run  
30 through the action guide on this item. Okay, Dr. Diagne.

31  
32 **PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 63: MODIFICATIONS TO**  
33 **GULF RED GROUPER IFQ PROGRAM**

34  
35 **DR. ASSANE DIAGNE:** Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you, and good morning.  
36 Reef Fish Amendment 63 action guide, we are going to give a  
37 presentation on the public hearing draft for this Amendment 63,  
38 and, as you recall, this action addresses a pilot program, a three-  
39 year pilot program, and so we will discuss the amounts to be set  
40 aside, requirements for eligibility, as well as distribution  
41 methods.

42  
43 Because this is a public hearing draft, the committee should review  
44 the information and options discussed today and recommend  
45 preferred alternatives to the council, as appropriate, and, also,  
46 if there are revisions to be made, the committee should also  
47 suggest those.

1 The council previously recommended that public hearings for this  
2 document be held virtually, and staff will hold these, or at least  
3 plans to hold these, before the June meeting. We also note that  
4 the ad hoc AP will review this meeting, or excuse me, this  
5 document, and discuss it prior to the June meeting. In fact, our  
6 meeting is set for April 21, after this council. Thank you, Mr.  
7 Chair.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so it looks like we got a  
10 presentation here.

11  
12 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. We have a presentation, and I'll wait for Ms.  
13 Roy to put the presentation, which is right here in front of us.  
14 Thank you. I will just start with the purpose and need, which  
15 you've already seen and discussed in the past, and so it is just  
16 added here to this presentation for reference.

17  
18 Action 1, commercial quota pool for the Gulf red grouper, and so  
19 we start with a no action alternative, and, under the no action  
20 alternative, we would not establish a quota pool for red grouper.  
21 The entirety of the commercial red grouper quota would continue to  
22 be distributed based on the IFQ share ownership percentage at the  
23 time of distribution.

24  
25 Alternative 2 is establish a commercial quota pool for Gulf red  
26 grouper beginning in 2027. If the commercial quota is at or below  
27 2.79 million pounds gutted weight, the quota pool is set at zero  
28 percent of the quota, meaning nothing is distributed, zero pounds.  
29 However, if the commercial quota is above 2.79 million pounds, the  
30 quota pool would hold, and these are Options 2a to 2d, increasing  
31 percentages, going from 15 percent to 30 percent, of the commercial  
32 red grouper quota increase above 2.79 million pounds.

33  
34 2.79 million pounds, that is essentially the status quo quota in  
35 the books, and, of course, to be soon replaced by the quota in  
36 Amendment 62. We'll finish this action, and Alternative 3 changes,  
37 essentially, the thresholds that would revert the quota back to  
38 zero and establish a commercial quota pool beginning in 2027, but,  
39 if the commercial quota is below or at 4.28 million pounds, the  
40 quota pool is going to be set to zero. If the commercial quota is  
41 above 4.28 million pounds, then the commercial -- The quota pool  
42 would hold the same amounts, between 15 and 30 percent, of the  
43 commercial red grouper quota increases above 2.79.

44  
45 To finish up Action 1's discussion, these are the pounds that would  
46 be held under the various options, from 15 to 30 percent, and for  
47 the three years of this pilot program.

48

1 So, in 2027 for example, the commercial quota, as in Reef Fish 62,  
2 is 4.83 million pounds. Therefore, the increase above the 2.79  
3 will be 2.04 million pounds, and so 15, 20, 25, and 30 percent for  
4 2027, and those values are indicated, and so the smallest value is  
5 the 306,000 pounds in 2027, and the largest, or the maximum, amount  
6 this pool can potentially hold would be twice as much, essentially  
7 774,000 pounds, a little more than twice, and that would be in  
8 2028 and 2029.

9  
10 Because this amendment would account for appeals then for  
11 distribution, 10 percent of the amount would be withheld to address  
12 potential appeals, and the remaining amounts after the appeals  
13 have been addressed would, of course, be distributed based on the  
14 methods selected. That is the Action 1, and, Mr. Chair, if I  
15 should stop after each action or continue, and you let me know.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think, you know, dealer's choice. If you  
18 would like to go through the presentation, and I certainly know we  
19 already have some comments about Action 1, but I didn't know if  
20 you wanted to get through the collective presentation first.

21  
22 **DR. DIAGNE:** It's really your preference, but we can keep going  
23 then, and then go back to the questions, unless, I mean, there's  
24 a lot of questions.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and it looks like we've got some  
27 preference to talk about them as we kind of go through, and so  
28 maybe we'll have some discussion on Action 1.

29  
30 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right, and so John, and then J.D.

33  
34 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair. Reviewing the  
35 document, I guess I'll start with we just got this document Tuesday  
36 night, last Tuesday, and it's rather complicated, and then, to me,  
37 it's bad public policy to try to bring this to a final abbreviated  
38 action the following week, when there's questions, and, as part of  
39 that, I would like to add an Alternative 4 into Action 1, and,  
40 that way, we have the benefit of considering something additional,  
41 and I'll lay out my rationale after I lay it out for you, but,  
42 also, the fact that the ad hoc is going to meet on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and  
43 we're going to probably take up some discussion on this, and the  
44 final right now seems way, way, way aggressive, way so.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yeah, Dr. Diagne.

47  
48 **DR. DIAGNE:** I think Mr. Sanchez is putting together two documents,

1 because, let's say after this, there is a framework action, an  
2 abbreviated one, that addresses, you know, an issue in terms of  
3 the timeliness of this, but this is something that, you know, is  
4 in the pipeline, and has been in the pipeline for a while, and  
5 it's not scheduled for final action today, by any means.  
6

7 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I somehow believe they relate to each other, and so  
8 I'm throwing that out there, as I said, as a precursor, a brief  
9 history of where I'm going, but, more direct to this document, I  
10 would like to add an Alternative 4 to that, and, if so, I'll lay  
11 it out for you.  
12

13 **If we could scroll back to Alternative 3, and basically the same**  
14 **preamble, but it will be Alternative 4, utilizing the 4.28, but**  
15 **then, for the options, which will become 4a, 4b, 4c, et cetera, et**  
16 **cetera, the same percentages, same everything, but, where it**  
17 **references 2.79 here in Alternative 3, I would like it to be like**  
18 **the prior alternative, Alternative 2, where they're all the same,**  
19 **4.28, and then anything above 4.28 in 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4d, and the**  
20 **reason for that -- If I can get a second, I'll lay out my rationale**  
21 **for that.**  
22

23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. You got a second from Captain  
24 Walker. Mr. Strelcheck, to this point, and did you want to say  
25 something, or I'll go to J.D. first.  
26

27 **MR. STRELCHECK:** It's not specific at this point, and so I'll hold  
28 off.  
29

30 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Okay, and so rationale.  
31

32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right, and we're going to -- All right,  
33 and so we've got a motion on the table. Let's see if we can get  
34 it first, before we kind of start discussing it, and so Bernie  
35 might need your help there.  
36

37 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Just supplant 2.79 with 4.28.  
38

39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. We're getting that on the board  
40 there for you, John. All right. Does that look like what you  
41 were describing?  
42

43 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and just once we -- There you go. Change the  
44 options to the correct number.  
45

46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay.  
47

48 **MR. SANCHEZ:** That's it.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. The floor is yours.  
3

4 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you. The reason why I'm saying that is this  
5 is a pilot study. It's a three-year pilot, basically an  
6 experiment, and I don't think I'm opposed to trying this, and  
7 checking the mechanics of it, and seeing how this thing would work  
8 out, but I do have concerns with using, you know, in some  
9 instances, a set-aside of a percentage of two million pounds, and  
10 kind of taking those out of play to the existing universe of people  
11 that, whether we like it or not, they lawfully abided by a program,  
12 and they should be receiving a proportional distribution of this  
13 increase.  
14

15 While we're trying this, for all the reasons we know, I think we  
16 could check out this experiment with less fish. Now, when you  
17 look at 4.28, and you look at that, okay, well, that's not much  
18 fish. Well, on the first year, it might not be. In 2027, it looks  
19 like it might be just over half a million pounds.  
20

21 Now, on the subsequent years of 2028 and 2029, you will have a  
22 million pounds, and so I'm thinking, if we were to, as a group,  
23 pick one of the higher percentages, there would be enough fish  
24 there to redistribute and see how this works, but, to start off  
25 with an abundance of fish, when, historically, when the ACT has  
26 been there, our industry -- If you look at the landings back from  
27 2011 to 2017, we've got upwards of four million pounds, and even  
28 as high as 5.6, and so, if we have the ability to do it, and the  
29 stars line up, we can catch those fish, and so to set them aside,  
30 to me is just -- It seems excessive to me, given the potential  
31 impact to the industry.  
32

33 I'll add one more thing. As I was reviewing this document, and I  
34 was trying to see how impactful this was all going to be,  
35 potentially, because I was kind of on a ledge, and I was going,  
36 well, let me keep reading the discussion, and maybe it will walk  
37 me off the ledge explaining it, and so I get to somewhere like, on  
38 page 57, a statement, at the end of a paragraph, and it says that  
39 we're going to explain it to you in Section 4.3.3, and I'm looking  
40 at it, and I'm going, well, maybe this will give me some solace  
41 and peace in approaching this, except, when you look in the  
42 document, there is no 4.3.3, and so I -- I want to just add  
43 something that gives us a little reassurance here.  
44

45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thanks, John. I've got a couple  
46 of hands up. I'm going to go to Andy first, and then Dr. Diagne.  
47

48 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so, in response to the motion, my concern

1 is it's going to be very small amount of quota pool. If I do the  
2 calculations quickly, which I was doing on the fly, even if we  
3 chose 4d, you're essentially setting aside about three-and-a-half  
4 percent of the overall quota for the quota pool in year-one, 2027,  
5 right, and so it's a small fraction of the overall quota.

6  
7 The other thing that, you know, we've done with these alternatives  
8 is we're trying to, obviously, get the quota in the hands of those  
9 that are landing the fish, both non-shareholders that are leasing  
10 quota as well as shareholders that are landing quota, right, and  
11 so both sets of participants stand to qualify for the quota pool  
12 program, and benefit from it, in terms of those landings that  
13 they've had in recent years.

14  
15 To me, because we have such a large quota increase, there's already  
16 a bump-up in terms of the quota shareholders receiving quota, and  
17 I think it's to the benefit to have a larger quota pool, and test  
18 this out more broadly, than shrinking the quota pool and having  
19 just a small fraction of the overall harvest available for  
20 consideration.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Andy. Dr. Diagne.

23  
24 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and, just to provide some context, and if let's  
25 say, for this alternative, we went ahead and computed the numbers,  
26 and so the smallest, and let's say 15 percent in 2027, it would be  
27 82,000 pounds, 82,500, and so, if you were to use one of those  
28 minimum landings requirement, you would have roughly 235, I think,  
29 eligible folks.

30  
31 Now one of the question is, is it worth it to divide 82,000 pounds  
32 by 200, using, you know, the equal distribution, and is it worth  
33 it, and that's an open question, and, at most, you would have  
34 327,000 pounds, meaning 2028, 2029, 30 percent, and, again, the  
35 same thing, 320,000 pounds.

36  
37 Just round up, and, if you divided it by 300, it's 1,000 pounds  
38 each, but less than 300, and then 1,200, and so that's also an  
39 open question, and, as far as the explanation of the potential  
40 impact, we do consider and discuss those.

41  
42 I mean, I will not go at length on it, but the only thing that I  
43 would say is, briefly, none of these pounds will leave the  
44 commercial sector, and so, in the aggregate, the commercial sector,  
45 as a sector, is not going to suffer any loss, just very briefly,  
46 because everything stays in there, and that's number one.

47  
48 Number two, if we look historically at what happens when you

1 increase quota by two million pounds, the first thing you see is  
2 that the quota utilization rate drops significantly. When we did  
3 it in I think 2016, the quota utilization rate dropped to 43  
4 percent, and let me say 40 percent.

5  
6 It means that 60 percent of the quota was not landed, and so, here,  
7 the discussion is you can have the 60 percent not landed, you know,  
8 floating around, or try to learn something with it, by maybe doing  
9 this, or something else, and, again, that's an open question, and  
10 really it's just providing facts as context. Thank you.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and thanks for that, Dr. Diagne. Mr.  
13 Sanchez, and Captain Walker.

14  
15 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and, to that point, I understand what you're  
16 trying to do, but, just philosophically, conceptually, I think the  
17 problems we're trying to address with this, by setting aside quota  
18 to, I guess, redistribute to people that are leasing shares and  
19 landing, you know, quite a bit of red grouper, philosophically, I  
20 think we, as an industry, we should roll up our sleeves and work  
21 hard on 59, and, once and for all, address these philosophical  
22 problems that we're trying to address.

23  
24 Honest to God, and no disrespect to anybody, but I would much  
25 rather have the industry come up with their solutions to the stated  
26 challenges and problems than the government, because there will be  
27 unintended consequences, and I would rather live with the  
28 unintended consequences we've prescribed for ourselves, really  
29 thinking through the existing dynamics of the fishery and getting  
30 that, and I'll make that pledge to you.

31  
32 I'll work hard to try to do that, but, to do this here now, when  
33 there's several things -- Like I don't even really know -- Once  
34 this grand experiment is done, these people that were the  
35 recipients of this redistributed quota, what happens? It goes  
36 back to the normal, or do they keep them? What happens?

37  
38 Then another question is, if the quota just got increased  
39 dramatically, and you've got to think, as a business person,  
40 because that's what I do, you would think the share prices have  
41 gone down, and why haven't these same people that are saying, well,  
42 they're lower in price now, and it might not be as the all-time  
43 low, but it's low enough for maybe I should go hard with my money  
44 and get these shares that I feel I'm deficient in. Why haven't  
45 these things happened?

46  
47 I'm going to suggest it's because of all the instability we promote  
48 with our management measures. I'm going to say there's some people

1 now that are holding out for the freebie, shall we say, that's  
2 forthcoming in this document, and then, on us, we need to fix this  
3 problem in Amendment 59. I will make it my mission to try to get  
4 with the industry and hope like hell we can do that.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Captain Walker, and then Andy.

7  
8 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I've been in favor of  
9 doing what we can to help out the guys that are stuck having to  
10 lease quota, and, you know, have had a boot on their neck on quota  
11 prices, but, the more I look at this red grouper concept, I really  
12 don't know that it's worth it right now.

13  
14 Realistically, there's going to be two million pounds of leftover  
15 quota this year. I think the market price for allocation for red  
16 grouper right now is like twenty-five cents, and it might be fifty  
17 cents, depending on who you get it from, and the fish is selling  
18 from six to seven-dollars, and so, I mean, this is a lot of effort  
19 to try and save a guy twenty-five cents.

20  
21 When we go to four million pounds, that allocation is going to be  
22 nearly free anyway. We're already -- The guys that we're trying  
23 to help are going to be helped whether we do this or not with this  
24 increase, and so, as far as that goes, I don't know that it's worth  
25 it.

26  
27 There is some value in testing a new program, and I certainly see  
28 that, but, if it's going to get complicated here, you're -- The  
29 guys are getting quota for nearly nothing anyway, and so we're  
30 going to go through a lot of hoops here to try and give certain  
31 people some free quota, when they can get it for twenty-five cents  
32 anyway, and so I'm kind of waffling on my support for this, just  
33 based on that, and the red grouper landings, at the moment, are  
34 terrible this year, for the last month or two, and so it's unlikely  
35 we're even going to catch this 2.7 million pounds this year, and  
36 then they're going to throw another two million pounds out there.  
37 You know, the allocation cost is not going to be a factor for  
38 anybody for a while.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right, and that's a little bit different  
41 than adding an alternative, but Mr. Strelcheck.

42  
43 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, I mean, we're certainly deviating from  
44 the motion, but, in some respects, I feel like there's been  
45 statements arguing against this alternative, because there's  
46 potential for this quota to be on the table, and out there, because  
47 it's not going to get caught, right, and so why do we then reduce  
48 the quota pool to such a small amount if there's all of this extra

1 quota that's going to be available to the industry, right?

2  
3 The other point I'll make, and there's a lot of reasons why we may  
4 not want to do this, right, but I've sat around this table for a  
5 long time, and we've been debating the merits of trying to evolve,  
6 update, and modify the IFQ program.

7  
8 We've heard all of these concerns, obviously, from industry groups,  
9 both for and against, different ways to, obviously, address the  
10 high price of entering the fishery, and the barriers to entry, and  
11 what we're talking about here as a pilot. As John was asking,  
12 what happens after the pilot, well, it depends on what we learn  
13 from the pilot, and maybe we see this as another failure, but we  
14 tried, and we learned something from that, or we see it as a  
15 success, and then we come around this table and we ultimately make  
16 new decisions about how we can evolve and change this program going  
17 forward, but, without the pilot, we won't know that, right?

18  
19 You could certainly argue, and I agree with Ed, and I've talked to  
20 a lot of fishermen about the price of red grouper, and twenty-five  
21 cents is not a whole lot to pay for allocation, but, if you tally  
22 that up, if we're going to have a quota pool of 500,000 pounds,  
23 that's \$125,000, right?

24  
25 That's still money that someone is having to pay, that ultimately  
26 doesn't -- That comes off their profit, right, and so, even if  
27 it's a small amount for an individual, it's still something that  
28 comes off of their profit, and so I would just keep that in mind  
29 as well, and how can we help the industry as a whole, and this, to  
30 me, leans right into the executive order for seafood  
31 competitiveness and helping commercial fishermen, and so I support  
32 the amendment itself, and I do not support Alternative 4 as  
33 proposed.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. I'm going to try and rein this in  
36 here, and so we have a motion on the table. We've had some good  
37 discussion. I'll look around the table one more time, to see if  
38 there's any further discussion relative to the motion on the table,  
39 because we still have other actions we need to work through here.

40  
41 All right. **Seeing none, let's try this, are there any opposed to**  
42 **the motion on the table? All right. the motion carries with one**  
43 **in opposition.** All right. Have we had enough discussion with  
44 Action 1? J.D.

45  
46 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Just a question, and I don't  
47 know if it's for Assane or Andy. I'm questioning the date that's  
48 presented here for 2027. Is there enough time to make that

1 deadline?

2

3 **DR. DIAGNE:** Maybe I'll start with someone else with timing. I  
4 mean, that's the reason why, when we finish this, we will discuss  
5 an abbreviated framework, which would allow us -- At least give  
6 the RA the authority to take measures before this.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, and, before we got into that  
9 motion, Andy, you had your hand up about something else, and did  
10 you -- No? Okay. All right. Are we good on Action 1 for the  
11 time being? All right. Dr. Diagne, maybe we can continue on with  
12 the presentation.

13

14 **DR. DIAGNE:** All right. Let's go on and look at the Action 2.  
15 This action deals with eligibility criteria for participation in  
16 the quota pool. Alternative 1, no action would not establish any  
17 criteria for participation. Alternative 2 is, to receive annual  
18 allocation from the quota pool, IFQ account holders must possess  
19 a valid or renewable federal commercial reef fish permit and have  
20 minimum red grouper landings during a two-year qualifying period  
21 of, and the options are increasing from 300 pounds, minimum, to  
22 1,000 pounds, and these are the options that, as a council, were  
23 recommended for inclusion in the document.

24

25 We mentioned reference periods and the reference period would be  
26 two years running. For example, for 2027, it will cover a two-year  
27 period from January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2026, and rolling  
28 like that, I mean, in two-year periods.

29

30 This is just based on 2023 and 2024, and, obviously, we wouldn't  
31 know the number of eligible accounts until that year right prior  
32 to 2027, but, just to give us an idea, for the different minimum  
33 landing thresholds, 300, 500, and 1,000 pounds, for accounts with  
34 shares as well as accounts without shares, we have the numbers.  
35 For example, if the minimum landing requirement is set at 500  
36 pounds during the reference period, eighty-six accounts with  
37 shares would qualify, and 126 accounts without shares would  
38 qualify.

39

40 The distinction is made here because, as you recall, when it comes  
41 to distribution, the distributions would be made separately for  
42 the two subsets, and so that is Action 2, Mr. Chair.

43

44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Any  
45 discussion on Action 2 here? Looking around the table -- Captain  
46 Walker.

47

48 **MR. WALKER:** I mean, we should pick one, right, while we're talking

1 about it?

2

3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and, I mean, we can certainly have a  
4 discussion about each action. We just have a document that we  
5 need to go through as well, and so I mean --

6

7 **MR. WALKER:** Okay, and we can wait, although I feel confident  
8 saying Alternative 2, and we at least pick one, and then we have  
9 to pick an option from Alternative 2 on how many pounds we're  
10 talking about.

11

12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** You absolutely can do that now, Captain Walker.

13

14 **MR. WALKER:** So I'll throw out a number, just to get us started,  
15 and why don't we say 500 pounds? That will -- I think that will  
16 eliminate random catches, incidental catches, from people that  
17 don't really fish for red grouper, but I'm certainly open to  
18 discussion. I'm not hardline on that one, but, just to keep the  
19 ball rolling, I'll call it 500.

20

21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Is that a motion?

22

23 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and I'll make a motion to select Alternative 2,  
24 Option 2b in Action 2 as preferred.

25

26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Do we have a second? Second by Mr.  
27 Strelcheck. Discussion? J.D.

28

29 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. A question, and so, if I'm  
30 understanding correctly, if you do not pick the minimum, which is  
31 300, we're eliminating about sixteen accounts with shares, and so  
32 why would we eliminate some of the accounts? Why would we not  
33 utilize all of them, like the 300?

34

35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.

36

37 **MR. WALKER:** Certainly the intent was not to eliminate anybody,  
38 but I would say it was -- My thought process was like say a guy in  
39 another state doesn't really have red grouper that often, and  
40 caught a few, and, those guys, we don't want to distribute anything  
41 to, and so I was just trying to set a bar that would kind of  
42 eliminate incidental fishermen and keep it in the hands of the  
43 regular fishermen, but Dr. Diagne.

44

45 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and that's exactly what Captain Walker said,  
46 because, initially, when we brought the document to you, we did  
47 not have any minimum landings requirement, but, following the  
48 council's discussion, you recommended these numbers, so that the

1 incidental fishermen would not be part of it.

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

4  
5 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and just kind of think of the quota as being  
6 in two parts, right, and there's going to be the standard quota,  
7 and then there will be the quota pool, and so all shareholders  
8 will qualify for the standard quota, right, the main portion of  
9 the quota, and the quota pool then would have this qualification  
10 criteria, and so, even if you held shares that didn't meet this  
11 landing threshold, you wouldn't qualify for the quota pool at that  
12 point. You wouldn't get additional quota on top of your standard  
13 quota.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Sanchez.

16  
17 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and, in looking at this, you know, obviously,  
18 you would gather that I would be leaning towards 1,000, to find  
19 the legitimate people, but 500 is the middle of the road, and so  
20 I'm not going to die on that hill for 1,000, but, at least to me,  
21 300 seems too low, and so this is kind of a split in the difference  
22 in the middle ground.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

25  
26 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and just to point out, in the amendment, the  
27 average vertical line gear trip in 2024 was 417 pounds, and that's  
28 just a trip, right, a single trip, and a longline trip was 3,400  
29 pounds.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Good information there. Thanks, Andy. All  
32 right. We have a motion on the table. Any further discussion?  
33 All right, is there -- We'll put it to a vote here. **Is there any**  
34 **opposition to the motion on the table in Action 2 to make**  
35 **Alternative -- In Action 2, to make Alternative 2, Option 2b the**  
36 **preferred? I am seeing no opposition. The motion carries.** All  
37 right. Assane, Action 3.

38  
39 **DR. DIAGNE:** Okay, and on to Action 3. This action addresses the  
40 distribution of the quota pool among the eligible participants.  
41 Alternative 1 is no action, do not distribute the quota pool  
42 allocation to qualifying participants.

43  
44 Alternative 2 is distribute 60 percent of the quota pool among  
45 fishermen with a valid or renewable commercial reef fish permit  
46 and red grouper landing within the reference period, but without  
47 any red grouper shares, and so, essentially, the two subsets that  
48 are going to receive quota pool amounts are those without shares

1 and those with shares, but everybody needs to have landings, as  
2 per your preferred, and let's say at least 500 pounds, and  
3 everybody, of course, needs to have a valid permit, and so 60  
4 percent would go to those without red grouper shares, and 40  
5 percent of the quota pool amount would be distributed to those  
6 with red grouper shares during the reference period.

7  
8 As mentioned early on, 10 percent of the quota pool amount would  
9 be held to address potential appeals, and, the two options that we  
10 have here, each one of the options deals with one of the subsets.  
11 Option 2a is to distribute quota amongst those without red grouper  
12 shares. It could be done equally, and that would be Sub-Option  
13 (i), or proportionally based on red grouper landings during the  
14 reference period, and that would be the second sub-option.

15  
16 Option 2b would do the same thing, but this time for those with  
17 red grouper shares. The distribution could be equal, or it could  
18 be proportional, based on red grouper shares, and, just to go back  
19 up, 60 percent to those without shares and 40 percent to those  
20 with shares.

21  
22 For this alternative, Alternative 3, the only difference is that,  
23 rather than a 60-40, split, it's a 50-50 split, and so meaning 50  
24 percent of the quota pool amount to those with red grouper shares  
25 and the other 50 to those without, and the distribution methods  
26 are the same, equal, or proportional, based on red grouper  
27 landings.

28  
29 This is just to give you some context, if you would, keeping in  
30 mind that we will not know the exact number of eligible accounts  
31 until I guess this is implemented, but, for the different landing  
32 thresholds, minimum landings, 300, 500 and 1,000 pounds, and the  
33 two scenarios, 50-50 or 60-40, if we look at an equal distribution,  
34 assuming that 15 percent of the increase above our baseline was  
35 used for the quota amount, then, for example, with a minimum of  
36 500 pounds, each account with share would receive about 1,800  
37 pounds, meaning 1,777, and each account without share would receive  
38 1,214 pounds.

39  
40 If we go to the 60-40 scenario, essentially we are giving more now  
41 to those without shares, and so, essentially, the account without  
42 shares would receive 1,457, and the account with shares 1,423, and  
43 so, with equal distribution, having taken 15 percent of the  
44 increase as our example here, the smallest amount to be given would  
45 be received by an account without shares under a 300-pound  
46 threshold, and that is 1,150 pounds per account, and the largest  
47 account would have been about 2,000 pounds. Let's say, if the  
48 minimum threshold is set at 1,000 pounds, the account with shares

1 would receive each 1,937, because you have fewer accounts, because  
2 of the high minimum thresholds, and more of the amount divided by  
3 a smaller number, and then they get more of it, and just an  
4 illustration for equal distribution.

5  
6 The second half of the table looks at the intervals, meaning  
7 between the minimum and the maximum that would be received by  
8 shareholder accounts if we used a proportional distribution. For  
9 example, under a 50-50 scenario, with 500 pounds minimum landings,  
10 account with shares would see between fifty and 11,000 pounds, and  
11 account without shares between twenty-seven and 7,600 pounds, and  
12 so these are just numbers that are based on 2023-2024 landings  
13 histories, to essentially pick the number of accounts and go  
14 forward, just to illustrate the different distribution methods.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and we've got a question here from Mr.  
17 Osborne.

18  
19 **MR. OSBORNE:** Yes, and, just so I'm understanding this, so the top  
20 -- The number with shares, that is including the average  
21 shareholder poundage right now, right, and so, the 1,937, that's  
22 including whatever, the 1,404, that number plus whatever the  
23 average number of shares that they currently have.

24  
25 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and this is just what the quota pool would  
26 distribute. I mean, whatever they own would be separate. Like,  
27 as Mr. Strelcheck mentioned, if, for example, you withheld 15  
28 percent of the increase, the remaining portion of the quota is  
29 going to be distributed according to the traditional approach,  
30 meaning based on your percentage of shares. This is just in  
31 addition to, yes.

32  
33 **MR. OSBORNE:** In addition. Okay. Gotcha.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.

36  
37 **MR. WALKER:** So, on the chart on the bottom, that's -- I'm assuming  
38 that the number at the beginning in each box is the number of  
39 vessels or permits that would qualify, and what is that number,  
40 the twenty-seven, fifteen, and ninety-one?

41  
42 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and that's the range, essentially, the lowest  
43 value and largest value, because, if you do proportionally, there  
44 are some folks who land let's say 550 pounds, but, in that same  
45 category, you have someone that has landed 20,000 pounds, and so,  
46 if you distribute proportionally based on landings, you are giving  
47 let's say forty-times more to the person landing 20,000, as opposed  
48 to someone who is landing 500 pounds, because the threshold is a

1 minimum value.

2

3 **MR. WALKER:** Okay. I've got you. Thank you for that clarification.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

6

7 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, just to add to this, you know, from my  
8 standpoint, it makes more sense to allocate proportionally,  
9 because of it being kind of commensurate, or consistent, with their  
10 landings.

11

12 You have the potential, if you allocate equally, where you may  
13 over-distribute quota to individuals that have very small  
14 landings, or under-distribute to those that have larger landings,  
15 right, and the other thing to point out is, the 50-50, versus 60-  
16 40 split, obviously, if you shift more toward those that have  
17 shareholdings, they're going to get, obviously, more quota pool  
18 than if you did a 60-40 split, where more of it is going toward  
19 those without shares.

20

21 The 60-40 is kind of consistent, commensurate, with what we're  
22 seeing right now in the red group for fishery, where 60 percent of  
23 the accounts are landing red grouper without shares and 40 percent  
24 with shares.

25

26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks Andy. Any more discussion here? Dr.  
27 Diagne.

28

29 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and not discussion, but, just for the record, to  
30 Mr. Sanchez, yes, typically in our amendments, it goes by actions  
31 in the environmental consequences, as you know, and you're right,  
32 because here there is a typo, and it's my fault, because it says  
33 Action 4.3, but, when you go to the effects, it jumps and it says  
34 4.4.1, and 4.4.2, and so, if you search for 4.1 or 2 or 3, you  
35 would not see it, and so we just looked now, and it's 4.4.1, rather  
36 than 4.3, and that's a typo that I've made in the numbering, and  
37 that would be corrected, but just to put it on the record.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Assane. Okay, and I'm going to  
40 look around the table and see if there's any appetite for selecting  
41 a preferred here, but we've got other opportunities to do it here.  
42 Captain Walker.

43

44 **MR. WALKER:** Based in part on what Andy said, I agree, and the  
45 fact that 60 percent of the red grouper guys that land red grouper  
46 don't own shares, I think 60 percent, Alternative 2 here in Action  
47 3, I would personally pick as my preferred.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Bernie, it looks like we're  
2 crafting a motion here. You don't need to do it right now. We  
3 have more time, if you want to stew on it. Okay. Take it back,  
4 Bernie, unless -- I'm going to look around the table to see if  
5 there's --

6  
7 **MR. WALKER:** I was just picking Alternative 2, but the options I  
8 need to think about a little bit more under Alternative 2, and so  
9 we'll do that later, and how about that?

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That's okay. We've got a little time here.  
12 All right, and so it doesn't look like there's appetite at the  
13 exact moment for selecting a preferred there. Dr. Diagne, I think  
14 you just have a few more slides left in this presentation.

15  
16 **DR. DIAGNE:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, and yes, and, at this point, I  
17 would like to turn it over to Dr. Stephen to go over the process  
18 and give also additional information relevant to the pool. Thank  
19 you.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Stephen.

22  
23 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** So, if we can go to the next slide, and so  
24 this is the way it would work within the IFQ system, and so just  
25 a reminder for how things currently work. We have red grouper  
26 allocation, and we also have the multiuse allocation, and so it's  
27 red grouper multiuse and gag grouper multiuse, and those are taken  
28 off the top of the red grouper and gag quota when we distribute  
29 the allocation, and so it doesn't change the shares, but how the  
30 shares are put into an allocation category does change.

31  
32 I would like to remind you that, currently, red grouper multiuse  
33 is set to zero, because gag is in a rebuilding plan. What we would  
34 do is add a new allocation category, when we're going through the  
35 quota pool program, that would be considered the red grouper quota  
36 pool, and so that quota would be non-transferable, and so there  
37 just in order to assist with the landings with it, and it could  
38 not be transferred to another account. If you have more than one  
39 vessel in your shareholder account, you can, obviously, change  
40 between those, but not between shareholder accounts.

41  
42 In the IFQ system, we have certain criteria that the system sets  
43 with regards to red grouper and the multiuse, and that is that the  
44 red grouper would have to be completely zeroed out in your accounts  
45 before you can land red grouper multiuse, and then that would have  
46 to be zeroed out before you could land gag grouper multiuse for a  
47 red grouper species, and so these are automatically built in the  
48 system.

1  
2 What we intend to do is do a similar process with the red grouper  
3 quota, and we would say that that allocation must be landed before  
4 your other red grouper allocation categories. This is not  
5 something the fisherman would have to worry about. The system  
6 would automatically determine it, and then we have our customer  
7 service, if they have any questions with how it's being used.

8  
9 In that process, once the red grouper quota pool allocation is  
10 released, at that point in time, then that must be landed before  
11 you land the other ones, and the idea behind that is that they're  
12 not going to use that in order to transfer more of the red grouper,  
13 or red grouper multiuse, in lieu of the quota pool.

14  
15 Because we are doing a quota pool, we will be subject to an appeals  
16 process. I've been talking with our appeals office. For this  
17 one, we intend to open an appeals for thirty days. All appeals  
18 must be submitted to the appeals office. Determinations would be  
19 solely based on the IFQ landings, landings in the IFQ system, and  
20 so it does not take into consideration trip tickets or coastal  
21 logbooks. It would just be the IFQ landings. It's not on here,  
22 but it would also include permits, since you need to have a valid  
23 permit, as we mentioned in the alternatives.

24  
25 Because this is a pilot study, we're not going to consider  
26 hardships as part of the appeals process, and there is a link here  
27 if you want to find out a little bit more about appeals, and we'll  
28 be fleshing that out a little bit more in the document as we're  
29 coming along.

30  
31 The reason I stressed when the red grouper quota pool would be  
32 released is because of the expected timelines for when we initiate  
33 the quota pool, and so, to remind everyone, on January 1 of each  
34 year, we released our regular IFQ quota, and so that means that  
35 the red grouper accounts with shares would get their allocation  
36 based on that reduced total quota for them, and so minus the quota  
37 pool allocation.

38  
39 We will distribute the multiuse allocation for gag, because, again,  
40 red grouper would be set to zero at this point in time, based on  
41 the full quotas. Within the IFQ system, you have fifteen days to  
42 submit any landing corrections to your landing submissions. That  
43 means we could not start our calculations until January 15 for who  
44 would be qualifying for the quota pools. That would be the last  
45 day that they could submit their corrections.

46  
47 We would take the time between January, mid-January to the end of  
48 January, to calculate out how much each person would get for the

1 quota pool. We hope to intend to notify all the participants who  
2 are eligible of their expected distribution by February 1. That  
3 would be done through the IFQ system.

4  
5 We haven't quite figured out exactly how we're doing it, but you  
6 would be able to log in and either look at a view or have a message  
7 waiting for you that would tell you your amount. That would be  
8 critical if you wanted to appeal, and so that's the start of when  
9 you're knowing what information you have.

10  
11 We then, between February 2 to 15, and I give a little range of  
12 dates there, because it might depend on how long it takes for us  
13 to release it, and the calculations we're doing, and we would be  
14 distributing the allocation from the quota pool, minus the  
15 percentage that we held back for the appeals. Because of the  
16 thirty-day appeal deadline, they would have between March 2 or 3,  
17 again adjusting for weekends, where they could submit their  
18 appeals.

19  
20 Then the appeals office will begin working on that, and they would  
21 give us their determination sometime within March. After we have  
22 the determination, we will adjust for any appeals, and then  
23 distribute the remaining quota pool allocation that we held back  
24 for the appeals by April 1, and so I kind of want to point out,  
25 because we're doing the two-year landings, we need time to make  
26 those calculations, and so we can't know that in advance, because  
27 we're taking up to the full December landings of the year before,  
28 and I believe that's our last slide.

29  
30 Sorry, no, and I forgot about the multiuse. Right, and so I just  
31 want to go over the multiuse, because this is a little bit of a  
32 confusing concept for everyone.

33  
34 In 2013, we did set formulas that are used to calculate our  
35 multiuse, and so that is used between what the ACL is and what the  
36 commercial quotas are for both red grouper and gag. These  
37 allocations and formulas are set so that we never exceed the  
38 commercial ACL in each one of the species, and, again, as I  
39 mentioned before, if a stock is under a rebuilding plan, then  
40 there's no multiuse for the other species. Say gag is under a  
41 rebuilding plan, and red grouper multiuse is expected to be zero  
42 for all three years of this pilot study, and here are the formulas  
43 for it.

44  
45 One thing we had to do is think about how we were creating that  
46 multiuse, because we were taking off the top of the commercial  
47 quota for the quota pool. After doing the math on it, we will be  
48 using the full commercial quota, and so what would be distributed

1 through shares, plus what would be distributed through the quota  
2 pool, in our calculations, and this is so that we can ensure that  
3 gag does not run over its commercial ACL.  
4

5 You can see here what the calculations are of the expected gag  
6 multiuse would be for each of the years coming up, and so it's  
7 around 79 percent, and then it drops to about 75.7 percent of the  
8 gag will be converted over to gag multiuse.  
9

10 I will remind you that we had one year where all of gag was  
11 converted fully over to multiuse, because of differences between  
12 the red grouper and gag quotas, and I think I have one more slide.  
13 No, and that was it.  
14

15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen. Appreciate that. Any  
16 questions for Dr. Stephen? Okay. Not seeing any, Assane, and  
17 thank you, Dr. Stephen, and do you want to roll through the  
18 document? Is that the preferred action here, and that's next on  
19 the list.  
20

21 **DR. DIAGNE:** No. Given that we covered the actions and the key  
22 points here, the document is just for background. Thank you.  
23

24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. That sounds great. I will say -- We've  
25 got a couple of hands up here, and we do have two actions that we  
26 do not have preferred selected for there, and so I would just note  
27 that for folks, that there is a timing component to this, if we  
28 wanted to move forward on this, and so I would put that for you  
29 for Full Council tomorrow, if this is the direction we want to go,  
30 but Mr. Strelcheck.  
31

32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, C.J., and that was one of the points I  
33 was going to make, and so, earlier on, John mentioned about the AP  
34 meeting, and that's the beauty of this process, is we get great  
35 input from our advisory panel.  
36

37 I recognize that we may get some input that we haven't considered  
38 for this amendment, but, right now, the track we're on would be to  
39 take this out for public hearing, have an AP meeting, and then  
40 come back for final action. Obviously, we can decide whether to  
41 take final action in June or not, based on some of the input we  
42 receive, but I do recommend that we select preferreds at this  
43 meeting, so that we can continue developing the document.  
44

45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and thanks, Andy. I would agree. Okay,  
46 and so just keep that in mind, folks, when we get to Full Council  
47 tomorrow. All right. Mr. Sanchez.  
48

1 **MR. SANCHEZ:** One question, and not really related to the document  
2 items per se, but being that it is, in my mind, a substantial  
3 change from the current grouper-tilefish IFQ program, I would like,  
4 I guess, a legal determination on is that substantial change enough  
5 to warrant a referendum vote?  
6

7 **MS. LEVY:** We grappled with this long ago with red snapper, and so  
8 we're not -- The vote is required when establishing a new IFQ,  
9 right, limited access privilege program. We're not doing that  
10 here. You're establishing a limited three-year pilot program,  
11 where you're setting aside a small percentage of the quota for a  
12 different type of redistribution. That's not establishing a new  
13 program.  
14

15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** To that point, Mr. Sanchez, and then Mr. Anson.  
16

17 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I'm not an attorney, you know, and we'll  
18 preface it with that, but I thought one of the values for  
19 determining is, if you're materially altering a program, even an  
20 existing program, then it might warrant a referendum. I don't  
21 know that we're not doing that here. Now, I don't know if there's  
22 other legal nuances which justify it. Again, I'm not an attorney.  
23  
24

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

27 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I had a question that was similar, I guess,  
28 in nature, relative to the program, and that is, for the options  
29 here, the actions, relative to the distribution of shares, there  
30 is a mention in the calculation for those that have shares as well  
31 as distribution percentage of the quota pool to go to those who  
32 have no shares, and so is there a requirement to have, in one of  
33 the actions, a distribution to those that have shares, since the  
34 goal of this is to try to just get quota to those that don't have  
35 shares, or do we have to have those participants in the fishery  
36 represented that have shares as part of the alternatives?  
37

38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Go ahead, Mara.  
39

40 **MS. LEVY:** I thought the goal was to get the quota pool into the  
41 hands of those that are landing red grouper, whether they have  
42 shares -- I mean, that's up to you, right, but, if that's the goal,  
43 then both categories land red grouper.  
44

45 **MR. ANSON:** So I guess I wasn't clear enough. So, those that have  
46 shares that are landing, I mean, is there -- I guess, just to try  
47 to, again, maximize the number of quota that goes to those that  
48 don't have shares, but are landing them, and they're not owning

1 shares, but they have allocation for that particular year. It's  
2 a nuance, but I was just curious if there was a restriction that  
3 would limit that, or include that, or have them included in the  
4 calculation.

5  
6 **MS. LEVY:** I don't think there's a legal restriction if you develop  
7 the rationale, and there's the record supporting that.

8  
9 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** A quick question, Mara. Maybe, since we have  
12 some new council members that weren't here in the process, can you  
13 kind of define what the referendum vote kind of is in general?

14  
15 **MS. LEVY:** So there are two provisions in the Magnuson Act that  
16 apply to the Gulf. One is red snapper specific, which requires a  
17 referendum. The other one is just limited access privilege  
18 program, IFQ, actually, IFQ specific, and it basically says that  
19 a council may not submit, and the Secretary may not approve or  
20 implement, a fishery management plan or amendment that creates an  
21 individual fishing program unless such system has been approved by  
22 more than two-thirds of those voting in a referendum of eligible  
23 permit holders, and then it goes on to describe what's required  
24 for the Gulf of Mexico. Only those participants who have  
25 substantially fished the species can be part of the referendum,  
26 but it specifically says "creates an IFQ system", and there was a  
27 referendum when this was created.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that, Mara. I appreciate it.  
30 Dr. Allen, you're next.

31  
32 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I really liked the  
33 idea of trying to do a pilot program, and trying to do something  
34 that would help fishermen that are trying to get into the fishery.  
35 I guess my question, at a ten-thousand-foot view, is I'm having  
36 trouble separating out which of these options I think would be the  
37 best option, and I think that's mainly because I'm trying to figure  
38 out what success would look like.

39  
40 Like, at the end of this, like what would be the best-case scenario  
41 for the number of fishers that it would help, you know, and would  
42 it be some measure of recruitment of new entrants into the fishery  
43 that were just getting started, and now we've enabled them to do  
44 it, and I'm trying to think of -- It would make sense, to me, to  
45 have that in mind for us.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

48

1 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, Mike, that's great, and I'm thinking  
2 along the same lines, right, and I don't think it's fully clear  
3 even to me. I've had some good conversations with some commercial  
4 industry members, and one of the things that we need to really  
5 work toward is fleshing out some of the key metrics for evaluating  
6 this pilot program.

7  
8 We've floated some ideas, and certainly that's kind of a work in  
9 progress, but I would love to, obviously, hear from anyone that's  
10 giving public comment, or council members, if you have specific  
11 ideas on metrics. In my view, obviously, we need to kind of anchor  
12 this, in terms of the purpose and need for the amendment, right,  
13 and why we're doing this, and that, obviously, then kind of guides  
14 the decisions about the preferred alternatives and how we're trying  
15 to maximize achieving that purpose and need.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Some good discussion on 63 there. Mr.  
18 Strelcheck, more discussion?

19  
20 **MR. STRELCHECK:** One more request, and I realized that Full Council  
21 is tomorrow. I don't know if Assane or Jessica could put together  
22 a table similar to slide 11 by tomorrow that reflects John  
23 Sanchez's motion, but it would be good, I think, to see the  
24 distribution of quota under that new Alternative 4 that was  
25 recommended.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** You tracking that, Assane and Jessica?

28  
29 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes.

30  
31 **DR. STEPHEN:** We'll try to get that.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. I think we're okay on 63. Good  
34 discussion, but we do have another somewhat related item. Assane,  
35 do you want to walk through the action guide for this, or Ms. Levy?

36  
37 **MS. LEVY:** Well, we can do it after the action guide. I just  
38 wanted to talk a little bit about why this is showing up in the  
39 briefing book.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think that that makes a lot of sense. That  
42 will answer some questions here, but, first, let's do the action  
43 guide, and then I'll go straight to you.

44  
45 **FINAL ACTION: ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK ACTION: RED GROUPER IFQ SET-**  
46 **ASIDE QUOTA HOLDBACK**

47  
48 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you. Final Action: Abbreviated Framework Action

1 for the Red Grouper IFQ Set-Aside, or Quota Holdback, and so staff  
2 will first present written public comments, and that would be Ms.  
3 Muehlstein, received the relative to this abbreviated framework  
4 action.

5  
6 This action is intended to facilitate the timely implementation of  
7 the amendment that we just discussed. After the discussion, SERO  
8 staff will review the codified text of the proposed regulation.  
9 The committee should review the information presented, and discuss  
10 it, and, if the committee finds the proposed regulation to be  
11 necessary and appropriate, recommend that the council take final  
12 action on the document and transmit to the Secretary for  
13 implementation.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Are we tracking why -- I'm going to go  
16 to Ms. Levy here for tracking why this is coming forward right now  
17 with an abbreviated framework action. Assane hit on some things  
18 there, but go ahead, Ms. Levy.

19  
20 **MS. LEVY:** Right, and so, I mean, I wanted to touch on it, because  
21 it's a little unusual, because it's in the briefing book before  
22 you've asked for it, and so the first thing that you would need to  
23 do is ask for it, right?

24  
25 Because the framework procedure allows you to initiate the process,  
26 and inform the public of issues, and develop potential  
27 alternatives, and just develop it and discuss it at least one  
28 public meeting, right, we wanted to have the information in the  
29 briefing book that would allow you to do that at this meeting if  
30 you wanted to.

31  
32 It was not meant to presume that you would do it, or that you would  
33 ask for it, but, instead of just talking about it with no  
34 information, we wanted to provide you with the information and  
35 what the request or document would look like.

36  
37 In that vein, I guess I would suggest deviating a little bit from  
38 what's in the action guide, deciding whether you want to request  
39 this, soliciting public comment on it during the public comment  
40 period, and then deciding whether you want to approve it for  
41 submission, right, and so, instead of doing that in committee,  
42 because nobody has had a chance to public comment on it, I would  
43 suggest waiting to take that part of the action, if you want to  
44 move forward, until after you've heard public comment. Thank you.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, I certainly would agree with waiting until  
47 we hear public comment. Dr. Diagne, just a question for me, and  
48 so, if we move forward on final action, this is presuming that

1 we're moving forward on 63, correct?

2

3 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. If, for example, 63 became, I mean, moot, if we  
4 stopped work on 63, none of this would be needed.

5

6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and so I just wanted to make that point  
7 clear to everyone, kind of how these things are a little bit linked  
8 there, but I agree with Ms. Levy, you know, in terms of like the  
9 process-wise, you know, figuring out whether this is something  
10 that we want, listening to public comment here, and then we could  
11 potentially move forward on this following kind of our Amendment  
12 63 discussion, and so order of operations there, and I know it's  
13 not necessarily the most straightforward thing, but okay. All  
14 right. With that, I think we're okay. I'm going to turn it over  
15 for public comments received.

16

17 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you. Okay, and so, sort of based on what  
18 Mara just said, we published the document in the briefing book on  
19 March 31. That day, we also wrote an article, which is a council  
20 meeting preview article, that you're probably familiar with. We  
21 pushed that out not only on our website, but also on our social  
22 media, and what we endeavored to do was gather any comments on  
23 this in short order of notice.

24

25 What we did was link the comments to Amendment 63, rather than  
26 have a standalone comment form, and so those comments are going  
27 directly to the Amendment 63 record as well, and so we did receive  
28 one comment this week that was germane to this specific quota  
29 retention for 2027.

30

31 That comment specified that it was not necessarily opposed to the  
32 concept of a pilot program. However, it did caution that there  
33 was significant concerns about Amendment 63 itself, including  
34 ensuring that actions and alternatives do support the purpose and  
35 need of the document and ensuring that unintended and potentially  
36 harmful consequences to the IFQ program are avoided through  
37 Amendment 63, and so that's all I have so far.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Emily. Any questions about that  
40 one comment? Thanks, Emily. Okay, and so, next up, Dr. Diagne,  
41 or Dr. Stephen, do we want to walk through the document, to kind  
42 of roll through what this final action would be like?

43

44 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. I'll discuss it, and, in keeping with the  
45 remarks of Ms. Levy, I guess we will just present the two options,  
46 explain what they would do, and leave it at that, and so, Bernie,  
47 if you would open the abbreviated framework and just go on the  
48 page 2, management options, and above that is the purpose and need.

1 Okay, and let's start with 1.2, the purpose and need, and so if  
2 you could scroll I would say down a little bit. All right. Thank  
3 you.  
4

5 The purpose of this action is to withhold a percentage of the 2027  
6 commercial quota for red grouper equivalent to the portion of the  
7 quota proposed for the quota pool in Amendment 63, which we just  
8 discussed.  
9

10 The need for this framework action is to allow NMFS to implement  
11 63 if approved in 2027. NMFS annually distributes red grouper  
12 commercial quota around January 1 for that fishing year. For  
13 Amendment 63 to be implemented in 2027, NMFS would have to withhold  
14 the percentage of the quota on January 1 that would be necessary  
15 to implement the quota. If not, 63 would have to be final, done,  
16 and I guess packaged, by December 31, and so that's the purpose  
17 and need for this action.  
18

19 In terms of management options, Bernie, please scroll down a little  
20 bit, so that we can see Options 1 and 2. There is a no action  
21 alternative, which essentially would distribute 100 percent of the  
22 2027 quota to account shareholders on January 1 of 2027, and Option  
23 2 would provide the Regional Administrator the authority to  
24 withhold the percentage of the red grouper commercial quota  
25 necessary to implement Amendment 63 during the 2023 fishing year.  
26 If Amendment 63 is not implemented by July 1, 2027, the withheld  
27 quota would be distributed to the shareholder, and so, essentially,  
28 that's a six-month stopgap measure. If it doesn't happen, then  
29 the quota would be returned, and so these are the two options, and  
30 I will stop here, and maybe someone would want to add to the  
31 discussion.  
32

33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We've got a few things on the table  
34 here to discuss. I'm going to go to Ms. Levy first, then Dr.  
35 Allen.  
36

37 **MS. LEVY:** Yes, and so it would be helpful to discuss if you want  
38 to entertain this, and then, also, that July 1 date, that was kind  
39 of a placeholder. It was not meant to be the date certain. I  
40 think that the Fisheries Service might have some indication about  
41 a different date, and so, whatever date is appropriate to put in  
42 there where you would release it if Amendment 63 was not  
43 implemented, that's up for discussion.  
44

45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Allen.  
46

47 **DR. ALLEN:** Sorry, and just repeating kind of my comment earlier,  
48 and so the purpose and need here doesn't really define the goals

1 of the program, or, you know, how we would measure success, and so  
2 that's what I'm still struggling with.

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

5  
6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so 63 really would be the amendment that  
7 would need to include the metrics for success, and so the challenge  
8 we have before us is, if we take action on 63 in June or later,  
9 the timeline that we've typically worked off for rulemaking is  
10 about a six-month time period, which runs us right up against the  
11 start of the next fishing year, if all things go as it has typically  
12 gone.

13  
14 Rulemaking has been taking longer. We expect it will bleed into  
15 2027, and so, rather than releasing the quota at the start of the  
16 year, and not being able to pull it back, this gives us the ability  
17 to hold onto that quota for the quota pool program and distribute  
18 it later in the year, right?

19  
20 As Mara indicated, July 1 was a placeholder. We've certainly had  
21 some conversation about the timing of that, and how it interfaces  
22 with the metrics you're talking about, because you could -- There's  
23 a couple of benefits and a drawback, in my view.

24  
25 The benefit of allowing this to go later in the year is you have  
26 the greater likelihood that it will be implemented in 2027. You  
27 also have the ability to kind of work out some kinks, in terms of  
28 implementation in 2027, but, the later it goes, in my view, the  
29 drawback is you're not going to necessarily have a full year to  
30 evaluate the metrics for success or failure of the pilot, and so  
31 it's kind of like, that first burn-in year for that pilot study,  
32 that we would set ourselves up for better success in 2028 and 2029,  
33 but I see this as a necessary step, if we're going to try to get  
34 something in place next year, but in terms of the timing of how  
35 late it goes is the question.

36  
37 **DR. ALLEN:** Okay. I see that. Thank you. Thank you, Andy.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any prospective from folks around the table?  
40 Mr. Anson.

41  
42 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so, Andy, you mentioned six months, once the  
43 council approves, in order for it to be implemented, and so we can  
44 just kind of then use six months plus whatever timetable we  
45 determine the council thinks it might be able to be approved, in  
46 order to make that date, and, you know, I recognize your point  
47 about trying to maximize the amount of days within the year that  
48 the quota could be used, but, you know, you layer on top of that,

1 you know, hurricanes and such, and so I'm just concerned with the  
2 July 1, and that's -- Here we are, and we're fourteen months out,  
3 and July 1 seems like it's a little conservative, I guess, or  
4 liberal, depending upon how you want to look at it, and so I'm  
5 thinking more along the lines of potentially April 1, and is that  
6 doable?

7  
8 **MR. STRELCHECK:** To be determined, and so I'm trying to choose my  
9 words cautiously. So there's a lot of steps, obviously, in the  
10 rulemaking process, and so, once you take final action and approve  
11 an amendment, council staff will work with us and Mara to finalize  
12 the amendment, and/or framework action, or abbreviated framework,  
13 and submit it to us.

14  
15 That then goes into rulemaking, right, and so my six-month  
16 timeframe comment was -- That's kind of the typical what we would  
17 predict in terms of a rulemaking process. Right now there's far  
18 less predictability. It is taking longer for certain rules, and  
19 so the fourteen-month -- Yes, I would certainly hope we could get  
20 something in place well before then, but, the more you shorten  
21 that time period, the risk goes up of whether or not we would be  
22 able to implement something. When we hold back quota for the IFQ  
23 program, we release it June 1 if we're not able to get a rulemaking  
24 in place, and so this is a month later than that, at least as  
25 proposed in the --

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Something to chew on there. Captain Walker.

28  
29 **MR. WALKER:** I think I would be in favor of Option 2, because I  
30 know that, essentially, you're kind of saying yes or no, because,  
31 if that quota goes out the first of the year as normal, then none  
32 of this would really even be applicable. As Andy said, you can't  
33 take it back once it's out there, and so at least Option 2 would,  
34 you know, allow flexibility, if you will, but, once quota goes  
35 out, you can't take it back, and you can't change a plan or anything  
36 like that, and that would be January 1, and so it does seem like,  
37 if we're going to do something with this, we have some motivation  
38 to keep it going.

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

41  
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I've been talking with Jessica about  
43 this before the meeting, and, although it's still a little  
44 conservative, I think May 1 probably would be more ideal. It still  
45 leaves eight months of the fishing season, right, and it also gives  
46 us some time into 2027 to implement the rulemaking, in the event  
47 the rulemaking is delayed, and so I would just put that as an  
48 option for consideration. If we get the rule done faster, then

1 we'll release the quota as soon as we can, right, and it could be  
2 well before May 1.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Andy. I think that, obviously, is the  
5 preferable option there, is as soon as possible, and I kind of  
6 agree with Kevin and Andy, that that kind of middle-of-the-road  
7 approach there, that May, definitely would be better. Mr. Sanchez.

8  
9 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I'm real curious to hear from the public on  
10 this tomorrow and see what -- Then guide us into what we're going  
11 to pick here.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes. Absolutely. Dr. Banks.

14  
15 **DR. BANKS:** Andy, if the typical timeline is June 1, why deviate  
16 from June 1 and go July or May? Just questioning the logic there.

17  
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So I think it depends on what our goals are for  
19 the quota pool program, but, to me, the view is we want to try to  
20 get this in the hands of recipients as early in the season as  
21 possible, especially those that are non-shareholders, and so, to  
22 me, aligning it with the earlier in the season the better, but we  
23 could certainly go with June 1. There's nothing magical about May  
24 1 or July 1. I'm just trying to get something in place as quickly  
25 as possible, and this also gives us kind of a target date to try  
26 to get the rulemaking through by.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Mr. Anson.

29  
30 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so, picking up on what John said about letting  
31 the public comment, and what Mara had said relative to the timing  
32 and what this meeting means for the process, I think normally we  
33 would set a preferred, and it would simulate some conversation,  
34 I think, if we did that, and so I would just like to offer another  
35 option in the document, and that would be to just -- Bernie, if  
36 you copy Option 2's text there.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Andy has got something for you real quick,  
39 Kevin.

40  
41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, since this is the first time you're  
42 seeing the document, we don't necessarily have to have multiple  
43 options here, and so, if you wanted to change Option 2, that would  
44 be my recommendation, for simplicity.

45  
46 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I was just thinking if there were still folks  
47 that were leaning on the July 1 date, and I was just going to offer  
48 another option to put May 1, and so more options that I was thinking

1 would be better, and I was going to -- To make it real easy then,  
2 to add this as the preferred, the new option.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Motion on the table. A question before,  
5 procedural. Dr. Simmons.

6  
7 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, Mr. Chair, and just a procedural  
8 question. So, Ms. Levy, did you say that the council needed to  
9 ask for this first, or can we go ahead and make changes for it,  
10 and make it all one? Are we covered there?

11  
12 **MS. LEVY:** Yes, and, I mean, I think, as it's one process, right,  
13 and like you're asking for it, deciding what you want to do, and  
14 then deciding to submit it. Like I said, this document was just  
15 here to give you information, so that you can have the discussion.  
16 How it's actually worded in there, I mean, ultimately, you could  
17 just say this is what we want to request, and it could even be,  
18 quote, a letter, but this is the way we do them, and then we try  
19 to incorporate everything into this document, and so I don't think  
20 there's any prescribed way that you have to do it. If you want to  
21 put different options in there, that's fine, so that people can  
22 see what you're considering.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thanks for that. Yes, and, honestly,  
25 I think, even if we're adding a different option, that's almost  
26 like we're advocating for its need, right, and, obviously this  
27 would be the vehicle that we would need, and so let me just formally  
28 state that, that we are requesting something like this, but, all  
29 right, Kevin, back to you. I think we need a second here, if you  
30 wanted to read that motion.

31  
32 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so I'm just trying to -- I'll tell you what.  
33 I take back my preferred statement, and so I would just like to -  
34 - That's my motion.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right, and I think we're cool. We don't  
37 have the preferred in there, and so do we have a second for Kevin's  
38 motion? Second from Captain Frady. All right. Do we have any  
39 discussion on the motion on the table? It's basically just  
40 changing it to May 1. **Do we have any opposition to the motion?**  
41 **Seeing none, the motion carries.**

42  
43 Okay, and so now we'll have some items to present, to show, and  
44 we're hoping for public comment to be received on that during the  
45 comment session tomorrow. Mr. Anson, do you have anything else?

46  
47 **MR. ANSON:** You addressed my thought, and so, if you're comfortable  
48 with that, Mr. Chair, as far as how we proceed, and certainly we

1 have folks here in the audience that are listening in, and those  
2 that are listening in from elsewhere, and just the urgency of it  
3 and such was -- That's why I was thinking of the preferred, but we  
4 can leave without it, identifying a preferred. Thank you.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that sounds good, and I honestly --  
7 Just let's make that point loud and clear. This will serve as the  
8 kind of public comment session for this item here, and so we do  
9 want to receive public comment explicitly on this topic here. Ms.  
10 Levy.

11  
12 **MS. LEVY:** Yes, and just to note, for folks that are looking in  
13 the document, under the alternatives in the discussion is  
14 essentially the table that comes from 63 that shows the various  
15 options for what the quota pool would hold, which is what you would  
16 be holding back. It does not include the new Alternative 4 that  
17 you just put into 63, and so just -- I mean, this is really going  
18 to mirror what you pick in 63. The table is based on what was in  
19 there at the time this was developed.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Any further -- Mr. Anson.

22  
23 **MR. ANSON:** So I'm just thinking about -- These don't happen very  
24 often, fortunately, these types of documents, and what the council  
25 needs to do, but I'm just wondering -- You made a comment more  
26 about it could be just a letter from the council to the agency, as  
27 far as conveying our wishes, and so I'm just looking to staff and  
28 such, you know, to make a little note, a footnote, for these types  
29 of things that -- I appreciate all the work in the background that  
30 went into it, but it was maybe a little bit more of a lift than it  
31 needed to be, and so that's all. Thank you.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Ms. Levy.

34  
35 **MS. LEVY:** Right, and so, I mean, the process says, for all  
36 framework actions, the council will provide a letter of memo or  
37 the completed framework document along with -- We have done it in  
38 the past. We did one where it was a letter, and it was a very  
39 minor change you were making. We just talked about it. I think,  
40 for this kind of thing, it's helpful maybe to have the document,  
41 so it's very clear what you're talking about, but, again, I think  
42 you have some flexibility, and it's not going to be -- Like, for  
43 NEPA purposes, it's not even an environmental assessment. It's  
44 not an EIS or anything like that, and so it's not going to have  
45 like Chapter 4 and all that stuff in it.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Any other discussion before we  
48 wrap up this topic here, and we'll certainly get more on this

1 tomorrow. We'll have to make some decision points for everyone,  
2 and so keep that in mind.

3  
4 All right. We're going to move on to the next item. I do think  
5 that we've got time, but we're going to do a little switcheroo in  
6 the agenda. J.D., do you want to highlight anything there?

7  
8 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes, and I was going to let you know, Dr. Sweetman,  
9 that Mr. Rindone is going to go through the action guide, and Mr.  
10 Moncrief is ready to tackle Item Number X. Dr. Sweetman.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so this is going to be the February  
13 2026 SSC meeting presentation, but, before we get to that, just a  
14 quick action guide check from Mr. Rindone.

15  
16 **MR. RINDONE:** (Mr. Rindone's comment is not audible on the  
17 recording.)

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Trevor is going to talk about the meeting.  
20 Great. All right. Cool.

21  
22 **FEBRUARY 2026 SSC MEETING PRESENTATION AND MEETING SUMMARY**

23  
24 **MR. RINDONE:** So Trevor is back to talk about SSC discussions from  
25 the February meeting. It's going to include the greater amberjack  
26 interim analysis, which used G-FISHER. He'll also talk about  
27 emerging research on projecting recreational fishing season  
28 duration for gag and discard mortality for reef fish, including  
29 gray triggerfish. Also economic effects of mid-year IFQ quota  
30 changes and a check-in about the progress of the gray triggerfish  
31 stock assessment, and, lastly, he'll talk about stakeholder  
32 participatory workshops that were done by the Science Center, and  
33 you guys should ask him questions and make recommendations as  
34 appropriate.

35  
36 **MR. TREVOR MONCRIEF:** Yes, and I will say feel free to interrupt,  
37 or ask questions, because we're going to go through about eight  
38 different subjects here. The first one we're going to cover, this  
39 is the MSE evaluation that Dr. Walter plugged yesterday on the  
40 essentially recalibrations and recreational landings.

41  
42 This kind of started -- The effort started with Spanish mackerel.  
43 We got it I think a couple of years ago, if my memory serves me  
44 correct, but, essentially, the premise is what we talked about  
45 yesterday. There might be an overcounting of recreational trips  
46 with the telescoping bias and the question order study coming into  
47 play, and so the Science Center essentially examined four different  
48 scenarios to determine what kind of bias that would have on outputs

1 and the ability to really track these populations and do  
2 assessments.

3  
4 Each of the focus of the treatments was essentially either the  
5 landings were known, treated as true, or there were some level of  
6 variable bias, some of those more extreme than the other, and the  
7 gist of this is that, in scenarios with consistency in the  
8 treatment of catches, and so they were known, or that the bias was  
9 constant, the -- Essentially, we were able to reflect fishery and  
10 population dynamics.

11  
12 However, in scenarios where the recreational catches were more  
13 variable, and I think that one of the scenarios was 40 to 80  
14 percent fluctuation throughout time, along with the combination of  
15 an uncalibrated time series, where essentially you just change the  
16 currency midstream, management advice was much worse, and it wasn't  
17 able to achieve the goals that they were out to try to achieve.

18  
19 How this essentially applies to everyone at the table is that  
20 accurate catch data will lead to a better informed catch limits,  
21 and we're going to have to go through that process, it seems like  
22 in multiple different iterations as things go on, and, obviously,  
23 we've got folks here that can answer more questions, if there are  
24 any more detailed questions about it. That was the first subject.

25  
26 This one had a little bit of conversation around it. This is the  
27 greater amberjack interim analysis and catch advice. We provided  
28 some figures here on the right, just to try to orient you all to  
29 where the discussion was, but, essentially, you all know this, and  
30 greater amberjack was found overfished in essentially every  
31 assessment since 2004. It's on the rebuilding plan, a future  
32 assessment plan.

33  
34 In this iteration, the G-FISHER video survey was used to estimate  
35 relative abundance over time. Essentially, the findings were there  
36 was no large-scale change in management advice, and really what  
37 the conversation centered around was really using this, using G-  
38 FISHER, as the index of relative abundance for the species, we  
39 might be missing what is a very pertinent picture when it comes to  
40 this stock.

41  
42 If you look at the top-right map, that's essentially the sampling  
43 distribution. Red is where amberjack were observed. As you can  
44 see, there's a paucity data around the river, and really offshore  
45 around Louisiana, where there are a fair amount of amberjack, and  
46 then there was some coverage on the banks to the west, but also  
47 the lack of coverage moving into the shallower areas, like there  
48 is over on the Florida shelf, and all of that is it's readily

1 available for amberjack.

2  
3 We know there's a large amount of amberjack there, and so the  
4 question is, is there a lot more signal coming on the east side of  
5 the Gulf than on the west side of the Gulf, and, if there is  
6 differing signals, or some change that's not being seen, just  
7 simply by the coverage of the survey overall, along with,  
8 obviously, the visual issues of dropping a camera down to the  
9 bottom around the river in the western part of the Gulf.

10  
11 In general, I mean, poor data quality in some aspects, and great  
12 in others, makes providing management advice difficult for what we  
13 consider to be a Gulf-wide stock, and you can see, there on the  
14 bottom-right the overall index, and, I mean, overall, if you look,  
15 for a decade, it's relatively flat.

16  
17 All right. Next, we had some discussion about stakeholder  
18 participatory workshops, scientists who are using workshops to  
19 gather fishermen's input on various management-focused topics.  
20 Really, the entire premise of this was to try to reach out of who  
21 is normally engaged, or involved in these, and try to get answers  
22 from the general public.

23  
24 I would say that the SSC discussion really focused on how do you  
25 get a representative sample of these groups, or individuals, to  
26 make sure that whatever advice or information they are providing  
27 is truly representative of the Gulf-wide or, I mean, even the stock  
28 distribution.

29  
30 So, obviously, you would -- You know, a Florida-centric stock, you  
31 would focus on getting the distribution of Florida, but, a Gulf-  
32 wide stock, you would like to have some distribution around the  
33 Gulf, and would it be the amount of each licensed population, or  
34 whatever else, and, essentially, that's where a lot of these  
35 questions were centered around.

36  
37 It's just figuring out, if you are getting this information, how  
38 do you basically parse out the noise, to get what is the true  
39 signal, and what is representative of the fishery as a whole, and  
40 the gist of it is that the participatory models aid in reducing  
41 assessment bias, because you're getting some answers to some  
42 questions that are really from on-the-water experience, and that  
43 increased input leads to more trusted management decisions as the  
44 assessment process goes through.

45  
46 We had Dr. Hyman, and so he provided some information on gray  
47 triggerfish discord mortality. This one was fairly interesting.  
48 3,700 gray triggerfish were tagged by the charter fleet. This was

1 a Florida-centric study, with their group, but, essentially, the  
2 key here is that discard mortality was estimated around 31 to 35  
3 percent, which is fairly substantial.

4  
5 Obviously, depth and water temperature are key survival factors,  
6 and then we had some discussion that fish are being released in  
7 deeper water over time, and that's that figure in the bottom-  
8 right, and so you can see that, over time, discard mortality  
9 basically increased, and that was attributed to the fleet fishing  
10 in deeper water throughout that time series.

11  
12 You can see the seasonal distribution, discard mortality, and then  
13 the violin plots there by year of what was observed, and, really,  
14 this is -- It plays into the stock assessment and the discard  
15 mortality rates, and this one seemed to have a lot of somewhat  
16 novel information when it came down as far as, you know, what's  
17 going on with this species, and there was a lot of discussion  
18 around the table of, you know, why it is so high, some hypotheses  
19 as to, you know, what they're -- Where they sit in the phylogenetic  
20 tree, and what contributes to really why the answer was what it  
21 was, and so it was a good discussion all the way around the SSC.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** To that point, Trevor --

24  
25 **MR. MONCRIEF:** Go ahead.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** What was kind of some of the sentiment  
28 regarding some of those hypotheses that -- That number is high,  
29 and that's concerning.

30  
31 **MR. MONCRIEF:** Yes, and so, when you just look at -- They're fairly  
32 -- They talked about the life history, essentially the inability  
33 to be able to expel gas from the air bladder in a simple way, and  
34 then, you know, most of the time, in direct observation, the fish  
35 seems hardy, because it's -- You know, it's fairly leathery skin  
36 on the outside, and so it seems tough, but, a lot of the times,  
37 and this is what we had spoke to, is that the first thing you do  
38 --

39  
40 As soon as you touch that fish when it gets out of the water,  
41 you'll get the pop, and sometimes, if you're fishing in deeper  
42 water, and you've missed that, because it happened on the way up,  
43 and so there's this thought that everything is fine, but,  
44 internally, there's a lot of damage being done to that fish prior  
45 to even touching the hands of an angler or going back in the water.

46  
47 We talked about, you know, essentially the deeper side of it, and  
48 kind of related that to the charter fleet, which we have a fair

1 amount that are here, and, you know, there might be some, you know,  
2 desire to, you know, get outside of the crowd, fish alone, things  
3 like that, that could be driving that shift, but we didn't make  
4 too many assumptions on that side, just of what could have been  
5 contributing to it.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** It looks like we've got another one for you.  
8 Mr. Anson.

9  
10 **MR. ANSON:** Before we move on to the next topic, so Trevor, was  
11 this one study, or is this multiple studies, the data that was  
12 used?

13  
14 **MR. MONCRIEF:** So this was one, and it was from the Florida observer  
15 program, if I'm correct, and is that correct, Ryan? Yes, and so  
16 there was tagging associated with it. They gathered most of the  
17 information that they could. I think most of these were out of  
18 the Panama City area, if I'm correct. All right. Next slide.

19  
20 We had additional presentation by the same individual on pre-  
21 season forecasting for recreational fisheries. Really, it's a  
22 novel approach to predict how long the fishing season will last.  
23 Typically, what we've looked at is the year prior, and then  
24 projected out. This one actually looked at similar trends in  
25 previous years and tried to project out based on that.

26  
27 It was tested retrospectively on gag grouper seasons from 2015 to  
28 2024. It correctly predicted the 2025 gag season and stayed under  
29 the limits. It's more precise than the current season projection  
30 method, and the good thing about this one is that it's built to be  
31 plug-and-play for any species that we might want to apply it to,  
32 and, obviously, increased accuracy of the projections of  
33 recreational catch will really lead to maximized opportunity, and  
34 flexibility, when trying to determine these species, especially as  
35 we begin to constrain these with species like the example here.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think we've got a question for you. Dr.  
38 Allen.

39  
40 **DR. ALLEN:** Thanks, Trevor. I just wanted to emphasize on this.  
41 I thought this was a really interesting analysis, because it looked  
42 at how constraining the seasons, and expanding the seasons,  
43 influenced the effort and that effort contraction. What Dr. Hyman  
44 did here is a model that could be applied to -- Like you say, plug-  
45 and-play to other species, so we could make predictions about what  
46 will happen if you cut a season in half, or expand it by twice,  
47 and, you know, what's going to happen to the total effort in that  
48 amount of time, and so a very interesting analysis here.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I agree, and even -- Even more complex  
3 than that, it even considers like red snapper season overlap, with  
4 gag in particular, and so it's a pretty cool model. Back to you,  
5 Trevor.

6  
7 **MR. MONCRIEF:** Absolutely, and, yes, this one -- I mean, hopefully  
8 it plays out pretty well with the other species, and, you know,  
9 essentially what it relies on is some consistent response on the  
10 recreational side, as far as the estimates that are derived during  
11 a shortened season and everything else like that, which we know to  
12 be somewhat fluctuating at times, but, yes, this was a good one,  
13 and I think this is one that should be considered for a lot of  
14 these different species moving forward and building it out.

15  
16 We had a presentation on the economic effects of mid-year IFQ quota  
17 changes. This one was nice, because it gave the economic folks on  
18 the SSC -- You could see their eyes light up, and they were  
19 absolutely into it the entire time, and so we had mid-year quota  
20 increases can shift prices quickly.

21  
22 The example is a 1 percent rise in red snapper shifts lease prices  
23 by 0.68 percent, 68 percent. The large quota bumps can sharply  
24 drop lease values. These price drops obviously hurt sellers, but  
25 sometimes help small operators, and the premise of it was that  
26 some level of predictable quota changes might help participants  
27 plan better, and it might alleviate those large-scale  
28 fluctuations, and, as I said, the economists on the SSC had a lot  
29 of ideas.

30  
31 They were going back and forth about it, very interested in this  
32 topic overall, and gave some ideas of, you know, how this might be  
33 mitigated, and so I think, as this conversation continues on,  
34 they're a good group to tap into.

35  
36 All right. We had a check-in from Dr. Sagarese on the gray  
37 triggerfish, and this was the first one to have an SSC check-in  
38 before the review workshop, and it was good, because there was a  
39 few things they were looking for from the SSC directly that we  
40 were able to weigh-in on. Essentially, the high points are the  
41 ageing issues from the prior assessment were largely resolved.  
42 The new model uses updated catch survey and age data.

43  
44 We did vote to use a single Gulf-wide area model, and that  
45 justification was just based on the distribution of landings,  
46 biological, and all the other data. There's a little bit of an  
47 absence of that in the west, and so, essentially, what it would  
48 end up being is a two-area model that would function as a Gulf-

1 wide model, simply because you would be taking a lot of information  
2 from one and applying it to the other.

3  
4 Length-based selectivity was recommended for all fleets, and then  
5 there's a full review workshop scheduled for August of 2026 for  
6 the species. A lot of talk about triggerfish in this meeting.  
7 Next, which I think is the one I covered yesterday, but I'll take  
8 any additional questions you all might have on any of these  
9 subjects.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Trevor. Any questions for Trevor?  
12 Okay. I'm seeing none, and I appreciate your leadership, Trevor.  
13 Thank you very much. I think we're at lunch break, Mr. Chair.

14  
15 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Yes. We'll break for lunch,  
16 and we'll start back up at the scheduled time of 1:30.

17  
18 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on April 8, 2026.)

19  
20 - - -

21  
22 April 8, 2026

23  
24 WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

25  
26 - - -

27  
28 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council reconvened  
29 at The Battle House Renaissance in Mobile, Alabama on Wednesday  
30 afternoon, April 8, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman C.J.  
31 Sweetman.

32  
33 **MR. DUGAS:** Okay. Welcome back from lunch. We're going to dive  
34 right back into Reef Fish, and I'll turn it over to Dr. Sweetman,  
35 and we can go back up to the Agenda Item VIII. Thank you, Dr.  
36 Sweetman. Go ahead.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. Moving right  
39 along, get ready for some good discussions here. First up is Draft  
40 Options: Modifications to Red Snapper Private Recreational  
41 Accountability Measures, and I'll turn it over to Ms. Gardiner.

42  
43 **DRAFT OPTIONS: MODIFICATIONS TO RED SNAPPER PRIVATE RECREATIONAL**  
44 **ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES**

45  
46 **MS. SARAH GARDINER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so today I'm going  
47 to be providing an overview of some draft options that I put  
48 together for recreational red snapper flexibility measures, both

1 in-season and post-season.

2  
3 This presentation will review the history of previous carryover  
4 provision efforts that we've done in the Gulf, and also summarize  
5 work that has been done in South Atlantic for regional quota  
6 sharing by the South Atlantic Atlantic Migratory Group.

7  
8 Currently, I just want to highlight that, Gulf state private  
9 recreational red snapper landings, if they exceed their state  
10 specific annual catch limit in a fishing year, then, in the  
11 following year, the state ACL will be reduced by the amount of the  
12 average, and so that's our current post-season accountability  
13 measure. As you review this presentation, the committee should  
14 ask questions, make recommendations, and discuss next steps.

15  
16 Bernie, whenever we can pull up the presentation, we'll go to slide  
17 2, please. Before I get started today on summarizing the proposed  
18 flexibility measures, I just kind of wanted to provide a brief  
19 history and timeline, and so, back in April of 2024, the council  
20 requested staff develop a document to adjust for-hire red snapper  
21 season, which is separate from this, but also consider private  
22 recreational red snapper accountability measures.

23  
24 I brought back a presentation in January of 2025 that summarized  
25 the private recreational red snapper accountability measures. At  
26 that meeting, we had a pretty lengthy discussion about some  
27 additional flexibility measures that we wanted to bring forward  
28 for discussion. That was kind of put on the back burner a little  
29 bit, and so then we had an additional discussion at the January  
30 2026 meeting, with a specific council request to discuss additional  
31 flexibility measures, including carryover and/or ACL sharing  
32 amongst states.

33  
34 I just noted, but I wanted to put it here in the presentation for  
35 everyone to see, for Amendment 50, we currently have the post-  
36 season accountability measure being a payback provision where, if  
37 the state goes over their annual allocated ACL, then they pay back  
38 that overage in the subsequent year.

39  
40 Before I jump into flexibility measures, I use this figure kind of  
41 throughout the presentation for some hypothetical scenarios, and  
42 so I thought it would be helpful to walk through what our current  
43 catch limits are, and this is from the 2023 document, where it  
44 established our OFL at about 18,910,000 pounds, in CHTS units, and  
45 the ABC at 16,310,000 pounds, and the ABC is equal to the ACL, and  
46 so we currently only have a buffer of about 13.75 percent between  
47 our ABC and OFL, and so it's a relatively small buffer, and keep  
48 that in mind.

1  
2 From there, the allocation is broken out into 49 percent goes to  
3 the recreational ACL. Of that 49 percent, 57.7 percent goes to  
4 the private rec ACL, and that's divided up through the states, the  
5 five states. I want to highlight that no buffer exists currently  
6 between the private recreational ACL and allocation amongst  
7 states, and so the only buffer that we have within this current  
8 structure is between our ABC and our OFL.

9  
10 In bringing this forward, the council requested two flexibility  
11 measures, and so a carryover provision and a regional ACL sharing.  
12 The carryover provision, the framework for this was established in  
13 Amendment 50A, and so, if we wanted to move forward with this,  
14 and, you know, this framework was already kind of outlined. I  
15 have the exact text here on the screen, but you can also find it  
16 on page 14 of Amendment 50A, hyperlinked in the presentation.

17  
18 The other thing I'm going to be talking about today is the concept  
19 of regional ACL sharing, similar to the South Atlantic CMP  
20 Amendment 20B, Action 4, and then I have the regs for that  
21 hyperlinked in the presentation, if you want to take a look at  
22 that.

23  
24 I've broken the presentation up into two sections today, and I  
25 figure there will be some discussion throughout, and so please  
26 stop me as we move through the presentation. The first section is  
27 going to be detailing the history of carryover provisions in the  
28 Gulf, where I put together a draft Action 1, which would be looking  
29 at establishing carryover provisions for private rec red snapper,  
30 and then I have a hypothetical scenario where I look at carryover  
31 provisions based on historic landings.

32  
33 Section II of the presentation, I walk through this history of  
34 regional quota sharing in the South Atlantic, kind of how they  
35 approach this in-season management measure, and then I put together  
36 a draft Action 2 that would, modeled after the South Atlantic,  
37 look at ACL sharing in the Gulf, and then I have an example scenario  
38 for that.

39  
40 As we move through the presentation, we touch on these discussion  
41 points at the end, but I want folks to keep in mind whether or not  
42 we're interested in pursuing both of these actions in tandem with  
43 one another or if they are separate actions that should be treated  
44 as such.

45  
46 Additionally, I walk through the carryover provisions, and I think  
47 we should talk about what a carryover provision would look like  
48 without triggering any management consequences, and I have some

1 examples of that.

2

3 When we're talking about this regional quota sharing idea, it's  
4 currently written as an in-season management measure. I'm not  
5 sure if the committee or the council intended this to be -- For it  
6 to be post-season, but I think that's a discussion point, and then,  
7 as always, I want folks to consider the data units and the  
8 different state units, as we have some states transitioning to  
9 different state units and calibration ratios, and the stock  
10 assessment coming through, and a bunch of other things that lead  
11 into the pipeline for things that may be changing, and, lastly, do  
12 we want all states to opt-in or out and vote yes or no on this to  
13 participate?

14

15 So starting with carryover provision history, I wanted to provide  
16 a summary of what was done in 2019, for those folks who were not  
17 there, like myself, or who just wanted a little refresher, and so  
18 there was a generic carryover amendment that was put on hold in  
19 2019 that looked at carryover provisions for all of reef fish and  
20 CMP species.

21

22 There's a table here, and so it would apply to those in a rebuilding  
23 plan. It would not apply to those that are overfished, and, this  
24 generic carryover amendment, the way that it was written, it  
25 allowed NMFS to adjust the appropriate catch levels in accordance  
26 with any new ABC that is derived from the application of the  
27 carryover provisions.

28

29 Remember our ABC equals our ACL, and so it would allow NMFS to  
30 adjust our ACL, and our ABC concurrent, but, in order to do that,  
31 it required modification of the reef fish closed framework  
32 procedure, and so that would have to be an additional action, if  
33 we're looking to move forward with carryover provisions. That  
34 likely involves the SSC to a degree, in that there's some nuances  
35 there that I won't go too much into detail about.

36

37 During this carryover amendment, the Southeast Fisheries Science  
38 Center ran some simulations, and, in essence, the main takeaways  
39 were that, if unharvested ACL is carried over, and overages are  
40 paid back pound for pound, there's likely no long-term negative  
41 effects, but, if overages occur and are not paid back, the spawning  
42 stock biomass will likely decline, looking at larger biological  
43 consequences.

44

45 That's kind of a summary of where that generic amendment was.  
46 Ultimately, this document was put on hold, for a couple of reasons,  
47 and I think one of them being that the appetite for paybacks for  
48 all reef fish and CMP species was undesired, but that's something

1 that's already required for red snapper as an accountability  
2 measure, and so I'm not really sure if that would be a factor in  
3 the decision-making for red snapper here.

4  
5 Additionally, I highlighted that carryover provisions were allowed  
6 on stocks if they're in a rebuilding plan, but not if it's  
7 overfished, and so that limited specific species that maybe they  
8 wanted to include carryover provisions for, but, again, we're  
9 dealing with red snapper only here, and so it may not be  
10 applicable.

11  
12 I think the big thing to consider, which is still applicable as we  
13 look at carryover provisions here, is that the buffer between ABC  
14 and OFL is relatively small, and so, essentially, we have carryover  
15 that is bounded, but payback is not, and has the potential to be  
16 high if folks are exceeding their ACL.

17  
18 Lastly, there's some challenges in data needs and timing, given  
19 final landings timing and the request to include carryover in  
20 subsequent years, and so just looking at timing for final landings  
21 data, et cetera.

22  
23 With that being said, that's a little history of carryover  
24 provisions in the Gulf. I drafted up Action 1 to establish a  
25 carryover provision for private recreational red snapper, where  
26 Draft Alternative 1 would be no action, and Draft Alternative 2  
27 would establish a carryover provision for the private angling  
28 component of the red snapper ACL on a state-by-state basis.

29  
30 For those states that did not land the state-specific ACL, the  
31 unused portion would be carried over to the next fishing year, and  
32 the amount of the unused portion of the ACL not greater than  
33 Options 2a or 2b of the previous year's state-specific private  
34 angling ACL. 2a is essentially that states could carry over 100  
35 percent of their unused ACL, and 2b is states could carry over 75  
36 percent of their ACL.

37  
38 On the next few slides, I walk through state-by-state with the  
39 landings, and eligible carryover are starting in 2023. The  
40 landings are presented in CHTS units, as that is the common  
41 currency, and what we use for monitoring currently, and so that's  
42 using the calibration ratios from the state collections of their  
43 landings calibrated back into CHTS units.

44  
45 I just want to orient folks a little bit. I have Alabama landings  
46 on the left, and Mississippi landings on the right, from 2023 to  
47 2025. In the second column, I have the ACL listed in CHTS units.  
48 The third column shows reported landings converted to CHTS units,

1 and the fourth and fifth columns show the potential carryover  
2 amounts based on Alternative 2, Option 2a, 100 percent of the  
3 unused quota, and 2b, 75 percent of the unused ACL.

4  
5 Here we can see that Alabama would have been eligible for carryover  
6 in 2024 and 2025, where Mississippi was only eligible for carryover  
7 in 2025. I have Louisiana on the left, and Texas on the right,  
8 and we see Louisiana would have been eligible for carryover in  
9 2023, and Texas would have been eligible for carryover in all three  
10 years that are presented here. Lastly, I have Florida landings up  
11 here, and Florida would have been eligible to carryover in 2024  
12 and 2025.

13  
14 Based on these landings that I present here, I put together a  
15 hypothetical scenario to visualize the states that are eligible  
16 for carryover provisions, based on 2024 landings, with projected  
17 carryover into the 2025 year for Options 2a and 2b, and I walk  
18 through those in the next few slides.

19  
20 Okay, and so, if you remember, this is the figure that I presented  
21 back in the beginning, looking at how our ACL is broken up between  
22 sectors and states, and I have this hypothetical scenario based on  
23 the landings that are reported in 2024, and so those boxes that  
24 are green indicate an increase in ACL, and for those states that  
25 are eligible for carryover, and those that are in red indicate  
26 that a payback was required for those states, based on 2024  
27 landings.

28  
29 If we work our way backwards on the table, or on the figure,  
30 starting with state ACLs, in 2024, Alabama, Texas, and Florida  
31 were eligible for carryover, based on historic landings that we  
32 saw in slides 10 through 12. The new ACLs here are displayed based  
33 on allowing 100 percent of the unused ACL to be carried over to  
34 the next year.

35  
36 Mississippi and Louisiana went over their ACL, and, as a result,  
37 would be required to pay back, and their ACL is reflected in red,  
38 and so to allow 100 percent carryover would increase the overall  
39 ACL for private rec to about 5,934,655 pounds, but also then  
40 subsequently increase the recreational ACL, and, most importantly,  
41 would increase the overall ABC, which is equal to the ACL, at  
42 17,633,329 pounds, which would be 93.25 percent of the OFL, which  
43 allows for a teeny tiny buffer, at just under 6.75 percent, and so  
44 this is a pretty small buffer between our OFL and ABC.

45  
46 For the next slide, I have the same figure depicted here based on  
47 the Option 2b, which would be 75 percent of the unused ACL eligible  
48 for carryover, and that would increase the ABC to 17,292,577

1 pounds, and that results in an 8.55 percent buffer.

2  
3 As we're looking at carryover provisions, there's a few things  
4 that I want the committee to think about and discuss, and so, if  
5 we're looking at carryover provisions, it's likely that the reef  
6 fish closed framework procedure may need to be modified to allow  
7 the Regional Administrator the ability to modify the ABC, ACL, and  
8 ACT.

9  
10 I think most importantly here, and I've tried to emphasize this in  
11 the hypothetical scenarios I presented, is that the buffer between  
12 the ABC and the OFL with the carryover provision is incredibly  
13 small. If all sectors hypothetically exceed their catch levels,  
14 it could trigger overfishing, which is not what we want.

15  
16 Additionally, historical landings in this scenario that I  
17 presented do not account for all states eligibility to be carrying  
18 over unused ACL, and so none of the years that I presented, 2023  
19 to 2025, have all states being eligible for carryover. If that  
20 were to occur, that buffer would get even smaller.

21  
22 Biologically, if landings are consistently not landed, does this  
23 signal a larger problem with the stock long-term, and then I think  
24 there's a couple things that future iterations, if the committee  
25 and council are interested in moving forward with carryover, would  
26 have to consider, is whether we want to include carryover on a  
27 year-to-year basis, and so, for example, 2024 carryover would not  
28 be eligible after the 2025 fishing year, and so on and so forth,  
29 but I think there's a couple of nuances there that could be worked  
30 out in future iterations of the document, if folks are interested  
31 in this. That's what I have for carryover provisions, and so I'll  
32 pause for questions at this point, and then we'll move on to the  
33 next section.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Mr. Osborne.

36  
37 **MR. OSBORNE:** Okay, and so I like the hypothetical you just gave,  
38 because that was actually one of my questions, is how long -- If  
39 you give let's say 100 percent carryover for FY26, is that then -  
40 - Is the ACL increased to that number, and then the carryover for  
41 2027 could be even higher, but I also -- The other question I have  
42 is what happens if let's say Texas exceeds by a hundred, you know,  
43 to make it simple, a hundred one year, and so they're paying back  
44 a hundred the next year, and does their ACL then decrease by a  
45 hundred? Then if they're -- Say they only fish eighty, and is  
46 that twenty off of the hundred, or is it twenty off of the eight,  
47 in addition to the next year, right? Like one year they're over,  
48 and one year they're under, and, well, what's the number that

1 they're under?  
2  
3 **MS. GARDINER:** So I think I'm following your question. I hope I  
4 am. One year they're over --  
5  
6 **MR. OSBORNE:** And they're paying back.  
7  
8 **MS. GARDINER:** And they're paying back.  
9  
10 **MR. OSBORNE:** Their ACL -- Let's keep it at hundred, right, and  
11 their ACL is set at a hundred. The year before, they went over by  
12 twenty, and so now they're only able to do eighty.  
13  
14 **MS. GARDINER:** Yes.  
15  
16 **MR. OSBORNE:** Let's say they did sixty, and is their overage --  
17 Like they're carrying over twenty, or is it forty?  
18  
19 **MS. GARDINER:** I would say twenty, based on the ACL that was  
20 established, because the payback, in essence, based on the  
21 simulations that were done by the SSC, is that the paybacks have  
22 to be paid back in full, pound-for-pound, in order to not affect  
23 spawning stock biomass.  
24  
25 **MR. OSBORNE:** So the ACL has to be lowered next year?  
26  
27 **MS. GARDINER:** Yes.  
28  
29 **MR. OSBORNE:** Okay, and so then there would have to be that  
30 provision for the carryover, because then you can see a scenario  
31 where, you know, somebody keeps carrying over a million pounds one  
32 year and then another million pounds the next year, et cetera, and  
33 so that's capped, right?  
34  
35 **MS. GARDINER:** Yes, and so that would be -- My suggestion is that  
36 you can't carry over from multiple fishing years, right, and so  
37 2024 carryover isn't eligible to be carried over in the 2025 to  
38 2026 year, and only to the 2025 year. That would be my suggestion.  
39  
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. I got hands going up left and  
41 right, but I'm going to go to Mara first.  
42  
43 **MS. LEVY:** I don't really have a hand, but all of this is  
44 constrained by the OFL as well. You can't keep increasing forever.  
45 A number of questions. Just process-wise, you would have to have  
46 the SSC make an ABC recommendation that's flexible, that would  
47 allow you to increase the ABC through a closed framework action.  
48 We can't just do it.

1  
2 Then I would need to think more about increasing the rec ACL, or  
3 quota total, which, I mean, for red snapper, the Magnuson Act,  
4 right, has a specific provision that says you have to have rec and  
5 commercial quotas, and they have to reflect the allocation, and so  
6 I would have to think about that. I can't remember what we talked  
7 about in 2019 related to that and red snapper, because it was for  
8 everything, but just a number of things to think about. A lot of  
9 things would need to get fleshed out in order to move forward with  
10 this.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Mara. Yes, and, before I get to some  
13 of the hands here, I mean, my perspective on this is this is not  
14 exactly what I think we were looking for relative to kind of trying  
15 to address some of this issue.

16  
17 To me, it almost felt like it was more of an accounting  
18 accountability measure in the post-season. That's kind of what we  
19 were aiming for, and I'll just say a carryover provision where  
20 potentially looking at like a million pounds that Florida could  
21 carry over from what -- That's not what -- That was not what we  
22 were intending in this entire process here, and so that's why I  
23 would just kind of say I'm not necessarily sure, and carryover can  
24 be good in certain circumstances, but sometimes, when you see of  
25 this here -- All right. I'm going to go back to the hands. First,  
26 we have Mr. Sanchez.

27  
28 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I guess a more broader question is does this promote  
29 the idea that you're going to hold on to an underage you had this  
30 year to address a possible overage the following year? Is that  
31 something we want to suggest, because it seems to me that's what  
32 we're kind of doing.

33  
34 **MS. GARDINER:** I don't think that's the intent of this action, but  
35 I do think that that could be a possible consequence of someone,  
36 if they want to do that, looking at it this way, the way it's  
37 currently written for carryover.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** General Spraggins.

40  
41 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** Yes, I agree with you, C.J., on what you're  
42 saying. Also, to do this, especially at 75 or 100 percent, you  
43 know, when we developed all this, we had an ACL and an ACM and  
44 everything else to meet, but the idea was the ACL was something  
45 you didn't want to go over, and so everybody tried to fish to an  
46 ACM, but now you're telling me that, if I fish to the ACM, I'm  
47 just going to carry it back over to the next year. Well, that's  
48 not -- I think that's defeating the purpose of why we set

1 everything up to start with.

2  
3 You know, I'm not sure that I would be in favor of anything other  
4 than a small percentage of a carryover, and I'm talking very small,  
5 compared to doing something like that, and I think what C.J. is  
6 talking about -- You know, I think more in line, we want to know,  
7 if we had 100,000 pounds left over, is it available for us to be  
8 able to use inside of the five states to continue, you know, for  
9 an overage or an underage, and I think that's what we're talking  
10 about with all this, but I think we're defeating the purpose of  
11 everything, of doing an ACL and ACM, if we carry 100 percent, or  
12 anywhere close to that, over. I think we're defeating it.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and we do have more of the presentation  
15 here. This is just kind of this component of carryover. John.

16  
17 **MR. JOHNNY MARQUEZ:** Well, I thought this discussion centered  
18 around really that this was kind of a one-way street with the  
19 states, and that they were penalized for an overage, and so they  
20 were, you know, forced to try to manage right up to that limit,  
21 and, if they had a little overage, they had to pay it back the  
22 next year, but, if they tried to be a little more conservative,  
23 and they came in under, they just lose that fish, and so that's  
24 what I thought we were kind of talking about doing here, being  
25 able to have some carryover and be a little bit more flexible.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So that was -- I'll speak, and then I'll go to  
28 you, Mr. Schieble, here. The thought process here, when this was  
29 brought forward several meetings ago, and, state directors, feel  
30 free to correct me if I say anything out of line here, but it was  
31 when -- If a certain state goes over a percentage, and we've talked  
32 about putting in guardrails, like not being able to do it on  
33 consecutive years in a row, or else you have to pay that back,  
34 but, when the stock-wide recreational ACL is not exceeded, when  
35 we're not in that scenario there, that like on a one-time --

36  
37 Basically, it's a counting tax, basically, where it's like, okay,  
38 Louisiana went over 5,000 pounds, and is that right, 5,000 pounds  
39 this last year? Like Florida went under -- Florida, you know,  
40 fished under by a million pounds, and so clearly we did not exceed  
41 the stock-wide recreational ACL.

42  
43 Therefore, in theory, Florida could give that 5,000 pounds, after  
44 the season, in order to ensure that Louisiana doesn't pay that  
45 back, but part of this process was we wanted to put set up were  
46 guardrails to ensure that, quote-unquote, we didn't have bad  
47 actors, right, and like just someone constantly driving, and  
48 constantly pushing, overages, because they realize that they're

1 going to get something on the back end to cover it.

2  
3 We were trying to offer that one-time, if you will, kind of  
4 flexibility measure, through what I was calling an accounting  
5 accountability measure, but, Chris, do you want to add anything to  
6 that?

7  
8 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and just a couple of things here. You know,  
9 going back to where this originated, I think, you know, the  
10 recreational initiative, one of the outputs, or outcomes, of that  
11 was carryover provisions, looking into carryover provisions as a  
12 useful tool, and so that's kind of where this originates, was the  
13 output from something that we asked for.

14  
15 Secondly, the executive orders have asked for us to look at  
16 alternative ways to do things as well, and so I'm in support of  
17 this, but I also agree that I think we need to have some different  
18 guardrails in place here, just for those types of things that you  
19 asked for, and so, in the original, I guess, context of this, we  
20 were going to look at the ABC control rule, and we were going to  
21 tie this to the ABC control rule, similar to what the South  
22 Atlantic did, and so now this is the second iteration of this, and  
23 so it addresses what Mara was talking about a minute ago, but I  
24 think, one, it's important to have that annual carryover on there,  
25 the very last bullet in this thing.

26  
27 Like you cannot exceed in some sort of ratcheting and accumulation  
28 of quota over multiple years in a row, where you're just going to  
29 blow out the OFL one year if that happens, right, and so that's  
30 important. We need to have that in there, and I also think, going  
31 back to the original carryover goldfish bowl document, and Ryan  
32 knows what I'm talking about, we had options in there to where the  
33 difference between the ABC and the OFL can be reduced by 25  
34 percent, and Option b was 50 percent, and c was 75 percent.

35  
36 I would like to see consideration of that when you finally bring  
37 this as a document to us to look at, to have, I guess, more  
38 constraining percentage options, and not just 75 percent could be  
39 rolled over to the next year, and maybe smaller amounts of 25, 50,  
40 and 70, and maybe even less than 25. I don't know how far we want  
41 to go, but we should think about that, to put tighter guardrails  
42 on this, because, you know, yes, we paid back in Louisiana, for  
43 example, the past two years in a row, but, like I pointed out in  
44 my presentation with the landings earlier today, we had within  
45 almost our statistical limits of 6 percent plus or minus error,  
46 and we could have equally underfished by about 33,000 pounds each  
47 year.

48

1 That's basically our limit, and so it's just how the data works  
2 out at the end, and we're not looking for, you know, a way to fix  
3 that, or change that, but I think having the ability to do that  
4 from one year to the next is safe, I guess, in other words, as  
5 long as you have those smaller percentages to work with.

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

8  
9 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** So, from the staff level, we talked about  
10 this a lot, and so a couple of the things, just for your  
11 information, is we found it very difficult to talk about both  
12 carryover and transfer at the same time, and here's why, and so,  
13 if a particular state had an underage, but they could carry it  
14 over, why would they give it to another state, and so you create  
15 that problem.

16  
17 Then, if there's a transfer, then there's a potential that you're  
18 creating a race to fish, because if you exceed yours prior to, and  
19 you know another state is unlikely to, then you open that  
20 possibility, and I suspect you could do it to prevent serial using  
21 of this kind of thing, but we did talk about that, and it's not  
22 clear, and you know, if we could get guidance that we really want  
23 to do the transfer, but we're not so interested in the carryover,  
24 that I think we could make more progress on it, or vice versa. I  
25 think the other one would probably be easier than the carryover.

26  
27 The other part, we did talk about the allocation and all that, and  
28 if you were -- Because there is no buffer on the state between the  
29 -- There's just an ACL, and I didn't think the option, the desire,  
30 was to create an additional buffer for the states, although that  
31 would accomplish it, but then so, when you do that, then you're  
32 already against the recreational ACL, and so you're not observing  
33 the for-hire private allocation, nor are you observing the  
34 recreational and commercial, and so, to me, those are the bigger  
35 challenges than that buffer of the OFL and ABC.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I see hands going up. Okay, and let  
38 me -- I think it's more along the lines of not necessarily a  
39 carryover, and I don't necessarily think it's even a transfer  
40 either, and like it's not a formalized transfer of quota.

41  
42 It's just accounting for the overage in one year, right, and like  
43 it's not a formal -- Okay, and I'm going to start going to some of  
44 the hands there, but we'll try to answer some of the questions  
45 that Dr. Froeschke was looking for there, because we definitely  
46 need to give staff some guidance. Ms. Gardiner.

47  
48 **MS. GARDINER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Perhaps it would be helpful

1 to walk through the transfer section and then have the full  
2 discussion about both of them at the end, because I think Dr.  
3 Froeschke hit on some of the points that I touch on in the latter  
4 part of my presentation as well, but we can take questions now  
5 specific to carryovers.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. To the carryover, General?

8  
9 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and just one thing on it. You know, maybe  
10 we'll want to look at something else, if we are going to do any  
11 part of this, that, if we have a year that is an anomaly for a  
12 year, like when you have four hurricanes in one state, and  
13 something happens, then there needs to be something, and I could  
14 see where a carryover would really be, you know, beneficial,  
15 because they couldn't fish for a whole year, and maybe that  
16 happened, and, you know, something could happen there, and that  
17 would make a little bit of sense.

18  
19 I mean, I'm going back to Florida, you know, in 2024, and that's  
20 what I'm thinking about. You know, having all of the hurricanes  
21 and things that you had, you wasn't exactly fishing a whole lot.  
22 There was a lot of people trying to get rebuilt, and so we need to  
23 look at something that's an anomaly in there, and that's what I'm  
24 looking at, and that's another thing.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Understood. That would still be about a  
27 million-pound carryover in that one year. Mr. Strelcheck.

28  
29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Good discussion. C.J., I have the same  
30 reservations you do, in terms of the carryover, and I don't think  
31 we ever intended to have these huge amounts of carryover. To me,  
32 that's a fundamental problem with the system, either with the  
33 fishery itself or how we're adjusting management measures that  
34 are, you know, resulting in that much carryover from one year to  
35 the next.

36  
37 One suggestion I have, and it's not necessarily carryover, but I  
38 think it really gets to what you're suggesting, C.J., and what our  
39 intent was, is, in the South Atlantic, we have these accountability  
40 measures where not only does the sector have to go over the catch  
41 limit, but the fishery -- All sectors have to essentially exceed  
42 the catch limit.

43  
44 I'm thinking of it in the same way with the states, right? You  
45 want to still have some guardrails, and so you don't want, you  
46 know, a state to just go crazy and, you know, blow their quota,  
47 but, if they stay within a certain amount of their quota, but go  
48 over, and the Gulf-wide private catch limit is not exceeded, right

1 and there's quota remaining, then we wouldn't apply an  
2 accountability measure for that overage for the state, right, and  
3 so I think that's a far simpler approach, and the only complication  
4 to it is the differences in different units that have to,  
5 obviously, be figured out in terms of making this consistent across  
6 the Gulf.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Andy said exactly what I was trying to say,  
9 much better. Okay, and so that was a good discussion on carryover  
10 there. We do have another part of the presentation. Did we have  
11 any more discussion that we want to have? Okay. Ms. Gardiner,  
12 I'm going to turn it back over to you for the transfer portion.

13  
14 **MS. GARDINER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'll go to the next slide,  
15 and so, before I get started, you know, the first part of this  
16 presentation detailed carryover provisions as the framework is  
17 detailed in Amendment 50A, and so that's the framework we already  
18 have in place for recreational red snapper, and so that was kind  
19 of the approach that staff took with that, but the feedback that  
20 we received in that is super helpful.

21  
22 I wanted to give a background of the history of the commercial  
23 regional quota sharing that the South Atlantic does for the  
24 commercial Spanish mackerel, and so this was done in South Atlantic  
25 CMP Amendment 20B. That's hyperlinked in the presentation, if  
26 you're interested, Action 4.2.

27  
28 It kind of came about because the South Atlantic Council expressed  
29 concern that the commercial ACLs for Spanish mackerel could be  
30 filled by fishermen in one state before they're made available to  
31 others, and so, for example, North Carolina catches the ACL before  
32 it's available to other states, and they investigated establishing  
33 separate state quotas or regional quotas, and so, ultimately, they  
34 ended up establishing regional quotas for a northern zone and a  
35 southern zone.

36  
37 The northern zone extends from North Carolina North to New York,  
38 and the southern zone is South Carolina down to Atlantic Florida,  
39 and this is an in-season management measure that allows for the  
40 in-season transfer quota between the regions, where North Carolina  
41 and Florida were the designated coordinating states for the  
42 transfer request, in consultation with the other states.

43  
44 In order to do this, the transfer requests would come from either  
45 the southern zone or the northern zone, and this would be in  
46 consult with the other states, and the other states would have to  
47 approve, but, essentially, one zone would send a letter to the  
48 Regional Administrator to transfer part or all of their respective

1 zone's annual commercial quota to the other zone, and the request  
2 for transfer of the commercial quota for Spanish mackerel must be  
3 made by a letter signed by the principal state official or his or  
4 her designee, and the letter must certify that all pertinent state  
5 requirements have been met and identify the states that involved  
6 and the amount of quota to be transferred.

7  
8 This is an in-season measure, and so, once that letter was sent to  
9 the Regional Administrator, the Regional Administrator has ten  
10 days to reply and approve or deny the transfer of the quota.

11  
12 An example of this that I found was the 2025-2026 fishing year,  
13 which runs March 1 to February 28, and so, in July of 2025, the  
14 southern zone made a request to transfer 250,000 pounds to the  
15 northern zone. That request was approved.

16  
17 On September 20<sup>th</sup> of 2025, the northern zone hit their commercial  
18 quota, and so they closed for the season, and then there was an  
19 additional request done in September from the southern zone to  
20 send an additional 75,000 pounds of quota to the northern zone,  
21 and then, ultimately, the northern zone closed on October 7, 2025  
22 for the fishing year, because they had reached their commercial  
23 quota, and they had two transfers in this fishing season from the  
24 southern zone to the northern zone, and it was all done in-season,  
25 and it's the commercial fishery, just to highlight those, and so  
26 a little bit different than what we're looking at here.

27  
28 With the history of that in mind, I attempted to draft some  
29 alternatives, recognizing that we're looking at a different type  
30 of fishery, and I modeled kind of these draft alternatives based  
31 off of what they do in the South Atlantic, recognizing it's not  
32 going to be exactly the same.

33  
34 Alternative 1 would be no action. Alternative 2 allows for the  
35 transfer of ACL between states in a single fishing year for private  
36 recreational red snapper in the Gulf. Currently, as written, this  
37 is an in-season management measure.

38  
39 Option 2a would not allow carryover of the transfer quota, and so  
40 this would be if we're doing carryover and quota transfer or ACL  
41 transfer in tandem with one another. Option 2b would be not in  
42 tandem. Option 2b would allow them to carry over ACL that is  
43 transferred to them. I'll walk through a hypothetical scenario of  
44 this in a second.

45  
46 The process is similar to what's defined in the regs for Spanish  
47 mackerel, where they send a letter to the Regional Administrator  
48 to transfer part of their ACL, or all their ACL, to another Gulf

1 state for the remainder of the fishing year, and so an in-season  
2 management measure.

3  
4 I have here that the states may only request a quota transfer once  
5 in a fishing year. That could be adjusted. It's something to  
6 consider if we're interested in moving forward with this, and,  
7 again, similar to the South Atlantic, you have to have a letter  
8 signed by other states, and they must certify that all pertinent  
9 state requirements have been met and identify the amount of quota  
10 to be transferred.

11  
12 For this, I walked through a hypothetical in-season ACL transfer  
13 between states, based on 2023 landings, and so, as a reminder,  
14 since NMFS monitors the ACL in CHTS units, we would have to convert  
15 all units to the common currency of CHTS units to do the ACL  
16 transfer.

17  
18 In 2023, Louisiana did not reach their ACL, and had about 65,000  
19 pounds of unused ACL. In a hypothetical scenario, as the end of  
20 the fishing year is approaching, and so let's say October or  
21 November, and Louisiana realizes they won't use all of its ACL,  
22 and Mississippi is projected to exceed their ACL, and Louisiana  
23 could request to send Mississippi 50,000 pounds of their unused  
24 ACL. This would then increase the Mississippi annual ACL for that  
25 fishing year, and, at the end, when all accounting is said and  
26 done, this would not result in a payback for Mississippi.

27  
28 Under Option 2a of this action, carryover of any unused ACL would  
29 be ineligible, and so Mississippi would not be able to carry over  
30 that extra 3,000 pounds into the fishing year that they received  
31 from Louisiana.

32  
33 This is the same exact scenario, but it would allow for Mississippi  
34 to carry over that unused transferred quota, or ACL, sorry. At  
35 100 percent, they could carry over about 3,000 pounds. At 75  
36 percent, they could carry over 2,500 pounds.

37  
38 A few things to consider, and, with Mr. Strelcheck's comments in  
39 mind, I don't know that this is the approach that we want to go,  
40 but I do think it's worthwhile having a discussion, because I'm  
41 not sure that carryover provisions are necessarily how we want to  
42 approach this either, but I do think, when we're looking at ACL  
43 transfer and carryover provisions, these are separate actions,  
44 like Dr. Froeschke mentioned.

45  
46 I don't think these play well with one another, in that I don't  
47 see a scenario in which a state could carry over their unused ACL,  
48 but then would elect to transfer it to another state.

1  
2 Currently, this is written as an in-season measure. I don't know  
3 that the council's intent is for this to be in-season. It sounds  
4 like it may be something that they want to be post-season, and so  
5 then we would have to navigate the feasibility of this being a  
6 post-season management measure, and, additionally, what that  
7 timeline is as we get time for final landings to come in, and other  
8 information that would be needed, and what that cutoff date in  
9 order for this to be a post-season management measure is.

10  
11 Also, under this, could multiple states transfer to another state,  
12 or is only one transfer request permitted by state per year, and  
13 so could Mississippi request a transfer from Louisiana and Florida,  
14 or just one state, or how that would work? Additionally, does  
15 this create a race-to-fish scenario, where you just fish hard at  
16 the beginning of your season, and, if you have an oopsie overage,  
17 then you're requesting another state to cover you?

18  
19 Lastly, we have to calibrate all of our transfer of ACL to common  
20 currency, and so we would have to look at converting that to CHTS  
21 units, or the common currency that we're using, and so I'm not  
22 sure, as an in-season measure, the administrative burden  
23 associated with that, when we're looking at timing and feasibility  
24 of this.

25  
26 With that being said, I bring the committee back to this slide,  
27 where we're looking at decision points and conversation and  
28 discussion points. I think it's super helpful if the committee  
29 could identify if the council is interested in pursuing both of  
30 these actions at this time. If not, what are they interested in  
31 pursuing, and kind of outlining that, so staff can bring back a  
32 further iteration of this that is more aligned with their vision.

33  
34 If we're looking at carryover provisions, I think that that buffer  
35 is something to consider. The regional quota sharing, or ACL  
36 sharing, currently, as written, if we're modeling it after the  
37 South Atlantic, is an in-season management measure. If we want  
38 this to be a post-season management measure, what does that look  
39 like, and what is the information that's needed to apply this as  
40 a post-season measure?

41  
42 Then always I want to consider the data units and the effect that  
43 we have on calibration ratios, as Mississippi and Alabama are  
44 moving to creel data units. We've got the red snapper stock  
45 assessment coming through, if that might address calibration  
46 ratios and some other factors that we have moving through the  
47 pipeline that might address some of this, and then, always, do all  
48 states have to opt-in or out, and so, with that, Mr. Chair, we can

1 open the floor to discussion.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you very much, Ms. Gardiner. I  
4 appreciate the information. All right. We'll start with questions  
5 and comments here. We'll start with Dr. Banks.

6

7 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I have a question, and  
8 I'm sure we will not have an answer to this today, but say Texas  
9 under fishes, and we have a 365-day. We are getting ready to  
10 transfer quota to Florida, and this is all hypothetical. All of  
11 a sudden, we have a spike in landings, but we've transferred quota  
12 in-season, based on this hypothetical, and we are now overfished,  
13 and do we have to pay back, because we bailed a state out? I'm  
14 having some issues reconciling how they both work in my head.

15

16 Based on that scenario alone, I think, at this point in time, I  
17 would lean toward a post-season flexibility measure, and it's,  
18 like C.J. was saying, where this is just an accountability, and so  
19 a state that's only 10,000, or 50,000, pounds over is not being  
20 penalized when we're a million pounds under Gulf-wide, and so just  
21 something to think about, but, again, that's another one, and, if  
22 we go in-season, I think we're going to have to put some guardrails  
23 and have some protocols in place.

24

25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think you bring up some good points there,  
26 Dr. Banks, and that's part of the main reason why -- I mean,  
27 there's going to be some incredible challenges with doing something  
28 in-season, and, quite frankly, I mean, even if you just look at  
29 the way Florida's survey is set up, like it's just not going to  
30 work, right, because we're getting our data every couple of months,  
31 because we're -- You know, so that just wouldn't really work. We  
32 don't have that real-time data, like a lot of some of these other  
33 programs are getting there, and so just some challenges associated  
34 with that, and so that's why post-season, quite frankly, would  
35 make a lot more sense to me. Mr. Strelcheck.

36

37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I certainly appreciate Kesley's concerns  
38 about the payback, and you've given up quota to help another state.  
39 I guess I'm thinking about this a little bit different, that it's  
40 not necessarily an in-season, and it's an agreement before the  
41 season even starts, so that, whatever state is receiving the quota,  
42 and whatever state -- They're going to manage to that, and, to the  
43 extent that the systems allow it to be adequately monitored to  
44 that new catch limit, whether it's going up or down, that you would  
45 have at least a little better opportunity to ensure you're not  
46 going to have a payback or an overage. I recognize that it's maybe  
47 easier for the middle Gulf states than Texas and Florida.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Okay, and so, I  
2 mean, just to kind of provide some feedback, I would like to kind  
3 of gauge the temperature of the committee here relative to how we  
4 would like to move forward on this, and so, honestly, the way that  
5 -- I think what I was expecting from a metric like this, similar  
6 to kind of some of the ways that the Gulf state directors had tried  
7 to iron some of this out, and maybe in the next iteration we could  
8 but, from my perspective, I don't think this quota sharing --

9  
10 You know, the in-season is certainly not going to work, from a  
11 quota transfer perspective, along those lines, and Dr. Banks  
12 highlighted some of the challenges associated with that. We kind  
13 of talked -- Well, this is just my perspective, and I'll just throw  
14 that out there, but, the carryover, I don't think that's what we  
15 were going with anyway, and so looking at the accountability  
16 measures, and how we could navigate it through that process, kind  
17 of similar to like some of the -- I guess it is the South Atlantic  
18 that has something, and I feel like we've got something for  
19 deepwater grouper too, don't we, where it's like, if the entire  
20 private recreational component has exceeded, then we'll pay it  
21 back.

22  
23 I feel like we've got some examples for how we want to approach  
24 it, along those lines, as a post-season measure there, relative to  
25 the entire stock, and then I think we really wanted to hit on some  
26 of the guardrails too, right?

27  
28 I don't think those have been explicitly articulated, just because  
29 I don't think we have the appropriate vessel for what we're trying  
30 to accomplish here, if that makes sense. I think these were good  
31 discussions, honestly, and it's just really interesting to see how  
32 this plays out. I mean, I've always been interested in carryover,  
33 but there's some unintended consequences, based on what's going on  
34 out there.

35  
36 This commercial quota transfer was just a mechanism that I threw  
37 out there as a potential vehicle, but, as we're kind of exploring  
38 it relative to the private recreational component of this, you can  
39 see some of the challenges, particularly with doing anything in-  
40 season, and so I kind of want to see the temperature of the room,  
41 and see what people think here. Captain Frady.

42  
43 **MR. TROY FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Whenever I hear the  
44 term "carryover", a lot of uncertainty came to mind. Many, many  
45 years ago, I worked in the banking industry, and we didn't have  
46 carryovers.

47  
48 We used to set aside money for reserves, and so, when I look at

1 this fishery problem right here that we have, we're talking about  
2 carryovers, but the nervousness comes in, and it's just we need to  
3 be able to manage each state against itself, and we need to  
4 preserve accountability.

5  
6 We need to encourage a conservative management, but, in the banking  
7 world, if we were to roll unused quota over directly in the next  
8 year, it's going to increase next year's harvest ceiling, and it's  
9 going to weaken accountability. I think, if we set aside a reserve  
10 system, we set aside a portion of the unused quota into like a  
11 control pool, and it's not automatically usable. It's only  
12 accessible under certain strict conditions, and it would also have  
13 a conservative buffer.

14  
15 It's not free spending on -- You can't just go out and burn and  
16 snappers up when you want to, but it needs to be under defined  
17 stress scenarios, like the General was saying, hurricanes and stuff  
18 like that. We need to have a set-aside.

19  
20 You know, annual catch limits would be intact. There's no  
21 automatic quota inflation, and it still protects the Magnuson Act,  
22 if we look at a quota reserve system rather than that system, but  
23 we could even set the reserve, and cap it at 10 or 15 percent max,  
24 and, that way, nobody can double next year's harvest, and this  
25 will avoid sudden pressure spikes in the fish stock. You know, if  
26 we're talking about the hurricane year, or a low effort year, a  
27 bad data year, a mid-season recalibration, and so, anything that  
28 provides risk, we need to manage against risk.

29  
30 Right now, the state are rewarded for maxing out the quota, the  
31 way the system is set up, and so you're supposed to go to your  
32 ACL, and you're supposed to fish to your ACL. You're not supposed  
33 to go over it, but now we've got, you know, the beloved State of  
34 Mississippi, who has got a small quota, and they have to fight  
35 harder than some of the other states that have larger quotas to  
36 stay in compliance.

37  
38 I just think, if we designed a system that encouraged each state  
39 to set aside a reserve each year out of unused quota, instead of  
40 forcing the states, or encouraging the states, to maximize and  
41 fish to the very end of their quota, and let that state be more  
42 conservative, and reward them, by letting them set aside a certain  
43 percentage each year, to set aside up to a certain maximum  
44 percentage, to where they'd have a buffer set aside.

45  
46 In the banking world, we used to call it reserve for loan losses,  
47 and that was in case you had a charge-off, or you had something  
48 insignificant, or something significant, happen, and so I'm not a

1 big fan of the carryover, but I am in favor of setting up a reserve  
2 system for the states, and letting them manage it against  
3 themselves, and not against other states, and, if you set up a  
4 reserve, and each state had their reserve set up, there probably  
5 wouldn't be a need for a carryover to be swapped between a state,  
6 and, Mr. Chair, I thank you, but that's pretty much my idea, and  
7 that just comes from my years of banking.

8  
9 You know, there's no difference between money and red snapper, to  
10 me. It's all a commodity, and I think there's a better way to do  
11 this, instead of looking at carryovers, and it's by setting up  
12 that reserve system. Thank you.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Frady. General Spraggins.

15  
16 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and I agree with what you're talking  
17 about, Troy, but the other thing is, you know, I think, if we're  
18 looking at something, and I think I heard this from the staff, is  
19 maybe we need to give direction, as you said, which way to go with  
20 this, and, you know, which one do we want to move forward first,  
21 and I do think the share allocation is something that I would like  
22 to see move forward quicker.

23  
24 Then maybe, if you want to look at the overage in the future, or  
25 something like that, but give the staff something to look at that  
26 they could use the shared allocation part right now to be something  
27 to move forward with.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dakus.

30  
31 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, I am encouraged by this.  
32 The simple fact that we're even discussing this, you know,  
33 symbolizes where we are. We've come a long way. The state  
34 directors are working incredibly well together. I think we've  
35 recognized some issues specific to Mississippi, where we could  
36 alleviate this. The simple fact is we're not -- Minus a couple of  
37 states, in a couple of years, we're not approaching the ACL.

38  
39 Just keeping this simple, I do value the flexibility here. I agree  
40 wholeheartedly with Andy and C.J. that we need some guardrails  
41 here. We need some frameworks to ensure accountability. Not only  
42 -- I have the utmost trust in us, as state directors, to manage  
43 the resource accountably, but, to our stakeholders, to the anglers  
44 from all the sectors out there, I think we're moving in a great  
45 direction.

46  
47 I applaud council staff, Ms. Gardiner, for putting this together.  
48 She threw up a wide array of options here. I think it's incumbent

1 upon us to kind of dial in some of those guardrails, some of the  
2 framework, you know, think about exactly how this would look, and,  
3 to Captain Frady's point, and I am, you know, a conservative, and  
4 I like that the notion of, and the philosophy, of fish left in the  
5 water also have value, in order to preserve that sustainable  
6 fishery for the greater benefit of the nation, and for all the  
7 sectors out there, and so I think we're moving in the right  
8 direction. I'm encouraged by this, but we've got some work to do  
9 ahead of us here if we really want to accomplish this goal.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dakus. Andy.

12  
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I shared some language, but I'm going to  
14 hold off until Full Council, and so I was just playing around with  
15 the post-season accountability measures, and seeing if I could add  
16 some language that maybe gets the intent of what the council was  
17 talking about, and so I'm always a person that likes as many tools  
18 in the toolbox as I can have, right, or that the council can have,  
19 and so I think there's potentially the post-season accountability  
20 measures that we could look at.

21  
22 We could also look at this catch limit sharing. I recognize  
23 there's some limitations to that, but it doesn't obligate a state  
24 to be willing to share that quota, but, if you're part of the  
25 process, you could at least have, you know, a say, in terms of  
26 providing input as to whether you would agree to it or not, and so  
27 I would like to at least just explore further both of those  
28 options, and I agree with the carryover discussion, that I think  
29 that is going kind of far afield of what we're trying to do, and  
30 the post-season accountability measures may be another avenue.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Andy. Mr. Schieble.

33  
34 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Briefly, I just wanted to say that I agree with  
35 what you were stating earlier, and so I think the goal would be to  
36 have, if there is carryover, a percentage of that is then carried  
37 over to the next season, and not in the middle of the season,  
38 because let's say, for example, and I don't want to speak for the  
39 General, but, a state like Mississippi, they want to know what  
40 they're going to fish to the next year.

41  
42 They don't want to start a season, and then count on another state  
43 to underfish, and then give them, you know, a transfer of quota to  
44 be able to extend that season in the middle, because there's no  
45 guarantee that that could happen. Another state could have a great  
46 year, a bunch of fish, more activity, and you don't know, but, if  
47 you're carrying it over as a post-season accountability measure  
48 into the next season, then they at least know what they start with,

1 right, and so, to me, that seems like the course of action with  
2 this, would be to make it to where those things are determined  
3 before the next fishing year starts.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. General Spraggins.

6  
7 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and, all of this, I think we all need to  
8 keep one thing in perspective. We're not here to overfish. We're  
9 not here to overfish our allocation in any one state. Our goal is  
10 to fish to what we are given to be able to do.

11  
12 The situation is, if you have something that happens, and, all of  
13 a sudden, you know, you had -- In Mississippi, we take a small  
14 amount, but let's say we had 10,000 pounds left over, and then,  
15 all of a sudden, we open it up for the weekend of Labor Day, and  
16 we got a massive amount of people fishing that weekend that we  
17 didn't anticipate, and kind of what happens in other things.

18  
19 I don't think any of us ever want to get to the point that we're  
20 sitting here saying, well, you know, I'll overfish 20,000 pounds  
21 this year, and hope that Louisiana doesn't overfish, and they'll  
22 give it to me. I think we need to state there, and I think we  
23 need to keep ourselves in perspective on this, but just thoughts.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Ms. Gardiner.

26  
27 **MS. GARDINER:** Thank you. This has been a really helpful  
28 discussion. I think. Bernie, if you could go to slide 4, I think,  
29 to address potentially Mr. Strelcheck's comments about adjusting  
30 the post-season accountability measures, if we look at modifying  
31 the language -- If we look at modifying the language to adjust the  
32 private recreational ACL, and so that 4,611,326 pounds, in our  
33 accountability measures, and we modify the language that, if that  
34 private recreational ACL is not exceeded, then states are not  
35 required to pay back, with the exception of, and then detail the  
36 guardrails that the council is interested in.

37  
38 I'm wondering if that achieves the intent of some folks for this,  
39 and so that's definitely an avenue that staff could explore. I  
40 think, for Full Council, it would be very helpful, and I've heard,  
41 around the table, some interest in continuing with carryover  
42 provisions, and some interest in continuing with in-season quota  
43 transfers, and I think if we could really hash out what we're  
44 interested in having staff explore for Full Council, that would be  
45 very helpful.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think you hit the nail on the head  
48 there, Ms. Gardiner, but I've got some hands up here. Mara is

1 going first.

2

3 **MS. LEVY:** Well, just to say that, I mean, that idea -- I think  
4 the easiest way to do what you want to do is to change the  
5 accountability measures when the trigger for the overage is  
6 required, right, the payback, right, and like trigger when that's  
7 required, because, when you start getting into this carryover to  
8 the next, then you're dealing with the ABC, and the OFL, and  
9 raising catch limits on one side, and so, if the real goal is to  
10 look at the total, and allow for some wiggle room for those states  
11 that went under or over by some maximum percentage, to allow them  
12 not to have a payback, that's just modifying the accountability  
13 measure language. It's not getting into all this transfer  
14 carryover stuff that really complicates things.

15

16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I would agree, Mara. It does seem like there's  
17 some appetite to at least see what options could be on the table,  
18 and even kind of throw any of those away, but I would tend to agree  
19 with you. All right. Captain Walker.

20

21 **MS. WALKER:** I was just going to say almost exactly what Ms. Levy  
22 said. I think I'm in favor of, you know, maybe using it as an  
23 accountability measure to help out somebody with an unintended  
24 overage, but I'm not really supportive of just a general carryover.

25

26 I think that that kind of goes the wrong way, and it doesn't really  
27 sound like, around the table -- That's really not what most people  
28 sound like they're looking for anyway, and so just my input, and  
29 I agree with Ms. Levy that, as an accountability type tool, yes,  
30 but, as just a general carryover, I don't think I'm supportive of  
31 that.

32

33 I know the commercial sector does not do carryovers on anything in  
34 the Gulf, that I'm aware of, and like at least the IFQ system  
35 doesn't say, well, they were 100,000 pounds under this year, and  
36 so they get another 100,000 pounds next year. That's really never  
37 been how it worked.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Sanchez.

40

41 **MR. SANCHEZ:** As far as guardrails, something to dissuade people  
42 from being a habitual repeat offender, and, you know, something  
43 like you can't do it two years in a row, and you can't do it more  
44 than X amount of times over a five-year period, something like  
45 that, because, if not -- You know what I mean? You don't want to  
46 promote people to have some ability to --

47

48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Like it has to be within a certain percentage,

1 and, you know, you can't just be like 200 percent of my quota, you  
2 know, and assuming someone is going to -- Anyways, I think we can  
3 think about this, some of those things, for Full Council, but, Dr.  
4 Banks.

5  
6 **DR. BANKS:** I would just ask that, while we're thinking about --  
7 I like that idea, C.J. and Sanchez, and maybe we could get some  
8 analyses done of how many times each state has gone over, what the  
9 average overage is, and some of that analysis, so we can make those  
10 decisions for what maybe those guardrails should look like, or  
11 percentages that we might want to explore.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. J.D., or Dr. Simmons.

14  
15 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I think  
16 you're going in this direction, but you're saying you're going to  
17 give us some motions by Full Council on this, but it sounds, to  
18 me, like, you know, you want us to look at the post-season  
19 accountability measures, and so I didn't know if it's worth us at  
20 least directing staff to do that now, and then clearing up the  
21 carryover versus the transfer, because it gets quite complicated  
22 pretty quickly, and, because it's red snapper, I just think it's  
23 good for us to have a motion, or at least a motion with a list of  
24 things that are prioritized that you want us to look at, and it  
25 doesn't have to happen right this second, but by tomorrow, and so  
26 I don't know, if we have the time now, if it's worth us doing it  
27 or not.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I guess I'm going to look over at you,  
30 Mr. Schieble. You've been advocating for lower percentages of  
31 carryover to be looked over, in kind of a holdover document here,  
32 and so, given what's been said around the table, there does seem  
33 to be some appetite of more leaning towards the post-season AMs,  
34 that would be more simple, and not have to navigate changes in  
35 catch limits or anything along those lines, but I'm curious what  
36 your thoughts are with the discussion here.

37  
38 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Well, so I think -- That's action 2, and is that  
39 what that is under? Is that potential Action 2?

40  
41 **MS. GARDINER:** Action 1 would be carryover provisions that, if  
42 you're interested in the lower percentages, that it would adjust.

43  
44 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** You had Alternative 2 that had the percentages, the  
45 75 and 100? Bernie, can go to number 9, pretty please? All right,  
46 so I guess I'll make a motion to -- Now you made it hard to read.

47  
48 **MR. DUGAS:** Bernie, can you zoom-in on the motion?

1  
2 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** There we go. I got some help from my wingman over  
3 here, and so I make a motion, under Action 1, Alternative 2, to  
4 add Option c and d, which would be the difference between the ABC  
5 and the OFL can be reduced by 25 percent, and then d would be the  
6 difference between the ABC and OFL would be reduced by 50 percent,  
7 and so we have a little bit tighter guardrails on that. Currently,  
8 that difference is like 6.75 percent, right, that you had in that  
9 --

10  
11 **MS. GARDINER:** Under draft Option 2a, it would be 6.75 percent.  
12 Under draft Option 2b, it would be 8.55 percent, and so I think,  
13 in the next iteration, I would modify it, whatever that --

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Let's wait until we get the motion on the  
16 table, and so I'm taking Chris is operating in the affirmative  
17 that he wants to keep carryovers within a document moving forward.

18  
19 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I think, at least for now in this document, since  
20 it's a draft, let's keep it in there, and talking about it, but,  
21 if we're going to look at a Gulf-wide ACL accountability measure,  
22 I really don't see that there's a difference ultimately there,  
23 but, for now, let's at least have it for discussion in this  
24 document. I think we need to keep it in there.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We've got a motion on the table. Do we  
27 have a second? Second by Mr. Broussard. Actually, hold on, and  
28 I got ahead of myself here. Let's just get it on the --

29  
30 **MR. WALKER:** How many states did not catch their ACL last year?  
31 Just Florida?

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** No, and I think there was only one state that  
34 exceeded, right?

35  
36 **MR. WALKER:** That's what I meant. Only one state exceeded.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so what we would be doing here is  
39 adding draft options. Sarah and Bernie are working on it. We'll  
40 wait until we get it up here. Okay, and so this motion would be  
41 adding those two draft options, 2c and 2d, within Alternative 2.

42  
43 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Maybe we could just also clarify this  
44 is in regards to the carryover action, so we're just clear, because  
45 we have three vehicles, potentially, we're looking at. We're  
46 looking at individual states carrying over, potential of changing  
47 the post-season accountability measures to where you're not  
48 requiring individual states to pay back, but only have to pay back

1 if you potentially exceed the state private angling recreational  
2 ACL, and so that's the other vehicle we were looking at, but you  
3 don't have that in front of you, potentially, and then the  
4 transfer, and so you haven't really directed us yet to look at the  
5 post-season measure with the recreational state -- Okay.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Can we do all this at once, rather than just  
8 three separate motions here? I feel like -- I mean, if you want  
9 three separate motions for each of these things, but I was trying  
10 to whittle it down, and it doesn't seem like we're going in that  
11 direction.

12  
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and I don't know how that would  
14 work. I was thinking maybe not this level of detail, but it seems  
15 like maybe that's necessary for specifically for the carryover  
16 right now. I was thinking it could be more general, a general  
17 list to staff, that this is the priority order, and this is what  
18 you want to see, but if you want to take those three vehicles, and  
19 delve into it that way, whatever way you think makes the most  
20 sense, but I think we need to prioritize what we want to see after  
21 that. It can be tomorrow, but at some point.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Froeschke.

24  
25 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I guess we also need some certainty that the  
26 council is interested in exploring perhaps all three, but they're  
27 not interested in using them in combination with each other,  
28 because that's when it gets really complicated, is trying to figure  
29 out carryover and transfer and all that, and so -- But only one,  
30 and like you might consider all three, but, at the end of the day,  
31 you would only pick one of these. That's what I'm asking.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Fair question. All right. I'm going to go to  
34 Mr. Strelcheck, and let's try to reel this in here.

35  
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** If you're willing to entertain, I would like  
37 Bernie to show language that I've just put together quickly about  
38 the post-season accountability measure, and so I feel like it might  
39 provide some clarity here.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** But we do have a motion on the table that's  
42 been seconded, and so we'll have to dispense of this, unless you  
43 wanted to do a substitute, Andy.

44  
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, they all accomplish different purposes,  
46 right, and that's what I'm struggling with, and I think the  
47 transfer provision is a necessity. I'm not convinced the carryover  
48 is, with the combination of accountability measure, or vice versa,

1 right, and so I'm just trying to narrow the scope of what we would  
2 ask staff to work on.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That's exactly what I was trying to do as well.  
5 Okay, but, that being said, we do have a motion on the table that's  
6 been seconded. Any more discussion? Captain Walker.

7  
8 **MR. WALKER:** Maybe I'm not following this all the way, but would  
9 this not just put more pressure? Like we're kind of at least --  
10 We're chasing a declining fishery. If we're not catching our ACL,  
11 it might be because we're beating our fish down really hard, and  
12 do you want to just keep adding to that each year?

13  
14 If you beat the stock down, and you're not catching your ACL, do  
15 you want to put that on the next year, and have twice as much quota  
16 on a beatdown stock? That's just a thought that I have. I'm still  
17 trying to wrap my head around the benefits to this, but, if the  
18 stock is declining to the point where you're having a lot of  
19 leftover quota, do you want to put more quota on top of that the  
20 next year?

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** To that point, Dr. Banks, and then I'm going  
23 to go to Mr. Marquez.

24  
25 **DR. BANKS:** I understand that point, Ed. I think, at this stage  
26 though, we're also looking at one-time big events that may leave  
27 fish in the water that you otherwise might have been, and not  
28 chronic underfishing, and so I think, at this stage, I would argue  
29 that continuing to look at this, whether we move forward in the  
30 long term, is still valuable.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Mr. Marquez, and then Mr. Schieble.

33  
34 **MR. MARQUEZ:** So, first off, I think some of the discussion around  
35 Mississippi -- You know, I thought it was necessary for us to  
36 figure out some kind of transfer mechanism, because it just doesn't  
37 exist right now, and so that was part of the reason that we were  
38 interested in this. I think those things are -- They are separate.

39  
40 Whether you had the carryover or not, if you just had a way to  
41 look at it at the end of the year and say, okay, here's the quota  
42 that was fished, and here's what we have, and you had that  
43 accountability measure, but you would also need a second piece,  
44 from our perspective, from Mississippi, and how could you transfer  
45 somebody to use some of that quota for the next year, and I don't  
46 know how to -- I don't know how to get to that. I guess that is  
47 the carryover.

48

1 Otherwise, the state would have to guess it, to guess at that, but  
2 I don't think we were thinking about any great big numbers on this.  
3 It was, you know, something small, where we know around the edges  
4 on what is a carryover, and, when I go back to some of the  
5 discussion we had in the private rec group, it was, you know, like  
6 how could we -- The initiative was how can we smooth some of this  
7 out, and that covered everything from looking at sort of, you know,  
8 groups of years, you know, could you have three years or whatever,  
9 or could you have carryover and payback, and so you didn't have  
10 this kind of whipsawing back and forth. Anyway, I just -- I think  
11 you have to have the transfer measure in here, and whether that's  
12 as a separate action.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and we're only talking about -- There's  
15 going to be other components to this here. There's two other  
16 aspects of this. Mr. Schieble.

17  
18 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so this comment is to Captain Walker's  
19 point that he made earlier, and I think I agree with some of what  
20 you're saying, is that there's some anxiety over, you know, if we  
21 under fish by a considerable amount, and then we're going to try  
22 to roll some of that over, is that the best thing, and so these  
23 two additions that I made here in this motion are more conservative  
24 than what was on there. That's the whole idea, right?

25  
26 Maybe we shouldn't be rolling over 100 percent of what we leave on  
27 the table. As C.J. pointed out earlier, what is he going to do  
28 with a million pounds next year, right, but then 25 percent maybe  
29 is more reasonable to look at, but I think you have to -- At least  
30 in a state like Louisiana, we're pretty close every year, plus or  
31 minus, right?

32  
33 For me to be able to move some allocation, using the transfer  
34 thing, to another state that needs it, I need a carryover in place,  
35 so that, when I underfish, a percentage of that can be rolled over  
36 to the next fishing year, and then maybe potentially be  
37 transferred. Without this, I don't see the mechanism to get to  
38 the next step.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** General Spraggins, and then I'm going to try  
41 and wrap this conversation up, because we still have a motion on  
42 the table.

43  
44 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I mean, all right, and, Dr. Simmons, I think  
45 you're asking for something that I was trying to get to a while  
46 ago. We need to prioritize something, and maybe these are two  
47 different separate things, because how are you going to ask the  
48 staff to be able to put something together that says we're going

1 to do some type of -- Where you can share allocations, and then  
2 turn around and figure out how to do, if you have a carryover, as  
3 to how much are you over, and how much are you under, and what  
4 you're doing here.

5  
6 I mean, to me, I can see that. It's confusing me right now. I'm  
7 sitting here trying to figure out, number one, if something passes  
8 to the effect that says that we can do a shared allocation, and  
9 just say that Mississippi overfished, or something like that, and  
10 that Louisiana or Texas or somebody gave me 10,000 pounds.

11  
12 Well then how does that affect the other part of what you're trying  
13 to do about what we're going to do with carryover? It's going to  
14 make it entirely, you know -- All right, now it's Mississippi  
15 10,000 over, and so they've got to be 10,000 under the next year,  
16 and, you know, there's a whole lot of issues there, and so I would  
17 like to see it separated. I don't know, and maybe I'm out in left  
18 field here, but I would almost like to see it separated, and let's  
19 take it in two different angles, but I don't know. Maybe I'm out  
20 in left field.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'm not tracking you, General. When you're  
23 saying separating, what explicitly are you talking about  
24 separating here?

25  
26 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Well, I was talking about separating. Let's  
27 ask the staff to do one thing, and then come back and look at the  
28 other thing later, and what I'm saying is --

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'm tracking you. Okay. I mean, I'm going to  
31 try and hone this in, all right, and so we've got a motion on the  
32 table. Can we please dispense with that? The option basically  
33 would add to continue looking at carryover, but all this is doing  
34 is adding 50 percent and 25 percent of the state private angling  
35 ACL that can be carried over from one year to the next. **Do I have**  
36 **any objections to the motion that's on the table?** It's just adding  
37 an option to be explored. **I am not seeing any. The motion carries.**

38  
39 Okay, and now I would like to try and give some direction to Sarah.  
40 Andy, maybe now is the time to bring up your post-season AM  
41 language.

42  
43 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So maybe, if you're okay with it, what we'll do  
44 is we'll share it with the council staff, and they can look at it,  
45 and, if you're agreeable, we can incorporate it into the committee  
46 report for consideration at Full Council. That way, they have a  
47 chance to look at it and make sure we're all in agreement with the  
48 language.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think that sounds good to me, and so I guess  
3 what I would say, Sarah, is we will certainly come back at Full  
4 Council with a little bit more explicit direction here, but at  
5 least it sounds like, you know, continuing to explore carryover  
6 with these different percentages here, and it did seem like there  
7 was some appetite for looking at quota transfers, along those  
8 lines, just to keep that as a tool in the tool chest, and then we  
9 will bring forward a little bit more detail relative to post-  
10 season accountability measures.

11  
12 One thing that Dr. Froeschke was asking was asking is are these  
13 being viewed in a vacuum, or are they being viewed kind of together  
14 with one, because, obviously, if you start combining them, things  
15 get very, very complicated, and that's going to be a challenge for  
16 staff to even put a document together like that. Dr. Banks.

17  
18 **DR. BANKS:** I would argue, at this stage, we look at them in a  
19 vacuum, before we start complicating it. We're barely getting  
20 through the vacuum.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Banks. I would agree. Okay.  
23 Dr. Froeschke.

24  
25 **DR. FROESCHKE:** On the transfer, are we clear that that would be  
26 functioned as a post-season measure only?

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I did not hear any appetite for an in-season  
29 mechanism. Dr. Banks.

30  
31 **DR. BANKS:** I would argue we start with post-season, but I hate to  
32 remove in-season while we're going down this rabbit hole, but I  
33 would argue prioritizing post-season. If I understand Andy's idea  
34 of that, from the description, I think that will fit with kind of  
35 what everybody has also been talking about. That will give us a  
36 place to start, before we start talking about in-season transfers  
37 and go into the calibration and payback provisions and all of that.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Got that, Dr. Froeschke?

40  
41 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes. I think so. I mean, I guess the biggest  
42 part with the in-season bit, unless you did it at the beginning,  
43 before you ever started fishing, is we never have the data within  
44 a year, and so I don't know how we would ever do that.

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

47  
48 **MR. DUGAS:** To John's comment, LA Creel runs about ten days in

1 arrear, Chris, if I'm correct, and the path that Mississippi and  
2 Alabama is going down on new creel programs, you know, in-season  
3 monitoring, and shifting fish around in the future, could be easily  
4 done, and so I wouldn't take it off the table just yet, and maybe  
5 in the future.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** We will have more for you, Ms. Gardiner, come  
8 Full Council, which is tomorrow. All right. Captain Frady.

9  
10 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Reading the motion that we  
11 just passed here on the draft Action Number 1, Alternative 2, I  
12 was just looking at this right here, and we passed this right here  
13 where we have the options of 100 percent, 75, 50, and 25.

14  
15 I would like to add another action that set a hard cap on the  
16 carryover, with options of 2 percent, 5 percent, 7, or seven-and-  
17 a-half percent, I guess, and then 10 percent. Let's just give us  
18 some options to set a hard cap, because I'm more concerned about  
19 being more conservative than just allowing 100 percent, but I think  
20 it would be wise if we added some hard numbers as a cap, to be a  
21 little bit more conservative, to make sure we don't go over, and  
22 so if we were to take the same option here and add the language of  
23 putting a hard cap with options of two-and-a-half, 5 percent,  
24 seven-and-a-half percent, and --

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I mean, these effectively are hard caps. The  
27 25 percent would be the maximum amount that you -- Then so are you  
28 asking basically to add four separate options at 10 percent, 5  
29 percent, 2 percent, and -- Okay. Mr. Anson.

30  
31 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and Troy has asked me to help him out here a  
32 little bit, and so, you know, both of these cap, essentially, what  
33 he's offering and what this motion we just passed offers, but I  
34 think what Troy is saying is that if you set it based on your  
35 actual ACL, and the percentage of your ACL, that is different at  
36 5 percent or 10 percent than 75 percent of what you don't use.

37  
38 What his -- In my mind, what his motion would do would be to set  
39 it up so it would be more conservative in the amount of pounds  
40 that you would be able to carry over.

41  
42 For instance, if, for whatever reason, the economy was bad or what  
43 have you, and you didn't get the effort that you had normally would  
44 get for your area, and, therefore, your catches would be lower,  
45 depending upon which percentages are used, potentially, if his  
46 option were to be passed, and the percentage that would be used,  
47 that would be the maximum amount, and so you would only be limited  
48 by that 2 or 5 percent, whereas this is 75 percent of whatever

1 that number is, and it can be 30 percent, or 40 percent, of your  
2 allocation, if it's a bad event, but if Troy said you can only  
3 have 2 percent of your ACL, that may only be, pounds-wise, maybe  
4 half as much, you know, and so it just depends.

5  
6 It's a little bit more conservative. It's a little, I guess, more  
7 clear, maybe, potentially, as to what your maximum could be, and  
8 so that's what I think he's trying to say.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Banks.

11  
12 **DR. BANKS:** So, to that point, Troy, I'm in favor of what you're  
13 asking. I think, if you maybe wait for that motion until we get  
14 the analysis I asked for, we'll be able to give not just some  
15 percentages that way, but something based on landings and  
16 historical overages or underages, if you're amenable to that.

17  
18 **MR. FRADY:** Look, and I'm amenable with everything. It's just I  
19 wanted to make sure -- I'm a numbers guy, and not a percentage  
20 guy. I like numbers, hard numbers, and, if we set it based upon  
21 the percentage of your ACL, I think we would get a clear number,  
22 and it would be easy math for every state to say, well, if I do  
23 this, I can set aside, you know, 2 percent, 5 percent, or whatever  
24 it may be. Thank you.

25  
26 **DR. BANKS:** Yes, and I think just what I asked for will give you  
27 some hard data to put those numbers to, but you heard it on the  
28 record, everybody. He's amenable to everything, and so we're  
29 equal.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I guess I'll look back over to you,  
32 Troy, and so is this a motion you want to put forward now, or is  
33 this something you want to wait for Full Council?

34  
35 **MR. FRADY:** I'll take Dr. Banks' recommendation, but it is  
36 something I would like to add, or at least analyze. Thank you.  
37 Thank you for your thoughts.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Appreciate it, and so we've got some time to  
40 -- All right. Are we good on this one? Anything else? Dr.  
41 Simmons.

42  
43 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Sorry, Mr. Chair, and so I think, if  
44 we're understanding correctly, in order for the analysis to be in  
45 there, that potentially Mr. Frady was suggesting, you would have  
46 to have a motion, I think, for that, based on the way Mr. Anson  
47 described it, and so let's think about it, and maybe help and  
48 figure out if it's worth adding by tomorrow.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. You heard that though, Captain Frady.  
3 We might need a motion. All right. We're going to wait to move  
4 on for that. Thank you, Ms. Gardiner. I think we're going to  
5 move on to the next item here, which is Draft Amendment 64:  
6 Delegation of Federal For-Hire Red Snapper Management to the Gulf  
7 States, and I believe Dr. Diagne is going to lead us through this.  
8 How are we doing, Dr. Diagne? The floor is yours, sir.  
9

10 **DRAFT AMENDMENT 64: DELEGATE FEDERAL FOR-HIRE RED SNAPPER**  
11 **MANAGEMENT TO GULF STATES**  
12

13 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you very much. I'll go over the action guide  
14 item first, which is the title is Delegate Federal For-Hire Red  
15 Snapper Management to Gulf States. We will give presentations on  
16 options for state management of the federal for-hire component of  
17 the recreational sector for red snapper.  
18

19 Some of the options we'll discuss, we'll consider whether the state  
20 manages the private vessels and federal for-hire components  
21 together or separately and how the annual catch limit is going to  
22 be apportioned between the five states, and perhaps some of the  
23 closure or opening of federal waters by the states, and then  
24 essentially consider future actions, as suggested by this  
25 committee.  
26

27 The committee should consider the information presented, discuss  
28 it, and suggest the revisions and additions, and recommend next  
29 steps, as needed. Bernie, if you would, just please put the  
30 document, Reef Fish Amendment 64, and, if you would please, let's  
31 scroll to the purpose and needs section. Thank you.  
32

33 For the purpose and need for action here, this is the purpose and  
34 need that you discussed, and essentially recommended, that it be  
35 the one for this document. The purpose of this action is to  
36 establish a program structure through which a Gulf state may  
37 establish a management program that would provide flexibility in  
38 the management of the federally-permitted vessels' harvest of red  
39 snapper for their anglers.  
40

41 The need for action is to consider the management of the federal  
42 for-hire harvest of red snapper within the context of the states  
43 of the Gulf to prevent overfishing, while achieving, on a  
44 continuous basis, optimum yield from the harvest of red snapper by  
45 the federal for-hire sector; take into account and allow for  
46 variations among and contingencies in the fisheries, fisheries  
47 resources and catch, and provide fair and equitable access for the  
48 sustained participation of fishing communities of the Gulf, and to

1 the extent practicable, minimize adverse economic impacts on such  
2 communities. Again, to re-emphasize, this is your motion as-is,  
3 and so we just essentially put it as the purpose and need for  
4 action here.

5  
6 Bernie, please scroll down, and we could stop on page 2, which is  
7 7 PDF, and I would just like to mention something. If you could  
8 scroll I would say up, I guess. Yes, to Table 1.1.1, and sorry,  
9 and I should have used the number. Yes, the one before that. Yes,  
10 this one.

11  
12 This one, just I guess as a reminder, this table provides the  
13 historical number of permits, for-hire permits, by states, and the  
14 reason why essentially this time series starts in 2015 is, as you  
15 recall, 2015 was the first year for sector separation, and so it  
16 seems to me that, perhaps for future considerations, that is a  
17 reference point to be looked at. Having said all that for the  
18 landings, we still went ahead and provided much more than that.  
19 Please scroll down to Table, the next table, 1.1.2, please.

20  
21 Here we have the landings prior, but really the important reference  
22 point, if you would, would be to start looking at this from 2015,  
23 if not 2016, because the first year of sector separation perhaps  
24 was trial and error in many things, and so perhaps these landings  
25 would really be more applicable starting from 2016.

26  
27 Now let's go to the actions, to the management actions, and let's  
28 start with Action 1. Action 1 here would consider the delegation  
29 of the federal red snapper for-hire component management authority  
30 to Gulf of America, the authority to Gulf states, and so here we  
31 have two alternatives.

32  
33 Alternative 1 would be no action, essentially do not delegate to  
34 the federal management authority for the red snapper federal for-  
35 hire component to the respective states, and so we will just  
36 continue as-is, meaning having a federal for-hire component and a  
37 private angling component, which are the two components that you  
38 have.

39  
40 Alternative 2 would delegate the federal management authority for  
41 the red snapper federal for-hire component to, and we have  
42 essentially an option for each one of the states, and what I would  
43 mention here is, I mean, when this proceeds, at some point there  
44 will be an official acknowledgement by each one of the states  
45 wanting to pursue this, essentially saying that, yes, we are  
46 willing and ready and able to accept delegation along these lines.

47  
48 Just for reference, we included, in the appendix, the letters that

1 were written by the council to each one of the states, as well as  
2 the responses from each of the states while the private angling  
3 state management was considered, and so, yes, we have the letters  
4 from the council and each state's response to this.

5  
6 The gist of it was, yes, we are willing and ready and able to  
7 accept delegation, and some states explained more about the data  
8 collection programs and so forth, but that was the gist of it.

9  
10 For Action 1, we have an option for each one of the states, and  
11 that will continue to be developed, and each one of the states  
12 would say yay or nay, and the process would then follow. If there  
13 are no questions, I would continue and talk about Action 2. Let's  
14 go to Action 2, please, Bernie.

15  
16 The Action 2 would deal with the allocation of the resource, if  
17 you would, amongst the five parties, because, at this point, if we  
18 were to allocate, we have to consider that each and every state  
19 would need to know what their piece of the pie is going to be, and  
20 presumably that would also, with other factors, inform their  
21 decision as to whether, you know, they'll accept the delegation or  
22 not.

23  
24 The Action 1 would not allocate the resource, and it would keep  
25 the federal for-hire component quota as a single entity, if you  
26 would, and it would not allocate this amongst the five states.

27  
28 Alternatives 2 and 3 here are just suggestions, essentially, I  
29 mean, because we are in the very beginning of the development of  
30 this, and I did say that sector separation started in 2015, and so  
31 we let that year lapse, and just pick 2016, and either use, you  
32 know, almost the entire time series or use the five or four more  
33 recent years.

34  
35 If, for example, we use all the, quote-unquote, recent time series,  
36 keeping in mind sector separation, we could consider historical  
37 landings from 2016 to 2024, and the resulting percentages would  
38 range from 0.7 percent to a maximum of 48.8 percent, but for the  
39 respective states are indicated in the document.

40  
41 If you were to use a more recent time series, the ordinal ranking  
42 is not going to change, meaning which state is going to get more  
43 is going to still be the same, and let's say, for example, the  
44 state of Florida, but the cardinal values, meaning the different  
45 percentages allocated to each state, those are going to change.

46  
47 For example, I would take, as an example, let's say the State of  
48 Alabama, which is the first one here. Under Alternative 2, the

1 estimated percentage allocated would be 26 percent, but, if you  
2 were to consider more recent years, as 2021 to 2024, that will  
3 drop to 22.6, for example. A state like Texas, to go at the very  
4 end of the little table here, is pretty much stable. It's about  
5 19 percent, 18.5 or 19 percent, I mean, realizing that half a  
6 percentage point would make a whole lot of difference here,  
7 definitely.

8  
9 For now, these are the alternatives that we have, and we would  
10 also, if possible, take suggestions, of course, from the committee,  
11 or the council, as to what are the other things you would want us  
12 to consider and compute alternative allocation alternatives, and  
13 so that would be one question, is what else should we consider and  
14 that would be practicable to essentially compute allocations and  
15 bring that for your consideration outside of these historical  
16 landings.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Yes, Mr. Anson.

19  
20 **MR. ANSON:** To answer Dr. Diagne, and certainly I'm speaking just  
21 for myself, and not the whole committee, but I'm wondering if you  
22 could bring back kind of the proportion, or landings, based on  
23 vessel, basically, based on permits. You showed those tables  
24 previously, and so if there's a way that we could look at the  
25 permits and address like an average harvest by federally-permitted  
26 vessels, maybe, just to try to capture that a little bit more. I  
27 don't know, and maybe I'll think about it some more, and then maybe  
28 discuss it tomorrow.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Mr. Schieble.

31  
32 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so I have a couple of things for the whole  
33 deal here, and so do we want to go back to Action 1, if there's  
34 things for that, or do you want to talk about Action 2 now, and  
35 then go back later, and what do you prefer? Start with this?  
36 There's a third one in here still.

37  
38 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and let's start with --

39  
40 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Well, so back, and I think it was at the  
41 November meeting, when you first gave us the presentation on this,  
42 and showed us the time series tables that you were going to propose  
43 in here and everything, and I asked why the time series was  
44 truncated from 2016 to 2024, and you said it was because of  
45 availability of data, I think, from the Science Center at that  
46 point, because they had just come out of a shutdown or whatever.

47  
48 What I requested was a longer time series to be presented once we

1 got to the document, and I'm sort of disappointed I'm not seeing  
2 that as one of these alternatives here, and so I sent Bernie a  
3 motion to put up that considers the same Amendment 40 calculations  
4 that we use for the current allocations for the private  
5 recreational snapper right now.

6  
7 If you go back, and this is based entirely on Amendment 40 and the  
8 whole 42.3 and 57 percent breakdown from Amendment 40, the states  
9 right now, and their allocations that we use for the private  
10 recreational sector, and so the 19.12, for example, from Louisiana  
11 is derived from the Amendment 40 calculations that we used, and so  
12 I submitted a motion for consideration of adding -- I guess it's  
13 an Alternative 4 under Action 2. I guess I'll just read it here.

14  
15 **It's an Alternative 4 under Action 2 to allocate the federal for-**  
16 **hire red snapper quoted between the Gulf states based on an**  
17 **Amendment 40 sector separation formula, and I'm not going to read**  
18 **it all, but it's 50 percent of that time series plus 50 percent of**  
19 **the more recent time series in there, and so it's exactly the same**  
20 **formula we used among the states to divide the private recreational**  
21 **allocation that we're currently fishing under, and it equates to**  
22 **those percentages that I put in that box that you could add if you**  
23 **needed.**

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Diagne.

26  
27 **DR. DIAGNE:** Just to make sure that I follow, in Amendment 40, I  
28 mean, this wasn't -- It was one of the many things that were  
29 considered in there, and, at the end of the day, what Amendment 40  
30 did was not this. This was never done anywhere, right? It's one  
31 of the many options. Just for me to understand, and so you would  
32 want us to inspire ourselves from this formula, or your motion is  
33 to just allocate as follows, like this.

34  
35 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So this is the formula that we use right now that  
36 determines the private recreational sector allocations that we  
37 currently fish to. This is what was agreed upon from the Amendment  
38 40 document, and I want to include that as an alternative under  
39 that action, to use the same calculations for determining these  
40 allocations.

41  
42 **DR. DIAGNE:** To use the formula, but use landings -- I mean,  
43 current landings, and that's just what I want to know, is what are  
44 we going to do with landings from 2015 to 2025, or are those not  
45 part of your consideration? That's what I want to get to.

46  
47 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** No, and so the time series that's there in that  
48 motion would be what we would use to determine that.

1  
2 **DR. DIAGNE:** So this is the option --  
3  
4 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Which is the same time series that we use right now  
5 for the allocations that we currently fish under. That's how we  
6 determined that.  
7  
8 **DR. DIAGNE:** I get it. Okay, and so this is -- Okay, and so we  
9 are not going to consider any current landings or anything, and  
10 just this. Okay. I get it.  
11  
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and we've got hands going up here. I'm  
13 not going to lie, and that scares the crap out of me, Chris, not  
14 considering landings whatsoever, or the recent years period, but  
15 we'll move on. I would not be in support of that motion, but what  
16 have you got, Ed?  
17  
18 **MR. WALKER:** I would speak against the motion. If we're talking  
19 about potentially dividing up the current program between the  
20 states, I think you should only use the years that the program has  
21 been in effect, because that's where the permits are with their  
22 landings.  
23  
24 There's a pretty well-established record here, that's already  
25 demonstrated in the document, of where the charter fishing activity  
26 has been taking place since sector separation was put in place,  
27 and I think that's the only thing you should consider if you're  
28 going to try and move forward with this idea.  
29  
30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Dugas.  
31  
32 **MR. DUGAS:** I was wondering if we had a second for the motion on  
33 the board.  
34  
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That is a good point. Do we have a second for  
36 the motion that's on the board? Billy Broussard. Now we've got  
37 a second. It's open for more discussion. Mr. Sanchez.  
38  
39 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I'll speak against it for the same reasons.  
40 This disregards recent history of a successful program that's been  
41 around for years. In fact, it was baptized right here, probably  
42 in this very building, and so I speak against this.  
43  
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Yes, and I'll also add, you know, not  
45 only is it just not even considerate of any landings whatsoever,  
46 which creates some management challenges altogether, but also the  
47 number of permits that are just relative to each state and the  
48 amount of effort.

1  
2 I mean, we've got ten-times the amount of permits that Louisiana  
3 has, and now we're saying we would set up this allocation, and  
4 it's only like 20 percent more. I mean -- Okay. We have a motion  
5 on the table, and it's been seconded by Mr. Broussard. Do we have  
6 any other discussion? All right.

7  
8 **MR. FRADY:** Can I ask a question?

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, you can ask a question.

11  
12 **MR. FRADY:** The formula is kind of confusing, because it says 1986  
13 to 2005, but it skips to 2007 and 2009. Is there a way to run  
14 this formula running continuously from 1986 to 2025? Is that a  
15 possibility, or is it going to benefit -- I mean, the longest time  
16 series has kind of been a precedent around the council.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** It is, but that is not what Mr. Schieble is  
19 going for here.

20  
21 **MR. FRADY:** Well, I was just asking. Thank you.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Marquez.

24  
25 **MR. MARQUEZ:** I just wanted to point out in this time series, I  
26 mean, you know, 2005 was when we had Katrina, and so that was a  
27 big gap, and then between 2005 and 2007, and then we had the oil  
28 spill, and so that's why that's not continuous.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Motion on the table. Any more  
31 discussion? All right. Let's -- I heard a roll call. We're going  
32 to do a roll call vote. We got a request. Mr. Dugas.

33  
34 **MR. DUGAS:** Before we vote, just a reminder for folks that we're  
35 just adding this to the document. That's it, for discussion, and  
36 nothing further, but just adding it to the document.

37  
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Should I do it old school, Bernie?  
39 All right. Are you ready to help me? Are you ready? Just type  
40 it up. Okay. Everybody knows what the motion is, right, and  
41 you're ready to go, Mr. Chair?

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, Dr. Simmons. It's all yours.

44  
45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** All right. Mr. Osborne.

46  
47 **MR. OSBORNE:** I'm voting yes, just because I like to see the  
48 Florida guys get a little upset.

1  
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Sanchez.  
3  
4 **MR. SANCHEZ:** No.  
5  
6 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** General Spraggins.  
7  
8 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes.  
9  
10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Ms. Ballard.  
11  
12 **MS. BRENDA BALLARD:** Yes.  
13  
14 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Broussard.  
15  
16 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Yes.  
17  
18 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Frady.  
19  
20 **MR. FRADY:** Yes.  
21  
22 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Allen.  
23  
24 **DR. ALLEN:** No.  
25  
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Strelcheck.  
27  
28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Abstain.  
29  
30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Overton.  
31  
32 **DR. OVERTON:** Yes.  
33  
34 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Marquez.  
35  
36 **MR. MARQUEZ:** Yes.  
37  
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Anson.  
39  
40 **MR. ANSON:** Yes.  
41  
42 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Schieble.  
43  
44 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes.  
45  
46 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Banks.  
47  
48 **DR. BANKS:** Yes.

1  
2 Mr. Geeslin.  
3  
4 **MR. GEESLIN:** Abstain.  
5  
6 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Walker.  
7  
8 **MR. WALKER:** No.  
9  
10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Dugas. I guess it's a roll call  
11 vote, and so Mr. Dugas.  
12  
13 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes.  
14  
15 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay, and Dr. Sweetman.  
16  
17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Abstain.  
18  
19 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. So that was twelve to two,  
20 right? Did I get it right? Three abstentions. Eleven to three  
21 with three abstentions. Okay.  
22  
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** **The motion carries.** Mr. Schieble.  
24  
25 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** All right. To make some folks in the room a little  
26 happier, I've sent another motion to add another alternative to  
27 this document for us to choose from with the altered time series,  
28 and so, even though it's passed, which I like, this one is slightly  
29 different, but it incorporates the more recent time series, which  
30 Dr. Assane just asked about, as to why I didn't include it in this  
31 motion, and so I want you to see the differences, is mainly why I  
32 did this.  
33  
34 **When Bernie gets it, whenever email works, essentially it's to add**  
35 **an Alternative 5 in Action 2 to allocate the federal for-hire red**  
36 **snapper quota between the Gulf States based on 50 percent of the**  
37 **Amendment 40 sector separation formula, and so the same thing you**  
38 **just saw, 50 percent of 1986 to 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, plus**  
39 **50 percent of 2007, 2009, 2011 to 2013, and 50 percent of each**  
40 **state's average red snapper landings between 2021 and 2024, plus**  
41 **50 percent times 2021 to 2024, which is from Alternative 3 in the**  
42 **document already, and then there's a landing allocation table**  
43 **included with that, and so this would be -- I'm sorry, and it**  
44 **should be an Alternative 5, if we can fix that "4" to a "5".**  
45 **That's the motion.**  
46  
47 It includes the more recent time series from Alternative 3,  
48 factored in with the historical time series, and so part of the

1 rationale on this is that you still have the historical time  
2 series, which is pre-FES landings, given some of those issues with  
3 overestimation and current error around some of those estimates.  
4

5 It takes out key years, as Mr. Marquez pointed out with Katrina  
6 and BP, the oil spill, and that's why they're not included, and  
7 then it also reflects some of the historic opportunity in the Gulf  
8 that used to be there that is now leading to inequity that is the  
9 basis for this whole thing in the first place.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We have a motion on the table. Do we  
12 have a second? Mr. Broussard. Any discussion? Captain Walker.  
13

14 **MR. WALKER:** So kind of same thing. To me, only sector separation  
15 years should be considered when we're talking about dividing sector  
16 separation between states. I don't think that's unreasonable. I  
17 disagree with trying to tweak the time series for individual gain  
18 between states, which I believe is what's happening here, and I  
19 think that's -- We knew we were going to come to this if we went  
20 down this road, and here we are, and so I speak against the motion.  
21

22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any further discussion? Mr. Anson.  
23

24 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so we're starting a document, and generally  
25 what you would like to try to do is to add as many alternatives,  
26 options, in each of the action items, so you have a chance to  
27 discuss the merits of each, and so that was my rationale for the  
28 previous motion, and it will be for this one.  
29

30 My vote at this time doesn't mean I'll support this particular  
31 motion, or these motions in the future, but inasmuch as just trying  
32 to provide different alternatives for the committee, and the  
33 council, to look at is my rationale.  
34

35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.  
36

37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So I'll lead by saying I'm going to abstain on  
38 this vote, but, you know, the good thing about what we call the  
39 Bowtie approach here, right, is you can look at the historical  
40 landings, whether or not there's been access gained or lost  
41 relative to, obviously, the newer landings history.  
42

43 I think my question is really to Chris, and, you know, why just  
44 the last four years, and why not consider 2016 forward through  
45 2024? It seems odd that we would have this gap of eight years of  
46 landings data that aren't even considered as part of this  
47 allocation formula.  
48

1 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So I'm not opposed to that either. If you want to  
2 make a substitute motion to modify this one, I would support that  
3 as well. I think we can incorporate probably 50 percent between  
4 2016 and 2024 plus 50 percent of 2016 through 2024, and just change  
5 where it says "2021" in there and make it "2016". If you want to  
6 do that, I'm open to that.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I guess I would say here that this is not a  
9 Bowtie approach. This is just adding three years on to the later  
10 of the time series. If it were to be a true Bowtie approach, you  
11 do the earlier time series plus weighting 50 percent with the more  
12 recent time series too, and that's not what this is doing here.  
13 All right. Any more discussion? Okay. Motion on the table.  
14 Second by Mr. Broussard. **Any in opposition to this motion? I've**  
15 **got three in opposition. Any abstentions? Two abstentions. The**  
16 **motion carries.** Mr. Schieble.

17  
18 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Can we go back to Action 1 and talk about stuff in  
19 there, briefly?

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** We still have Action 3 that we need to go  
22 through.

23  
24 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** What do you prefer, Chair?

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think let's get through Action 3, so we can  
27 get through the document, and then we can go back to Action 1.

28  
29 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Action 3 is also lifted, quote-  
30 unquote, from previous amendments, and, essentially, it will just  
31 consider for-hire red snapper season provisions. In other  
32 amendments, let's say, for example, you could start the season for  
33 everybody on the same day, to avoid confusion, such as we have it  
34 now for the federal for-hire component, and let's say a June 1  
35 start, and then the season would run their respective courses for  
36 the different states, or most likely give the flexibility to each  
37 one of the state to open and close their seasons in federal waters  
38 as they see fit.

39  
40 Then, to be able to do that, I guess request either the authority  
41 to close the waters adjacent to your state or request both the  
42 opening and the close, depending on the structure of the federal  
43 season, and so that would be the two alternatives here for your  
44 consideration at this point.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Ms. Levy.

47  
48 **MS. LEVY:** Yes, and so I didn't have a lot of time to look at this

1 before the meeting. I guess I don't really understand this action,  
2 right, and like it seems, to me, when we did the private angling  
3 state management, setting the season was the main part of the  
4 delegation, which was the first action, right, and so each state  
5 had to set its specific season, and then there were other options  
6 that you chose that states could do, like bag limit, et cetera.

7  
8 It's not clear to me why we would make this a separate action, and  
9 it's also not clear to me why you would want it to be only within  
10 federal waters contiguous to the state, unless not all states  
11 participate, right, and like that's what happened with the regional  
12 management. It was like, if all states are participating, federal  
13 waters are open, right, and then it depends where you land type of  
14 thing, but, if there was one state that wasn't participating, well,  
15 then we have to set a federal season, and we have to start drawing  
16 these lines, and so I'm just confused about why this is like this.

17  
18 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, Ms. Levy, and, actually, one of the things that  
19 we did was go back to Amendment 50 and see what was done, and this  
20 here, I mean, with extension, is essentially Action 3, the  
21 procedure for allowing a Gulf state to request the closure of areas  
22 of federal waters adjacent to their state waters for red snapper  
23 recreational fishing.

24  
25 Not only would this document at some point discuss what will be  
26 delegated to the states, including, you know, bag limits and so  
27 forth, and season setting, but, for what you said, if different  
28 states participate under different, I guess, modalities, it seems  
29 to me that they would require, I guess, you know, the closure of  
30 federal waters adjacent to their state, as it would have done in  
31 Amendment 50.

32  
33 **MS. LEVY:** I mean, maybe we can work it out, but, to me, that's  
34 not what this says, to me. This is like for-hire red snapper  
35 season provisions, and like it's not a federal water closure  
36 provision. I would think the for-hire season, state-by-state,  
37 would be in Action 1.

38  
39 That would be like the benchmark. Like, if you're going to get  
40 delegated authority for the for-hire sector, you should be setting  
41 the season, right, and like that's the main thing, and so maybe we  
42 can talk between now and Full Council, but this -- I'm just not  
43 understanding it, I guess.

44  
45 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and certainly we could talk, but I'm looking at  
46 Amendment 50 actually, that action, and probably we could change  
47 the title, but, you know, that specific provision, and you  
48 establish a procedure to allow a state to request NMFS close areas

1 of federal waters adjacent to their states to red snapper  
2 recreational fishing, and the request would be done by a letter,  
3 and so on and so forth, and so, for completeness, we just added it  
4 here, but certainly these are for-hire federal-prohibited vessels.  
5 Maybe that we can rephrase these more, I guess, in line with what  
6 we tried to do here, but it was done in Amendment 50.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We've gotten through the actions. Thank  
9 you for that discussion. Mr. Schieble.

10  
11 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so I see what Mara is saying, and I might  
12 be recalling this wrong, but I think, when we had the potential  
13 for the closures off of each state, that was included within the  
14 individual amendment A, B, C, D, or F, whatever we had for  
15 Amendment 50, right, and so some states chose to include that in  
16 their individual state amendment for Amendment 50, and others,  
17 like Louisiana, chose to not have a closure option off of the  
18 federal waters off of their state, and so maybe this is something  
19 we can consider moving back into Action 1, similar to what we had  
20 in Amendment 50, and I don't know.

21  
22 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and, I mean, the reorganization of the amendment,  
23 that's not a problem, and what you mentioned, Mr. Schieble, the  
24 procedure itself was set in Amendment 50, the umbrella one. That's  
25 why we included it here, but, the decisions made by individual  
26 states, those were in the satellite amendment, and so there's a  
27 distinction there.

28  
29 The procedure itself was Action 3 in Amendment 50, and, the  
30 decisions and the rationale for each one of the states, those were  
31 in the -- I guess "satellite" would be the term to be used, but  
32 certainly, I mean, at the IPT level, we can -- We will reorganize  
33 the actions to make it flow, to reflect this, but, initially, bag  
34 limit and size limit, within a certain range, those were taken as  
35 given, and were just included, and not even to be an action. That  
36 was a given that when a state, if you give them delegation, should,  
37 at the very minimum, be able to do that, set their own bag limit  
38 and their size limit, but within boundaries for the size limit,  
39 and there was a minimum and a maximum, as you recall, but those  
40 would just be included in that.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Chris, you had some stuff for  
43 Action 1?

44  
45 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, before we leave this, real quick, I'm  
46 not even sure if this is necessary. As Mara pointed out, the  
47 opening and closing of a season, that would be under the delegation  
48 in Action 1 anyway, right, and then, in my opinion, closing federal

1 waters off of each state, I don't think that's necessary either.

2  
3 Let's say, for a hypothetical example, that Louisiana and  
4 Mississippi chose to go along with this, and we both had season  
5 structure, and we closed before Mississippi, and you couldn't land  
6 those fish anyway, right? Unless you launched out of our state,  
7 and fished in our waters, you couldn't come land those fish in a  
8 closed state anyway. That's where they would have to go. If  
9 they're going to fish off of Louisiana, 200 miles out, and then  
10 drive back to Mississippi, well, so be it, you know? That's just  
11 my opinion on that.

12  
13 I guess, going back to Action 1, I think we need some guardrails  
14 in there. What I didn't see was any sort of accountability  
15 measures in the text below Alternative 2. I think we need to put  
16 something in here for like a payback provision, and so let's say  
17 one state ends up opting into this, and they blow over whatever  
18 that allocation is that we decide in Action 2, and there needs to  
19 be some sort of recourse to pay that back within that state  
20 allocation following here, just like we do right now in Amendment  
21 50, and so I think we've got to do that.

22  
23 Then, along the lines of what Mara was talking about, if you scroll  
24 further down, Bernie, under Alternative 2, the text that's in  
25 there, it talks about some of those delegated authorities, and do  
26 we need to specify where those would fall out under each of the  
27 options in Alternative 2 or not? I'm not sure, and so it sort of  
28 generalizes that.

29  
30 For example, the delegated authority could include determination  
31 minimum maximum size limits within a predetermined range, setting  
32 a bag limit, et cetera, and so this is what you were just talking  
33 about, Dr. Assane. Let's presume that, if you are delegated that  
34 authority, that includes all those things then, and that's what  
35 we're going to do with this, or do we need to declare that?

36  
37 **DR. DIAGNE:** Depending on your preference. I mean, the thinking  
38 here is that the provisions that we have for the private rec,  
39 essentially, in terms of size limits and all of those things, those  
40 would just be called in here, and copied, unless, as a council,  
41 you thought that you would have different bag limits, for example,  
42 for the for-hire versus the private.

43  
44 If that becomes the case during the development of this amendment,  
45 you let us know, and those would then be separated by state, and  
46 then there would be the need for having state-specific actions, if  
47 you would, but part of the previous discussion was it may be the  
48 case that we won't need the satellite amendments. It may be the

1 case that we can all have everything here, and so we start there,  
2 but, when the need arises, then we would have to split it, when  
3 that time comes.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Ms. Levy.

6  
7 **MS. LEVY:** Well, just to Chris's point, yes, when this gets fleshed  
8 out, it is going to have to say what is delegated. It won't just  
9 be that it might be this, and it will be the states are delegated  
10 X, Y, and Z, bag limit, size limit, whatever, like was in Amendment  
11 50, but I think what Assane is saying is we might be able to do it  
12 all in one amendment and not have six separate amendments.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Any further discussion? We have added  
15 a couple alternatives here in Action 2, had some discussion on  
16 Action 1, and the need for Action 3, and whether that can be  
17 incorporated into Action 1 a little bit more broadly, but actually  
18 calling some of that stuff out. Any more discussion that is needed  
19 on this topic? Assane, let me ask you, and what further do you  
20 need on this here?

21  
22 **DR. DIAGNE:** I think, for the time being, we have enough to continue  
23 developing this amendment. I mean, we take it as, of course, an  
24 iterative process, and we'll bring you more actions, and these  
25 options, and maybe your discussions will bring other actions as we  
26 go.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, sir. Captain Frady.

29  
30 **MR. FRADY:** May I ask a question? We're talking about percentages,  
31 and I'm just thinking about this. Percentages don't mean that  
32 much to me when it comes down to delegating. What means something,  
33 to me, is how many days we're going to get, and are there some  
34 numbers run that we could look at to see how many days we would  
35 get based on these percentages, because I've got a whole lot of  
36 people looking at me that make our living out there. Days mean  
37 something, and percentages don't, and is there a way we could get  
38 some of that information included?

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That question is not for me to do that  
41 analysis, but I think, as we develop a document, it would be  
42 developed along those lines, where we could present some options  
43 like that, but I'm going to look at Dr. Diagne.

44  
45 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and I agree with the chair, and I guess, you  
46 know, part of it is, you know, the way a particular state would  
47 want to set their season, right, and when would it start, and when  
48 would it end, et cetera, and what would be the bag limits, and all

1 of those, of course, would affect the number of days, but  
2 certainly, as we develop this, when possible, some examples, or  
3 scenarios, would be included to inform your discussion.  
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** It is also a little challenging because state  
6 management is state management, right, and so the structure could  
7 be set up in a variety of different ways, and so it might be a  
8 little tough to get that analysis going, but Dr. Froeschke.  
9

10 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Just thinking out, could an individual vessel  
11 participate or land in more than one state in a given fishing year?  
12

13 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes.  
14

15 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So that would complicate how we would calculate  
16 the season length, especially if the season is sort of overlapping.  
17

18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Agreed. I understand what you're saying.  
19 Discussion around the table? Mr. Anson.  
20

21 **MR. ANSON:** Relative to that, I think it's very minor, in the grand  
22 scheme of things, to have a boat participate in two state's  
23 fisheries.  
24

25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think they're just looking for some  
26 direction for how to calculate, or how to navigate that, if that's  
27 something that we would want to consider. I heard -- I saw some  
28 heads nodding yes. All right. Mr. Schieble.  
29

30 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So my interpretation of that would be let's say a  
31 vessel that is from Alabama comes over to Louisiana, and gets his  
32 out-of-state charter fishing license, and fishes in Louisiana when  
33 that season is open, and they were going to land those fish in  
34 Louisiana. They're going to be accounted for under LA Creel, and  
35 they're going to count against the federal for-hire quota that we  
36 established in that second action in here, whatever the percentage  
37 comes out to.  
38

39 Then that boat goes back over by you and fishes, and so let's say  
40 you're not participating in this. Then they fish out of Alabama,  
41 and land in Alabama, towards the Gulf-wide remaining ACL, whatever  
42 is left over there, and we're still taking our chunk out of the  
43 overall ACL, because that's what is delegated to Louisiana, and  
44 so, to me, the math works that way.  
45

46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Any further -- Dr. Froeschke.  
47

48 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes, and I guess just to follow-up, and so, if a

1 vessel is ported out of Alabama, could they not fish in Mississippi  
2 waters, for example, unless they had a Mississippi permit, or would  
3 they still be a federal permit, and they could fish, but just  
4 depending on where they land?

5  
6 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, to me, that's no different to what  
7 we're doing right now. We're fishing Gulf-wide, and so, if a boat  
8 from Louisiana drives over off of Alabama and fishes, and takes  
9 all of Kevin's fish, and comes back and lands in Louisiana with  
10 them, but still ended up landing in Louisiana, it counts towards  
11 the Gulf-wide ACL. In this scenario, it would be documented  
12 wherever that boat lands, right, and so, if it's fishing off of  
13 Alabama, and landing back in Louisiana, it counts out of that  
14 Louisiana ACL, whatever that is, and not Alabama.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Allen.

17  
18 **DR. ALLEN:** I just wanted to add, since our last meeting when we  
19 discussed this, I've heard from a fair number of charter fishermen,  
20 mostly in Florida, but also Alabama and Mississippi, and I have  
21 not talked to a single one that wants this, and so I'm kind of in  
22 the same spot that I was the last time we discussed it. Thank  
23 you.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. I'm looking around the table. Mr.  
26 Chair, we are -- John, have you got something?

27  
28 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I agree. I have not heard anybody, that I  
29 know, and that's the vast majority of the permit holders, that is  
30 in favor of this. They are very pleased where they're at with  
31 sector separation. It seems to have accomplished everything they  
32 wanted. They have their business model, and now they can prosecute  
33 and advertise. They know what they're getting at the onset of the  
34 season, and it's working, and, here, we're just going to disrupt  
35 it.

36  
37 I think there's other ways to address some of the concerns that  
38 some of the states may have with this, but, to revisit this when  
39 it's working, and seemingly accomplishes all of the purpose and  
40 need -- Everything that's in the purpose and need, it's already  
41 accomplished with the existing sector separation. I just don't  
42 see the need for this. It's going to create a lot of dissent and,  
43 you know, disruption in business models, and within the for-hire  
44 people, and, you know, they're a finite, identifiable universal  
45 people.

46  
47 We have already a bunch of public comment which would support what  
48 I'm saying, but, if you were to ask every single one of them

1 individually, a vote or something, and do you want to do this, it  
2 will be a big, loud, emphatic, overwhelming no, and so why do you  
3 want to force something on a group of people where the vast  
4 majority of them do not want it? I just don't -- It boggles my  
5 mind.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Schieble.

8  
9 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So, to that point, I've heard similar public comment  
10 here from mostly folks in the eastern Gulf, and I would suggest,  
11 or say, at least in response to that, a good example of the landings  
12 report we got this morning from NMFS showing that the federal for-  
13 hire underfished their allocation by a million pounds. They're 30  
14 percent under what the allocation is, and so I don't understand  
15 the apprehension with this.

16  
17 If it's underfished by that far, what difference is this going to  
18 make, right, and they've been 25 percent, or more, underfished for  
19 the past five years, and so, if that's taking place, this really  
20 isn't going to change anything.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'm going to have Dr. Allen last, and then  
23 we're going to take a break. We're overdue, guys. Dr. Allen.

24  
25 **DR. ALLEN:** I was just going to say, Chris, you know, that's true  
26 right now, but it won't always be true, and we're talking about -  
27 - Or it may not always be true, and we're talking about a system  
28 that would stay in place for an extended period, and so this could  
29 cause a lot of problems down the road.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Mr. Chair, I think it's time for  
32 a break.

33  
34 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We'll take a fifteen-minute  
35 break, and we'll come back at 4:10.

36  
37 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

38  
39 **MR. DUGAS:** Okay. If we can get council members back to the table,  
40 we're going to get started.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I think we're going to get --

43  
44 **MR. DUGAS:** Hold on, Dr. Sweetman. One thing before I turn it  
45 over to you. I would like to recognize a previous council member  
46 is here, Ms. Susan Boggs. Thank you, Ms. Susan. Okay.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We're going to get started. We've got

1 just a couple more items on the agenda, plus three other items in  
2 Other Business here, but the next item on the agenda is Discussion  
3 of the 2026 Gag Grouper and Greater Amberjack Recreational Fishing  
4 Season. I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Strelcheck.

5  
6 **DISCUSSION OF 2026 GAG GROUPEr AND GREATER AMBERJACK**  
7 **RECREATIONAL FISHING SEASON**  
8

9 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. We don't have a presentation.  
10 Right now, landings are preliminary. We're waiting on  
11 finalization of 2025 landings data, but, based on the preliminary  
12 landings that Kelli showed earlier, gag did not exceed the catch  
13 limit, and recall that we were fishing under a reduced quota last  
14 year, that had a payback, and so that's great news. That will  
15 allow us to continue with the rebuilding plan and increase the  
16 catch level next year without imposing a further reduction on that  
17 higher catch limit and quota.

18  
19 Based on some preliminary projections that the Southeast Regional  
20 Office has done, we're estimating the season to be somewhere  
21 between twenty-five and thirty-three days. The projection model  
22 that was discussed earlier by Trevor, that's been developed between  
23 USF and the Fish and Wildlife Commission, that estimated a season  
24 of approximately thirty-four days, and so we're very close to one  
25 another, and it just depends on a little bit of differences in  
26 methodology.

27  
28 We are going to wait for the landings to be finalized. We don't  
29 expect them to change substantially. We know also that the State  
30 of Florida is contemplating an exempted fishing permit, and so  
31 we're aware of that, and sitting tight right now with regard to  
32 any announcement of the season, but we'll continue to work on  
33 refining those estimates, if there's any adjustments to the  
34 landings, and so I'll stop there on gag, if there's any questions  
35 on gag first.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any questions for Mr. Strelcheck about gag  
38 grouper? All right. Seeing none, Andy, greater amberjack.

39  
40 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Okay, and so, as you recall, the amberjack season  
41 last year was quite a mess. We had a major overage the year prior,  
42 but that was not adjusted, or paid back, during last year's season.  
43 We did not make any corrections to the catch limit.

44  
45 We did run the season from September 1 until September 27. You  
46 saw, with the earlier presentation today, that the landings data  
47 did not come in above the catch limit. However, there was some  
48 lack of landings reports, obviously, from some states, and so it

1 was an unusual year, in terms of actual landings data.

2  
3 With that said, for this coming year, we would be fishing back to  
4 the catch target. We've done some preliminary projections for  
5 amberjack, and estimates are in the forty to forty-five-day range  
6 for the amberjack season.

7  
8 Similar to gag, we want to wait until the landings are finalized  
9 for 2025, and then we will use those landings to, obviously,  
10 announce a fall amberjack season. Like gag, we're aware of some  
11 interest in exempted fishing permits, and so also kind of sitting  
12 tight with regard to an announcement for the greater amberjack  
13 season. Any questions?

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any questions for Andy? Thank you for that  
16 update. Certainly I know there was some concern about the  
17 possibility of not even having a recreational greater amberjack  
18 season, and so thank you, Andy. Any questions for Mr. Strelcheck  
19 on that topic?

20  
21 **MR. WALKER:** Will amberjack open on September 1, regardless of  
22 what season it is, right?

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** The greater amberjack season is scheduled to  
25 open on September 1, yes. Mr. Schieble, then Mr. Dugas.

26  
27 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Andy, I may have missed this, and can you speculate  
28 when you think you will know what the season structure would look  
29 like for greater amberjack?

30  
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So we would likely have landings data by the end  
32 of this month, into early May, and could have kind of final  
33 estimates ready to go for the season.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any more questions for Andy? Okay. Seeing  
36 none, thank you, Mr. Strelcheck, and I think you're also next on  
37 the list here for announcement of the 2026 federal for-hire red  
38 snapper fishing season.

39  
40 **ANNOUNCEMENT OF 2026 FEDERAL FOR-HIRE RED SNAPPER FISHING SEASON**

41  
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, so I just want to, first, give a huge shoutout  
43 to my team. I know there was a lot of discussion at the last  
44 council meeting, and frustration that we weren't able to implement  
45 the before Memorial Day start date for the red snapper season.  
46 They worked really hard to get the announcement out prior to this  
47 council meeting. The Fishery Bulletin is on the screen, but we  
48 announced the June 1 start date, and we estimate the season will

1 close October 26.

2  
3 The one thing I will mention is this is kind of bittersweet.  
4 Obviously, I recognize the social and economic benefits of a longer  
5 season, but it is still a concerning trend that this is, I think,  
6 the fourth year in a row that the season has gotten longer and  
7 longer and longer, for a variety of reasons, but, to me, we're  
8 trending potentially in a bad direction, and I'm concerned,  
9 obviously, about, you know, the health and status of this  
10 population, and why these seasons are getting longer, and we'll  
11 hopefully get some science to inform, obviously, our management  
12 going forward, but the charter sector will certainly benefit from  
13 some additional fishing days this year.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Andy. Any questions or comments  
16 for Andy on the federal for-hire fishing season? Okay. Seeing  
17 none, thanks, Andy. That moves us into Other Business, I believe,  
18 and we had three items of other business. First on the list here  
19 that I had was a discussion of a greater amberjack exempted fishing  
20 permit from Mr. Schieble.

21  
22 **OTHER BUSINESS**

23 **DISCUSSION OF A GREATER AMBERJACK EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT**

24  
25 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, along the  
26 lines of the amberjack season, and it's been getting shorter and  
27 shorter, and we've had -- You know, we're down to a two-month  
28 season now, and it's making it a rare-event species.

29  
30 We saw, in our data summaries, that we are really not intercepting  
31 a lot. We intercepted six, and, of course, it was a shorter season  
32 last year, three weeks, actual amberjack in Louisiana. I think  
33 Kevin, in Alabama, said they had about five. It's just, looking  
34 at the number of intercepts and the data that's coming in, it's  
35 becoming difficult to make any decisions on amberjack going forward  
36 on anything if we're not actually intercepting fish, right?

37  
38 Part of what I feel is a justification to look at potential for  
39 exempted fishing permits on greater amberjack, and better data  
40 management, are some of the recreational initiative bullets that  
41 came out of the recreational initiative.

42  
43 One is overlapping consistency of seasons, interest in finer-scale  
44 management, state or regional, what we're talking about here,  
45 provide regional state flexibility, different management measures  
46 for greater amberjack in the western and eastern Gulf, addressing  
47 uncertainty and variability of Gulf-wide recreational harvest  
48 estimates, and equity of access in different regions of the Gulf.

1  
2 The state directors have been discussing this potential for  
3 exempted fishing permits to test out the state reporting systems  
4 for greater amberjack, with the goal of moving towards, as we've  
5 talked about around this table, state management of greater  
6 amberjack, but we won't really know how effective our current  
7 systems are for state management of amberjack unless we have the  
8 ability to test that.

9  
10 It's going to have to be in some sort of format similar to what we  
11 did with state management of snapper, which was we started the  
12 first two years, in 2018 and 2019, with exempted fishing permits  
13 among the five states, to test out their state reporting systems  
14 to be able to handle that, and could they do it or not, and this  
15 is a similar situation, I feel.

16  
17 We're working towards some of that. We've drafted one that we've  
18 talked about already, and it has not been submitted at this point.  
19 We're working with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, as well  
20 as the other state directors, to refine what that EFP would look  
21 like among the other states, and they may choose to want to talk  
22 about this as well, or not.

23  
24 Some of the goals for ours are to improve accuracy and timeliness  
25 of private recreational and for-hire catch data of greater  
26 amberjack in Louisiana and adjacent federal waters, and, two, to  
27 gain beneficial baseline information to inform future state  
28 management.

29  
30 If we're only getting five intercepts, or six intercepts, right  
31 now, we're really not getting biological data either. We've got  
32 a large amount of red snapper biological data, as you saw in our  
33 presentations, the lengths, weights, and ages especially, and  
34 we're not providing data at the state level to inform any future  
35 stock assessments if we're not intercepting fish with a truncated  
36 season. The idea is to be able to get more biological data going  
37 forward, while we're testing those state data reporting systems at  
38 the same time, to get the lengths, weights, and especially  
39 otoliths, to maintain that data stream coming in for the  
40 assessments.

41  
42 The plan right now, in the current format, would be to potentially  
43 submit at least the Louisiana exempted fishing permit sometime  
44 early summer, late spring or early summer, of this year. We're  
45 looking at the potential if we could adjust the season.

46  
47 I think, if we did adjust the season to a couple of spring months,  
48 versus fall months, under the state management, we would get a

1 better chance at getting more of that biological data, and dockside  
2 intercepts, if it were to overlap with a portion of the red snapper  
3 season under state management in Louisiana as well. That hasn't  
4 been finalized, or determined yet, at this point, but I will leave  
5 it up to my other colleagues in the other states if they want to  
6 elaborate more on some of this.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Any questions, or comments, for -- Mr.  
9 Geeslin.

10  
11 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thanks for taking the initiative, Chris, and really  
12 recognizing some of the pitfalls of shortened seasons, and some of  
13 the, you know, lack of data streams that we may be struggling with.  
14 I applaud you for, you know, not only drafting the EFP, but, in  
15 our discussions as state directors, we certainly recognize that  
16 there's some challenges associated with this.

17  
18 Again, the states and the Regional Administrator are working well  
19 together at the moment. I think there's some flexibility here to  
20 try out some things, to see how this is going to work, and I can  
21 tell you I've had conversations back at the ranch, and we've got  
22 a draft in process, and so we're with you. We want to see how  
23 this rolls out, and we'll hold that thing back until we, you know,  
24 continue these conversations, and see how this upcoming season may  
25 look, but, again, just, from the Texas state perspective, we're  
26 for this.

27  
28 We know that there may be some advantages to shifting seasons, as  
29 we've discussed in previous conversations, and there's a lot that  
30 needs to be dialed-in before we can probably get to an EFP per  
31 state.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Any further comments?  
34 General Spraggins.

35  
36 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and I agree with both of you, and what  
37 you're saying there, and I do think, if we're able to do something  
38 with this, and especially if we're able to do an EFP, and maybe  
39 try something in the May or June timeframe, you know, to look at  
40 it, because, as it stands right now, Mississippi can't -- It's not  
41 going to ever be a part of this, you know, as far as being able to  
42 give good numbers, but, in the May and June timeframe, we could,  
43 because we're having a lot of people fishing, and a lot of people  
44 doing, you know, deepwater fishing, and so we could do something  
45 with it, and so I'm definitely for looking at this.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Schieble.  
48

1 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, just to wrap this up, part of why I  
2 wanted to put it on here was, obviously, the state directors have  
3 been talking about this amongst themselves, but I wanted the rest  
4 of the council to be able to voice opinions on this, or at least  
5 ask questions about it if they wanted. It was the forum that I  
6 wanted to have.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Anson.

9  
10 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I was just going to echo the comments from  
11 Dakus and the General, in regards to our general support for what  
12 Louisiana is trying to do here, and, you know, we're working on an  
13 EFP as well, and we'll be part of the conversations going forward,  
14 and we look forward to them.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'll just say ditto for Florida. Mr. Geeslin.

17  
18 **MR. GEESLIN:** Just to Chris's point, I think we've established  
19 some common denominators associated with challenges, and maybe  
20 some hurdles here, and so, collectively, I think we're inviting  
21 that input, feedback, not only from council members, but also from  
22 our constituents, our stakeholders here, and this is a -- We've  
23 got some challenges here, but I don't think they're insurmountable,  
24 where we can move this in a direction that works best for also  
25 conserving the resource, but providing those opportunities.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Mr. Strelcheck.

28  
29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I just want to thank the state directors, in  
30 particular Chris, for pulling me into some of these conversations,  
31 and, you know, I've emphasized with them, and I think there's been  
32 some good recognition, with the state surveys, that there's  
33 challenges even with the state surveys, in terms of data and data  
34 limitations.

35  
36 To me, I think thinking through how these EFPs could help us to  
37 better manage this resource is critical, and how we can bring those  
38 surveys along to support that is really going to be key, because,  
39 based on the presentations we heard earlier today, right, there's  
40 still a lot of challenges with lack of sample sizes, whether you're  
41 talking MRIP or state surveys, and, if we're going to go into a  
42 more complex state management system, we want to make sure it's  
43 going to be able to support that state management that we're trying  
44 to provide.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.

47  
48 **MR. WALKER:** So we're talking about dividing it up among the

1 states, and so we're going to have to have the same discussion  
2 about allocating which state gets which one, and which time series  
3 we're going to pick, or who gets how many, and all that, and we've  
4 got to go through that whole process.

5  
6 On paper, that's a five-line sentence that I don't know much about.  
7 As not a state director, I haven't been in the loop, but is this  
8 the whole process? Are we going to have to allocate and all that  
9 to get to there?

10  
11 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So I'm not the authority on that or not, but I  
12 think it depends on what we ask for as the exemption in the fishing  
13 permits. If we're asking for an exemption to accountability  
14 measures, I'm not necessarily sure whether allocation has to be  
15 determined or not, because our exempted fishing permit, as we have  
16 a draft version of it, constrains the fishing to a two-month season  
17 still, to maintain the current structure.

18  
19 We're just trying to get better data within that two months on  
20 landings, using the LA Creel system, right, and so we're looking  
21 at more like a time constraint, instead of an allocation  
22 constraint, what is going to be sampled through that two-month  
23 window, which currently is September through October, and we're  
24 hoping we can shift that to earlier in the season, where we're  
25 going to have a higher chance of intercepts, and so still a two-  
26 month window, maintaining what the structure currently is, and  
27 it's trying to get it when there's the folks on the water getting  
28 snapper at the same time.

29  
30 Those rec initiative bullets that I listed talked about overlap of  
31 seasons, right, and it's one of the things that came out of there,  
32 is trying to get that a little bit better. It would test that at  
33 the same time.

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

36  
37 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman, and so, Chris, so we maybe  
38 understand a little better, the non-state folks, the EFP that  
39 Louisiana crafted is just asking to simply move the season just to  
40 collect better data, overlapping red snapper season, period, and  
41 that's it?

42  
43 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Well, yes, but it's allowing us to run that.  
44 Basically, it's saying that Louisiana is going to run that season  
45 for that same constrained two-month window, and so we're not  
46 looking at trying to make some summer-long fishing season out of  
47 this, where we would need an allocation that could potentially  
48 blow up or not.

1  
2 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you for clarifying that, and that was to Ed's  
3 point, was you're not asking for an allocation increase, or moving  
4 quota or any of that, and just move the season, so we can get data.  
5

6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Frady.  
7

8 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Schieble, can I ask a  
9 question about who is going to be catching these fish under the  
10 EFP, and what angler group is going to be catching the greater  
11 amberjack in your EFP?  
12

13 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So, because we don't have sector separation of  
14 amberjack, we would monitor the private recreational and charter-  
15 for-hire landings like we do now well under LA Creel.  
16

17 **MR. FRADY:** So the charter-for-hire, federally-permitted charter-  
18 for-hire, would come up under this EFP also?  
19

20 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, if it overlaps that season. Yes, they would  
21 be getting intercepted dockside, just like they do now.  
22

23 **MR. FRADY:** Okay. Thank you, sir.  
24

#### 25 **DISCUSSION OF A GAG GROUPEXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT**

26

27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any other questions, or comments, about the  
28 greater amberjack EFP? Okay. Thank you, Chris. Appreciate it.  
29 Moving on in the same vein, I'll start out with the gag grouper  
30 one.  
31

32 A similar concept, obviously, and we've had some challenges with  
33 this fishery in recent years. By the, you know, hair of our chin,  
34 we were under the quota last year for a two-week season. I think  
35 it's just really we don't know what we don't know relative to  
36 effort compression, and just how that was going to impact, and I  
37 think the entire intent for setting a September 1 start date for  
38 a fishing season was to get us the maximum amount of time.  
39

40 That didn't really work to the degree that we thought it would,  
41 because we didn't know what effort compression would look like,  
42 and, you know what? Gag grouper is a really popular fishery, and  
43 it was pretty extreme, and so FWC is exploring putting together an  
44 exempted fishing permit to explore some more flexible options  
45 relative to a fishing season, but we're actively working on  
46 preparing one right now, in anticipation that it could be reviewed  
47 by the council at the June council meeting.  
48

1 I don't have too much of the detail, the specifics right now, but  
2 we're analyzing a lot of data. One thing I can say is federal  
3 for-hire, and I've heard it loud and clear, and this is  
4 predominantly a Florida fishery, and so I don't think there's too  
5 much surprise that federal for-hire did not want to be included in  
6 this, and so we're working on an exemptive fishing permit, at the  
7 moment, that would be inclusive of private recreational anglers  
8 and state for-hire charter.

9  
10 We'll provide some more details certainly in the future here, and  
11 we're coordinating with some of the other Gulf States along these  
12 lines, but I'm happy to answer any questions, if people have them.  
13 Mr. Schieble.

14  
15 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** No question, and I just want to speak in support of  
16 what you're doing, and Louisiana would fully support your EFP.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, sir. Dr. Froeschke.

19  
20 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So, based on that, you would have some potential  
21 season, for example, in June for the private rec and state for-  
22 hire, and then, September 1, the federal for-hire could open up,  
23 and is that how would it go?

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So I'm not saying that we would start in June.  
26 This is when the EFP would be available for review by the council,  
27 and then it would go through the process of, you know, the council  
28 can make recommendations to the EFP, and then it goes to Andy's  
29 shop for formalized approval, or rejection or what have you, but  
30 just going through that process, but, by splitting it out like  
31 that, yes, it would be similar to -- Well, I mean, ignoring the  
32 conversation we just had today about federal for-hire red snapper,  
33 the way that it's currently set up, that's how it would be for gag  
34 too. Mr. Strelcheck.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Just for council members that may not be  
37 familiar with the process for exempted fishing permits, a state,  
38 or an entity, can propose an exempted fishing permit. They would  
39 submit it to the National Marine Fisheries Service for  
40 consideration, and we work with the applicant to determine whether  
41 it's complete, if there's additional information that's needed,  
42 and my expectation, based on what I've heard from Jessica and C.J.,  
43 is that they would be submitting this exempted fishing permit in  
44 the coming weeks, or month, in advance of, obviously, the June  
45 council meeting.

46  
47 Once we deem it complete, we have to publish it in a Federal  
48 Register notice and go out for public comment. It could be

1 anywhere from fifteen to forty-five days, and we also try to  
2 overlap that with the council meeting, so that you can provide  
3 input to the exempted fishing permit. You can provide a  
4 recommendation that's not binding to the agency, and then, after  
5 the public comment period, the agency makes a decision as to  
6 whether to issue the EFT or not.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks for that process, Andy. Any other  
9 comments? Ms. Levy.

10  
11 **MS. LEVY:** I don't have a lot of comments, because I don't know  
12 exactly what you're proposing, and I guess I would just suggest  
13 that you're clear about which regulations and who is being exempt  
14 from -- Like who is being exempt from what regulations, like what  
15 you're asking in that regard. Thanks.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes. Absolutely. Any other questions, or  
18 comments? All right. I think we're okay here. We've got one  
19 remaining item for other items, and that will be General Spraggins'  
20 Reallocation of Private Recreational Red Snapper.

21  
22 **DISCUSSION OF REALLOCATION OF PRIVATE RECREATIONAL RED SNAPPER**  
23 **ACL BETWEEN THE STATES**  
24

25 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, yes, I would  
26 like to -- I know we addressed this in the past, and that we've  
27 talked about it, and, last year, we kind of pushed it back a little  
28 bit, but I would like to bring it back forward and basically open  
29 up discussion. The discussion would be how that we could do  
30 reallocation, and look at the review of the reallocation of the  
31 red snapper for private recreational ACL between the states.

32  
33 I was looking at the Amendment 50 final rule, and it says,  
34 currently, the red snapper private angling component ACL is managed  
35 as a single unit for all of the Gulf states. The final rule  
36 appropriations, the private angling component ACL to each state,  
37 the allocation is based on the allocations requested by each state  
38 in the EFP application, which totaled 96.22 percent of the overall  
39 component of the ACL. The remaining 3.78 percent is apportioned  
40 between Florida and Alabama proportionately based on their EFP  
41 allocation request. Therefore, this final rule establishes the  
42 appropriate appointments.

43  
44 What I was trying to get at here is, basically, I would like to  
45 look at it, and I'm not talking about, you know, what each state  
46 turned in on the EFP, because that's there. I think it was numbers  
47 or, you know, Alabama was 26, and Florida was like 44, and  
48 Louisiana 19, and Mississippi 3.5, and then Texas 6.2, but that

1 was the numbers that we were looking at.

2  
3 What I'm looking at is the 3.78 percent. That was kind of an extra  
4 that was setting out there, and it was kind of an extra that was  
5 setting there, at the time when we made those decisions, and I  
6 remember us looking at it, and basically coming back and saying,  
7 okay, you know, by what we're getting with the catch data, and  
8 what everybody is asking for, this is going to work for everybody,  
9 and so that's what we did.

10  
11 What I would like to do is look at a possibility, and I was talking  
12 to Dr. Simmons just a few minutes ago about it, is a possibility  
13 of how we could look at that 3.78 percent, and say that it's kind  
14 of a flexible 3.78 percent, and it can be utilized to be moved  
15 around as needed, according to what states are doing, and that's  
16 what I'm asking right now, is the discussion on that, and I'll  
17 open it up if anybody has questions.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any questions for the General? I guess my  
20 question for you, General, is we were working through -- Obviously,  
21 we had just kind of started working on draft documents to address  
22 some of the issues in Mississippi, and I feel like this one would  
23 completely supersede that, and mitigate all of those issues there,  
24 and so I guess I'm wondering like how this interacts with what we  
25 just spent the last two hours working on there.

26  
27 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Well, I think in my case with this, what this  
28 is that, we have -- If you look at the allocation of what has  
29 happened over the last couple of years, and you look at how many  
30 states, and what they've caught and where they're at, and we should  
31 look at this every five years.

32  
33 It's been over five years since we've looked at it, and we should  
34 look at it every five years anyway, from my understanding, and we  
35 hadn't done that, and so the allocations -- I'm not trying to throw  
36 any state out. That's not what I'm after, but, if a state is under  
37 by a tremendous amount, or even, you know, 5 percent, or 2 percent,  
38 or 1 percent, or whatever, is that -- If it's a pattern for that,  
39 is there a way for that to be able to look at it and say, okay,  
40 well, we can take this, you know, and here's a state that needs 2  
41 percent, or here's a state that needs 1 percent, and could we look  
42 at that, and we're only talking the 3.78.

43  
44  
45 We're not talking, you know, the whole 100 percent allocation. I  
46 think that's going to come when we do the new assessment. Whenever  
47 we get the new assessment coming out, and everything else happens,  
48 I think we're going to have to go back then, at that point, which

1 is maybe a year or two down the road, and we're going to have to  
2 go back, at that point, and then reallocate accordingly, and I  
3 think that's what we need to look at, but this is just an interim  
4 fix, I would think, until the new assessment comes.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I guess I'm still not crystal clear as to which  
7 one comes first there, because I do think that this one kind of  
8 overtakes what we were just talking about there, and certainly,  
9 you know, we've been having some of these reallocation discussions  
10 there, but I guess I was just trying to -- In my own head, how we  
11 were navigating it previously was kind of fair and equitable. It  
12 wasn't really coming after any particular states, but, obviously,  
13 this three point -- I mean, it's coming after Florida, as that  
14 allocation was given to us, and so, I mean, just kind of curious  
15 how this works together with the process that we were trying to  
16 navigate before, but I did see some other hands raised. Mr.  
17 Schieble.

18  
19 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I guess just a technical question. I don't really  
20 know how this would work, but to just discuss that 3.78 percent of  
21 the overall Gulf-wide ACL, would we have to crack open Amendment  
22 50 allocations, and go through reallocation among all the states  
23 in order to do that, or would we be able to just handle that  
24 separately, if that's what we decide we want to do?

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Dugas.

27  
28 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. I have a question regarding  
29 that, Chris, and I didn't know if it was for Andy, or maybe even  
30 Ryan, but isn't there a five-year allocation review that we're  
31 supposed to look at, and we didn't maybe, and I feel like we --

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

34  
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** My recollection is that there was kind of  
36 agreement that they would wait on the assessment, right? There's  
37 no written rule that you have to do that. You can look at  
38 allocation anytime, whether it's a five-year review or any time in  
39 between.

40  
41 You know, in my view, you know, I go back to our National Standards,  
42 kind of that we would have to look back at the original intent of  
43 the state management program, but, you know, there are some  
44 inequities that have developed, in my view, under state management,  
45 and Mississippi talked about it earlier today, with a forty-five-  
46 day season, whereas everyone else is running 100-day seasons or  
47 more, right, and so, you know, is there a willingness of the states  
48 to come back to the table and have that conversation?

1  
2 I know C.J. feels very targeted, I think just based on kind of how  
3 it was presented, but I don't see it as the 3.78 percent, or any  
4 other percent, has to come from any individual state. It can come  
5 from all five or four states, if it's redistributed to Mississippi  
6 or some other states, right, but you guys have to agree, around  
7 this table, to how you want to approach this.

8  
9 To me, the key would be, whatever the reallocation is, how is that  
10 fair and equitable, and how are you reaching that decision, and  
11 why are you modifying it, and those are the key conversations you  
12 need to have about allocation.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any further discussion around the table?  
15 General Spraggins.

16  
17 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and, just in context right now, with  
18 roughly 4.166 million pounds that are sitting out there, we're  
19 talking 175,000 total pounds. That's what we're talking about.  
20 We're not talking about a large amount of fish, and, you know,  
21 that's the whole three point -- I'm just doing in my head numbers,  
22 but I think that's somewhere close to it, around 170,000 pounds,  
23 and it may be up or down a little bit, and it's not necessary that  
24 all of it has got to be allocated.

25  
26 It's not necessary that all of it has got to be moved at one time,  
27 or in any one state. I mean, I can tell you right now that  
28 Mississippi is definitely not asking for 175,000 more pounds. It  
29 wouldn't do us any good to do that. That wouldn't be what we would  
30 be benefiting. We wouldn't benefit anything by that, because we  
31 would just be sitting there and not catching our ACL there, and  
32 that's what we would be, but this would be a situation to where,  
33 just like us, if -- For us to get to where we should be, it would  
34 take about 50,000 pounds. That's 1.5 percent of it.

35  
36 If they said, okay, Mississippi, instead of 3.5, you get 5 percent,  
37 you know, then that could do it, and then where does the 1.5 come  
38 from? We could look at all the states and say, hey, where did it  
39 come from, and which states is not using what they need 100  
40 percent.

41  
42 We could also do this under a couple of ways, and so it could be  
43 a situation to where this was until we did the reassessment, and  
44 everything else, and looked at it, and, after the reassessment,  
45 that we went back, and we're going to reassess everything anyway,  
46 and that's when I think that Mr. Strelcheck was talking about that  
47 we're going to have to come back anyway at that point, and do  
48 something about it, and we're going to have to look at the

1 allocations at that point anyway.

2  
3 We're not talking ten years down the road, and we're not talking  
4 forever. We're talking something that could help a couple of  
5 states maybe, you know, in the short term.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any more discussion here? Dr. Simmons.

8  
9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so just a  
10 couple of things to think about for tomorrow, I guess. So, in  
11 regard to this Other Business item, and then what we spent some  
12 time talking on this afternoon, and so, on row 14, I guess, you  
13 did direct us, back in 2023, and, you know, you were supposed to  
14 work with the Gulf states and start thinking about looking at the  
15 red snapper private angling allocations between Gulf states.

16  
17 That was kind of put on hold, in anticipation of you all working  
18 together and coming back to the council and giving us more  
19 direction, but, from a staff perspective, I feel like there was  
20 lots of different things proposed that could solve the issue that  
21 may not be direct and permanent reallocation.

22  
23 I think that perhaps the terminology there is what may be causing  
24 some confusion, based on the fact we spent a lot of time earlier  
25 today talking about individual states carrying over, and not just  
26 paying back, but carrying over, versus quota sharing, or quota  
27 transfer, versus potentially looking at changes to the post-season  
28 accountability measures, and so just trying to compartmentalize  
29 that stuff.

30  
31 Then, in regard to Mr. Dugas' question, on our website, under  
32 Resources, we have our -- It's our internal policy on when we're  
33 looking at reviews, and we have an outline in there for each of  
34 the species that have allocations, and the time interval, and the  
35 start date when we anticipate doing those allocation reviews, but,  
36 as has been said, at any time, the council can request that we  
37 look at allocation changes. What's the document called, Assane?  
38 It's a letter that we had to submit.

39  
40 **DR. DIAGNE:** For allocation review?

41  
42 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes. It's a letter on our website.  
43 I can send it around to the council.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Any more  
46 comments, or discussion? Mr. Chair, amazingly, we got done ten  
47 minutes early. Back to you.

48

1 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman, for leading us through Reef  
2 Fish today, and so, with that, I will announce and remind staff  
3 and council members that, tomorrow morning, we will start with  
4 Full Council, and we do have a scheduled working lunch, a thirty-  
5 minute working lunch, and so please do not leave. With that, we  
6 will adjourn for the day, and we will reconvene at 8:30 in the  
7 morning.

8  
9 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 8, 2026.)

10  
11 - - -  
12