

GULF COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore

Tampa, Florida & Virtual

June 2, 2026

VOTING MEMBERS

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

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Gregg Bray.....GSMFC
 Lt. Jackson Morton.....USCG

STAFF

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 Assane Diagne.....Economist
 Leonardo "Leo" Egula.....Fishery Outreach Specialist
 Matt Freeman.....Economic Analyst
 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
 Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
 Jessica Matos.....Administrative Document Editor & IT Coordinator
 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
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 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
 Kathy Pereira.....Meeting Planner & Travel Coordinator
 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
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3	Jessica McCawley.....	SAFMC
4	Trevor Moncrief.....	MS
5	Jessica Stephen.....	NOAA
6	David Walker.....	AL
7	John Walter.....	SEFSC
8	Kate Zamboni.....	NOAA
9		
10		

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TABLE OF MOTIONS

PAGE 20: Motion to modify the purpose and need section of the document as follows: The purpose of this action is to establish a three-year pilot commercial red grouper IFQ quota pool and distribute the resulting annual allocation to eligible participants in the grouper-tilefish IFQ program. The need for this action is to test whether a quota pool may enhance economic profitability and reduce discards by improving access to red grouper annual allocation by fishermen engaged in the commercial harvest of red grouper and provide new opportunities for obtaining red grouper annual allocation. The motion carried on page 21.

PAGE 39: Motion to recommend that the Gulf Council select Alternative 3b in Action 1 as the preferred alternative. The motion carried on page 40.

PAGE 40: Motion to recommend that the Gulf Council select Alternative 4b in Action 2 as the preferred alternative. The motion carried on page 41.

PAGE 56: Motion to recommend in Action 1 to remove Option 2a from Alternative 2. The motion carried on page 57.

PAGE 76: Motion in Action 2 to make Alternative 3 the preferred alternative. The motion carried on page 77.

PAGE 77: Motion in Action 3 to make Alternative 2 the preferred alternative. The motion carried on page 78.

PAGE 87: Motion to request the council ask NMFS SEFSC for commercial CPUE from 2010 through 2025 for red grouper. The motion carried on page 88.

PAGE 118: Motion to request a presentation on the G-FISHER survey at an upcoming council meeting. The motion carried on page 118.

PAGE 124: Motion to request NMFS review and assess the efficacy and need for the current sea turtle release gear requirements for federally-permitted charter for-hire and commercial reef fish vessels. As part of this assessment, NMFS should consider streamlining the current regulatory burden on these fleets, including proposing a simplified gear kit that represents the most recent research on interactions with sea turtles when fishing for reef fish species. The motion carried on page 128.

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1 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council convened at
2 The Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore in Tampa, Florida on Tuesday
3 morning, June 2, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman C.J.
4 Sweetman.

5
6 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** All right. Good morning, everyone. Welcome back.
7 Today, we're going to work through Reef Fish with Dr. Sweetman,
8 but, before we get there, I'll turn it over to Ms. Levy to give us
9 an update on the litigation.

10
11 **LITIGATION UPDATE**
12

13 **MS. MARA LEVY:** As usual, it will be a short update. Last time,
14 I reported on the Amendment 54 case, which is the greater amberjack
15 rebuilding plan, and that was the Appointments Clause case, right,
16 and so it didn't really have anything to do with the substance of
17 the rule, but more about the constitutional issue about how council
18 members are appointed.

19
20 I reported that the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal upheld the rule,
21 but followed another district court and -- Another appellate court
22 and some other district courts that have said that, for certain
23 very specific provisions the council members are not properly
24 appointed, and so basically struck those provisions from the act,
25 to the extent that they constrain the Secretary's authority.

26
27 My update on that is that the plaintiffs -- It was a consolidated
28 case. Two sets of plaintiffs both filed motions for rehearing en
29 banc, and so, basically, they're asking the whole Fifth Circuit
30 Court of Appeals to look at the panel's decision, because they're
31 saying it conflicts with other Fifth Circuit precedent and
32 precedent from the Supreme Court.

33
34 They filed their motions for rehearing. Our responses to those
35 motions are due June 10th, and then the whole court will consider
36 whether to actually look at it en banc. They can say no, and then,
37 if they do look at it, they would review the panel's decision, and
38 come up with a decision from the whole court, instead of just the
39 panel, and so that's my update. Thanks.

40
41 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. Do we have any questions around
42 the table for Ms. Levy? Okay. Thank you, Mara. Next, we'll move
43 on to Reef Fish, and I'll turn it over to Dr. Sweetman.

44
45 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
46 **APPROVAL OF APRIL 2026 MINUTES**
47 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
48

1 **CHAIRMAN C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm calling the
2 Reef Fish Committee to order. This is a committee of the whole,
3 and so I'm not going to read everyone's name, with myself as the
4 chair, and Mr. Schieble as vice chair.

5
6 The first item on the agenda is to actually adopt the agenda, but
7 I will look around. I know we have at least one other topic to
8 add to Other Business. Captain Prady.

9
10 **MR. TROY FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to talk about
11 the regulatory burden that the sea turtle requirements for the
12 commercial and the federally-permitted charter-for-hire are
13 putting on our industry, and I would just like to have a little
14 discussion about that, to see where we are, and see what we can do
15 to alleviate some of the pain and discomfort that the regulation
16 requires. Thank you.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We'll add that to the agenda in Other
19 Business. Anything else? All right. Seeing none, can I get a
20 motion to approve the agenda as amended? Dr. Banks. Do we have
21 a second? Captain Walker. Okay. The motion is -- Sorry. Not a
22 motion, but the agenda is adopted as amended.

23
24 The next step here is approval of the April 2026 minutes. Do we
25 have any edits? Seeing none, can I get a motion to approve the
26 April 2026 minutes? Captain Walker. Do we have a second? Dr.
27 Banks. The minutes are approved. Okay. The next step is moving
28 into the action guide, and I will turn it over to -- We're going
29 to turn it over to Assane.

30
31 **FINAL ACTION: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 63: MODIFICATIONS TO GULF RED**
32 **GROUPEL IFQ PROGRAM**
33

34 **DR. ASSANE DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning. The
35 first item here is Final Action: Reef Fish Amendment 63:
36 Modification to Gulf Red Grouper IFQ program, or, I mean, Grouper-
37 Tilefish IFQ program.

38
39 Essentially, for this item, we will review a summary of input
40 received at public hearings, as well as written comments received
41 from the public. As you know, this action addresses measures
42 necessary to develop a quota pool program, a three-year pilot
43 program.

44
45 Following the public comments, staff will review the council's
46 preferred alternatives for the amount to be set aside, for the
47 criteria for qualifying for quota pool allocation, as well as for
48 the distribution methods selected by the council. We will also

1 summarize the recommendations made by the Ad Hoc IFQ AP during
2 their last meeting, and they discussed this Amendment 63.

3
4 The council should review the information presented and evaluate
5 the council's preferred alternative, as appropriate. SERO staff
6 will review the codified text of the proposed federal regulations,
7 and, if this committee finds it appropriate, the proposed
8 regulation would be then deemed to be necessary and appropriate,
9 and it would recommend that the council take final action on the
10 document to transmit it to the Secretary of Commerce for review
11 and implementation.

12
13 The first item here in this discussion, we would then turn it over
14 to Ms. Muehlstein for her to summarize the comments received, as
15 well as the public hearings. We turn it over to you, Ms. Emily.

16
17 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you, Assane. Okay, and so we held
18 two virtual public hearings on this. Our first one took place on
19 May 13th. Thirteen people attended that hearing, and eight people
20 spoke.

21
22 During that hearing, we heard opposition to Amendment 63 and
23 support for no action. The rationale that we heard was that there
24 is already ample and inexpensive red grouper allocation available,
25 and so a quota pool is unnecessary. We heard concern that the
26 amendment would take quota from existing shareholders and
27 redistribute it to current participants, rather than helping true
28 new entrants.

29
30 It was questioned the need to reduce red grouper discards, noting
31 that anglers did not see a significant red grouper discard problem.
32 There were concerns raised that the proposal could undermine the
33 IFQ program, and it could discourage share ownership. It could
34 increase allocation costs, and it could create unintended economic
35 consequences.

36
37 Some folks questioned the legality of the proposal, and whether it
38 represents a fundamental change to the IFQ program. We heard
39 comments suggesting that the council should focus on other IFQ
40 access issues, and complete work on Amendment 59, before moving
41 forward with this amendment.

42
43 We also heard the question that -- You know, people questioning
44 whether the red grouper stock assessment and quota increases really
45 needed to happen, right, and people seemed to think that the red
46 grouper quota increase was too much, and so they were kind of
47 concerned about stock abundance and the quality of recreational
48 data, and so they didn't want to move forward with this amendment.

1 We did hear that AP participants are mostly shareholders, and that
2 the IFQ program does not work for everyone.

3
4 During the May 14th hearing, we had fourteen people attend, and
5 nine of them spoke. At that hearing, we also heard opposition to
6 Amendment 63 and support for no action, with the rationale that
7 there is no shortage of quota available for purchase or lease,
8 that fishermen who want to access it can get it through the
9 existing market.

10
11 We heard a warning that the amendment could reduce confidence in
12 the IFQ program, and that would lower share values, and it would
13 redistribute benefits among existing participants, rather than
14 creating meaningful new opportunities. We heard that economic
15 benefits that are projected for the quota pool appear to be
16 minimal, and would not meaningfully improve profitability, and we
17 also heard that this amendment addresses the wrong problem, and
18 that the broader issues, such as recreational impacts, stock
19 assessments, and fishery management should be prioritized.

20
21 During this meeting, we also heard support for the concept of
22 getting quota into the hands of active fishermen and reducing
23 dependence on leasing from shareholders. We also heard a
24 suggestion that, if the quota pool moves forward, then eligibility
25 should focus on active working fishermen, and allocation should be
26 distributed early in the fishing year.

27
28 We also received thirteen written comments, and then we had twenty-
29 one anonymous voicemail comments that pertained to this issue, and
30 so I'll summarize those together right now.

31
32 We did hear some support for increased access to non-shareholders.
33 We also heard opposition to the amendment, because red grouper
34 allocation is currently abundant and inexpensive. We heard that
35 we should tighten eligibility requirements to focus only on active
36 fishermen with limited share ownership.

37
38 We heard a recommendation to modify quota pool triggers and
39 implementation timing. We heard concern that the stock assessment
40 doesn't reflect the actual red grouper abundance, and that the
41 ongoing boom-and-bust management cycles for red grouper are an
42 issue. We heard criticism of the IFQ system itself. Folks argued
43 that shareholders benefit disproportionately, while active
44 fishermen struggle to remain profitable, and then we heard support
45 for reallocating quota to fishermen without shares, while other
46 people also did oppose Amendment 63, and that concludes my report.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Emily. Any questions or comments

1 for Emily? Okay. Thanks, Emily. The next item that we have on
2 here is to review the Ad Hoc Red Snapper Grouper-Tilefish IFQ
3 Advisory Panel recommendations. Do you want to take care of that,
4 Assane, or I see we have Captain Walker in the audience there.

5
6 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. I will take care of that, even though we have
7 the chair of the AP. He's supposed to leave shortly, and so,
8 essentially, he did request that we take care of that, but he's
9 still in the -- Captain Walker is still sitting in the back there,
10 if need be.

11
12 So, essentially, recommendations, comments made by the AP, would,
13 in a large part, echo the comments that were just summarized by
14 Ms. Muehlstein, and so I'm going to highlight a few of those
15 comments, and finish with the motion that the AP approved relative
16 to Amendment 63. I'll be jumping around between actions, because
17 the comments were not offered in the order of the three actions in
18 the amendment.

19
20 To start with, the AP did mention that it is unclear who this
21 amendment, meaning 63, could help, and how, and, because red
22 grouper allocation prices are extremely low, and essentially that
23 is going to be even, I guess, magnified by the fact of the large
24 increase that Amendment 62 is going to bring, once it becomes
25 effective.

26
27 AP members were concerned by the fact that catch rates for red
28 grouper are declining, and this is further contributing to a
29 reduced demand for annual allocation. AP members also expressed
30 their concerns that this quota pool may provide the most benefits
31 to large shareholders with the highest landings, and they also did
32 mention that, because data are only available at the account level,
33 the council may not fully account for the complexities of different
34 business arrangements in the fishery.

35
36 The AP did discuss the purpose and need, and they noted that they
37 did not see how this amendment would enhance economic profitability
38 and reduce discards. Some AP members expressed concerns about
39 fairness for those who had bought into the fishery.

40
41 The fact that the lease price for red grouper is currently very
42 low, it was discussed several times, and leading some to note that,
43 whatever savings this program may bring, those may be very small,
44 given, again, the low price for red grouper allocation.

45
46 There was a discussion relative to the metrics for evaluating this
47 program, and staff, both council and SERO staff, highlighted some
48 of the elements that could be considered, and those include

1 harvest, prices, quota utilization rate, trips, change in the
2 composition of participation in the program, and so forth.

3
4 AP members did express concerns about the health of the stock,
5 based on their underwater experience, and some members did state
6 that the large increase that 62 is going to implement is not
7 warranted, given their perceived status of the stock, at least
8 based on their experience.

9
10 That point was, I guess, driven home when someone said that the
11 council has not been responsive to the needs of the commercial
12 fishery, and has raised the red grouper quota in a way that does
13 not correspond with the current health of the stock.

14
15 These are, I guess, a summary of the comments that they offered,
16 and, at the end, after several iterations, they approved a motion,
17 and, Bernie, you can scroll down to the very last motion in the
18 Amendment 63 section.

19
20 So, essentially, at the end, the motion which the AP approved
21 without opposition is as follows: To request that the council cease
22 work on Reef Fish Amendment 63 until Reef Fish Amendment 59A, which
23 deals with permit requirements, is finalized.

24
25 That is, essentially, this motion here captures, if you would, the
26 recommendation of this AP to stop working on 63 until 59A is
27 finalized, and that's the extent of, I guess, the summary that I
28 wanted to provide.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Just some comments
31 there, and definitely -- I don't know if anyone else was listening
32 into that discussion, and it was lively, relative to 63, but we
33 have some recommendations there from them, and so any questions,
34 or comments? We have David over there. I can see him standing in
35 the back, if you have any questions for the AP Chair. Mr.
36 Strelcheck.

37
38 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Either to Assane or the AP chair, and so it
39 seems like the counter-argument to 63 is the quota is too high,
40 and the price of the quota is going to be minimal, and so,
41 therefore, we shouldn't do it, and so was there any discussion of,
42 well, if the quotas were set properly, and the price of quota was
43 considerably higher, that they would be interested in doing it,
44 because I feel like they probably don't want that either, and so
45 I'm just struggling with, obviously, understanding the full
46 rationale here.

47
48 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and, I mean, in terms of a discussion on what

1 would happen if the price of the quota went up, we didn't really
2 have -- I mean, the AP didn't necessarily discuss that, but we
3 will get, I guess, some feedback, and some comments, from Mr.
4 Walker, the chair of the AP, if he so wishes to add to this.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Go ahead, David.

7
8 **MR. DAVID WALKER:** Good morning. The AP was a good AP. You know,
9 we had really good discussions and concerns about 63, and that was
10 a unanimous decision to delay it. 59A, get that going first, and
11 then we move forward in more discussion with Amendment 63, but, at
12 this time, it's not recommended by the AP.

13
14 I was born in 1963. I turned sixty-three on Sunday, and we're on
15 Amendment 63. I've been around a while, a lot of these meetings,
16 and I'm concerned about this increase in red grouper. Personally,
17 myself, I've landed 60,000 pounds of fish, over 60,000 pounds of
18 fish, this year, and I've not caught one red grouper, not one
19 undersized grouper, and I haven't seen a red grouper.

20
21 I saw one at Destin, on the dock the other day, and people were
22 taking pictures of it. That's the big concern there, is why are
23 we looking at this when we don't even have the fish to support it?
24 That's a big concern.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Andy, did you have any questions that you
27 wanted to address to David?

28
29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, David, specifically to my question, and
30 I recognize it may not have been discussed, and so it's a
31 hypothetical question, but, from what I understand of the AP's
32 reasoning, is, one, you don't believe the quota increase should be
33 happening, and the quota is too high, and, two, the quota pool has
34 limited value, because the lease prices are low, right?

35
36 To me, then the counter to that is, well, if we actually had lower
37 quotas, and higher lease prices, the AP would support it, but I
38 would like to hear from you, or others on the AP, if that rationale
39 is supported by the logic that the AP is providing.

40
41 **MR. D. WALKER:** I think a lot of it is just folks are worried about
42 this is just a Trojan horse stuck in there with Amendment 63, to
43 give disruption to our program, and set precedents for other
44 disruptions in other species, and it sets precedent, and we're not
45 in support of that.

46
47 I think you'll hear a lot from the industry that they're not the
48 ones pushing for this. You know, it's not on their agenda to push

1 for this. We have the best program that's ever been developed in
2 the commercial fishery.

3
4 The IFQ program has been successful, and it's working, and there's
5 plenty of red grouper out there to lease for twenty-five cents, or
6 probably less. Everything seems to be working, and that's what -
7 - We're just worried about this being something with the wrong
8 intentions, and the support of it would be wrongful in the
9 commercial industry's view.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, David. I've got Captain
12 Walker, and then J.D.

13
14 **MR. ED WALKER:** So, to your question, Andy, and I was at the
15 meeting as well, just sitting in, and there was -- They actually
16 went back. They essentially voted this thing out, and then it was
17 pointed out that, while this would not be a great benefit for a
18 fisherman to get a thousand pounds of allocation for free, instead
19 of paying twenty-five cents, which is one of the bigger arguments
20 here.

21
22 If we were talking about red snapper, and it was a five-dollar
23 lease price, then a \$5,000 benefit to a fisherman would be, you
24 know, a legitimate benefit to a struggling fisherman, and so they
25 actually went back, after voting that in, and undid their whole
26 motion, and came up with another one, and I don't know what the
27 terminology is, that left the door open, and not really in favor
28 of this one. However, not entirely wanting to toss the concept
29 from future consideration, and that's where it left.

30
31 There were two fishermen that showed up at the AP meeting that
32 gave testimony afterward, and both of those were in favor of the
33 program, and there's others, but we can continue in conversation,
34 and I'll just bring them up when we get there.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Walker. J.D.

37
38 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. So, Mr. Walker, my question
39 is it seems, to me, that it was almost a tied vote, four to three,
40 and there were two abstentions. Can you maybe elaborate a little
41 bit on maybe the three individuals, or how the conversation went,
42 because it seems like there were some folks in favor of 63.

43
44 **MR. D. WALKER:** I think there were some abstentions, and there
45 were some that voted against, you know, what we had on the board
46 at the time, but I think they were just looking for a consensus,
47 and the AP was trying to work together, and that's why we withdrew
48 one of them, the one that had little support, but the majority had

1 voted in favor of killing the amendment, but it's just it was a
2 good AP that, you know, had good intentions of working together,
3 and they just didn't feel like, at this time, it was a good time
4 to implement 63, that we needed more discussion in the industry.
5 That's just kind of the way we felt, and you'll hear more at the
6 public testimony as well.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Sanchez.

9
10 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** Thank you. I attended all three hearings, and
11 listened, and have spoken with several fishermen since then, stayed
12 in constant touch, and the impression I got during that initial AP
13 meeting was there was some discussion, and maybe some willingness
14 to explore something, but, after a lengthy discussion on all of
15 the impacts that would probably happen from trying this experiment,
16 they were -- They kind of ended up with saying maybe we should fix
17 these things in 59A, and probably dive into making them more
18 meaningful in 59B as well.

19
20 I think the quota is too high. The prices are -- You know, let's
21 not get into hypotheticals, but, if somebody needed additional
22 shares right now, they're really available, probably at the
23 cheapest that they've been, and you can buy shares, or you could
24 lease them, and there's a surplus.

25
26 It just doesn't seem like this is needed right now, to redistribute
27 something that some people have made investments on, to benefit
28 folks that really for, what, fifteen or twenty cents, you can go
29 get shares right now, and it just doesn't make sense to do this
30 and disrupt.

31
32 Some of the things I learned, because, you know, the IFQs, as
33 they've evolved -- It's very complex, people's business models,
34 and the suggestion that, you know, is probably valid, that a high
35 percentage, maybe 60 or better, of the folks blaming the fish don't
36 own allocation, but then you peel the layers on that onion, and
37 you start to hear that a lot of that is by design, the way the
38 industry has evolved in their business models, and they'll hold
39 their shares in an LLC, and then they will divvy them out to boats
40 as needed.

41
42 Some of these disruptions to these business models I think
43 outweigh any benefits that could come from this, and so I'm all
44 for not proceeding any further with this document, because I think
45 there's going to be very little benefit, and potentially a lot of
46 disruption and instability, and that's kind of what I heard, and
47 continue to hear from the fishermen, and I guess we're going to
48 hear some more tomorrow. Thank you.

1
2 **MR. D. WALKER:** I have a written summary that I'll get to the
3 council, and get more copies to distribute to the members.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Walker. I think I'll go just
6 back to Assane really quickly, just to kind of -- I think there's
7 a little bit of confusion just about the motions and kind of -- I
8 mean, it was an intense meeting, you know, and these motions were
9 coming out there, and withdrawn, and other motions put forward,
10 and there was some rationale and justification for why that
11 happened right there, and so, Assane, can you perhaps explain that
12 a little bit?
13

14 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. Thank you very much, and I guess I will just
15 piggyback on something Captain Walker talked about. Initially,
16 when the AP discussed this, their first motion was to, okay,
17 essentially, we would recommend that the council cease work on
18 this entirely, period, and that was the first motion, and then
19 discussion proceeded. As Captain Walker mentioned, and Mr.
20 Sanchez, they wanted to perhaps leave the door open for a future
21 consideration under the right set of circumstances, whatever those
22 may be.
23

24 The discussion went on, but the motion which they ended up with is
25 this one in front of you, and that was unanimously approved, and,
26 to read it again, it is to request that the council cease work on
27 63 until Reef Fish Amendment 59 is finalized, and so it was done
28 in an iterative process. They started with don't do it,
29 essentially, full stop, and then discussion led them to perhaps,
30 you know, open the possibility of a future exploration once 59A is
31 finalized. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that opportunity.
32

33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that was helpful, Dr. Diagne.
34 Appreciate that, and so I guess I just have a quick question for
35 Andy, because the timing of this was pretty much linked to 62 with
36 the red grouper quota increase across-the-board, right, and so you
37 were really trying to get this in place, final action at this
38 meeting, right, and so ceasing work on this wouldn't line up with
39 that schedule, and am I incorrect in that assumption?
40

41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Correct. Well, and I'm interpreting ceasing work
42 meaning we're tabling it, essentially, and not that we would come
43 back to this in a later council meeting.
44

45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.
46

47 **MR. WALKER:** I was just going to throw in, when Mr. Sanchez was
48 talking about essentially barriers to entry, that I thought the

1 council might be interested to know that the current market price
2 for a share of red grouper right now, and not an annual allocation,
3 but a share, for essentially perpetuity, is around seven bucks, or
4 eight dollars, is what I've heard from the fishermen.

5
6 If that's the case, then a fisherman could essentially buy a share,
7 that he owns, and go and catch that pound of fish one time, because
8 market price on red grouper right now is about seven-and-a-quarter,
9 and own that share outright, free and clear, minus expenses and
10 stuff, but, to me, the red grouper share price right now is not a
11 huge barrier to entry. If you can't spend seven dollars, and get
12 seven dollars back when you sell that fish this year, then I'm not
13 sure that it's the right business for you.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. I think we've got some response
16 there. Dr. Stephen.

17
18 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** Yes, and we just ran the share prices before
19 coming to this meeting, and so we currently have, for 2026, an
20 average of sixteen dollars for share prices. You're about right
21 on allocation, at \$6.50, but you know, there's a range, a
22 fluctuation, and so we calculate the average.

23
24 **MR. WALKER:** So that was post -- Yours doesn't figure in the
25 increase that hasn't come out yet, I'm guessing, and some of the
26 fishermen have figured that into it, because I surveyed multiple
27 people that are in this program, and I'm fairly confident I could
28 buy share for eight dollars right now, from what I heard from these
29 individuals.

30
31 **DR. STEPHEN:** You're correct. What we have is the prices submitted
32 to the IFQ program up-to-date now, and so, if there's speculation
33 on what it will be with the increase, we don't see that data yet.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That's good discussion. Mr. Anson.

36
37 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Yes, and I just had a question about -- There's
38 a reference in the Ad Hoc AP's summary report, on page 2, and I'll
39 read the sentence that I would like more clarification on, and it
40 reads: "There was a discussion on how to represent interrelated
41 accounts, which has been a challenge since programs became
42 available to public participation."

43
44 Was that a comment that came from the ad hoc members, or was that
45 something that came from staff? I just curious as to how that
46 came up, and then the conclusion of that, or the next sentence,
47 was there was interest in exploring how to disentangle related
48 accounts. However, this was deemed as too time intensive for the

1 administration of the three-year program, and so if anybody could
2 provide some clarity on that.

3
4 **MR. D. WALKER:** Assane.

5
6 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, and this was a discussion initiated by the
7 AP, if you would. The thing is it follows -- It's tied with
8 everything else going. There's a statement here saying that
9 distributing just at an account level is not going to account for
10 the complexity of the different business arrangements in the IFQ
11 program.

12
13 To give a practical example, if one has, quote-unquote, a master
14 account that holds shares, and satellite accounts that are fed
15 annual allocation and land a lot of fish, those satellite accounts,
16 under Amendment 63 as designed, distributing at the account level,
17 those satellite accounts stand to benefit by receiving a lot of
18 the allocation, especially if the distribution is proportional
19 based on red grouper landings.

20
21 The discussion at the AP was perhaps, I guess, a distribution that
22 would account for the related accounts would be more, I guess,
23 beneficial, down the line, to those who really don't own shares,
24 if that makes sense, and so that's the gist of this discussion.

25
26 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne, for that, and so I recall some
27 discussion that we had maybe a year or so ago, a year-and-a-half
28 ago about that issue, and I wonder maybe, and Dr. Stephen was one
29 that was addressing that issue, and I wonder -- Do you have an
30 update as to how far along you are in making updates, or changes,
31 within the program to do that tracking?

32
33 **DR. STEPHEN:** So we now have the permit system up and linked to
34 the IFQ, which allows us to go back into doing the related account
35 analysis. What I will say is that it becomes pretty complicated
36 pretty quickly in how you want to apply it, and so I'll just give
37 an example. Say Assane and I are in an account together, and then
38 Andy and I are in an account together.

39
40 I'm related to both of those, and maybe I have my own, but Assane
41 and Andy are not related, right, and, as soon as you start applying
42 that, how do you apply the math of who gets what within a related
43 account, and it might start to actually penalize people that have
44 multiple different business relationships, and so we would say
45 anything where we're going into the related accounts, outside of
46 the share caps, needs a lot of forethought into how the impacts of
47 it would go in determining all those different relationships.

1 Just for everyone on the same page, a related account has at least
2 one person in common, when we get down to all the individuals
3 related to accounts, and so, even in a business, we look at who
4 are the individuals within it.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Banks.

7
8 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** So I guess I need a clarification on that then,
9 and so what is the cap that includes related accounts, and I know
10 that changes per species percentage-wise, but the Magnuson cap, or
11 the cap stated in Magnuson, does that include related accounts
12 then?

13
14 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, and so the way we do the share caps is we do it
15 at the account level, at the business level or entity level, and
16 then also if someone is related across all the accounts and so,
17 again, say Assane and I were in an account together, and I would
18 get 50 percent of the shares if we were in a strict 50-50
19 partnership, and that would be applied to my individual account.

20
21 If we were a business, the business as a total would have a share
22 cap, especially if it's involved in with more than one account,
23 which we see as well, as the person, and so we do it at three
24 levels.

25
26 **DR. BANKS:** So at what cap then is -- I'm still not understanding,
27 and like say it's 10 percent of the cap, defined by Magnuson. How
28 are you calculating the 10 percent if you're doing it at all three
29 levels? Like what number hits that one?

30
31 **DR. STEPHEN:** So no entity or account can be more than 10 percent,
32 no matter what way we look at it, and so the first thing you look
33 at is no account itself can be 10 percent. Then you look at any
34 businesses or entity in it, including all their relationships
35 across related accounts. I probably have a presentation somewhere
36 I can dig up which shows the math and how we do it.

37
38 **DR. BANKS:** Okay, but, for the purpose of this discussion, then I
39 could be 10 percent personally, 10 percent in a business, and 10
40 percent in whatever category you just said?

41
42 **DR. STEPHEN:** So no one can exceed the share cap in any combination,
43 any of those combinations.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Andy.

46
47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I just wanted to note that it seems like we're
48 deviating considerably from the AP report, and maybe we dismiss

1 with the AP report and get into discussion of the merits of the
2 document.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I agree. Is there any questions -- David has
5 been patiently waiting up here at the podium. Any questions for
6 our AP chair? All right. Seeing none, thank you, David.

7
8 **MR. D. WALKER:** Thank you. I think it's just -- There was a big
9 concern, and it was a lot of focus that wanted to be placed on the
10 CPUE of the red grouper, and just see where that's at, to make,
11 you know, wise decisions for what the fishermen are seeing, and
12 they're telling you, and they're trying to look out for their
13 future, and I just think that delaying this 63 until we learn more.
14 Thank you.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, sir. Okay. Assane, have you got
17 something?

18
19 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. For the benefit of our AP chair, before he
20 leaves, under Other Business, the AP did offer some items,
21 including that discussion on CPUE, and they have a motion. Those
22 would be discussed after we discuss 59A, later I guess today, or
23 this afternoon, but we'll make sure that the motion the AP did
24 approve is going to be presented to the council and discussed.
25 Thank you, sir.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Let's get back on track here.
28 Assane, maybe we could roll through the document here. We've got
29 final action for 63, and so --

30
31 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you, and, Bernie, if you would,
32 let's switch to the amendment itself, and we could start with the
33 purpose and need, Section 1.2. Thank you, and so we'll start with,
34 I guess, reminding this committee of the purpose and need, which
35 was adopted, you know, some time ago.

36
37 The purpose of this action is to establish a three-year pilot
38 commercial red grouper IFQ quota pool and distribute the resulting
39 annual allocation to eligible participants in the grouper and
40 tilefish IFQ program. The need for this action is to enhance
41 economic profitability and reduce discards by improving access to
42 red grouper annual allocation by fishermen engaged in the
43 commercial harvest of red grouper and provide new opportunities
44 for obtaining red grouper annual allocation, and this is the
45 purpose and need that was approved for this amendment. If there
46 are no, I guess, comments on the purpose and need, Bernie, if you
47 would, let's move on to --

1 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Hold on. Mara.

2
3 **MS. LEVY:** So, just listening to the summary of the public hearings
4 and the AP's comments, I'm wondering if you want to consider
5 modifying the need just a little bit, because, I mean, it says
6 it's to enhance economic profitability and reduce discards, but
7 the whole point of the program, from the discussion over the
8 meetings, the three-year pilot is to sort of test whether this
9 program will do that, or may do that, right, and so I don't think
10 the need is to actually enhance economic profitability and reduce
11 discards.

12
13 I think it's more to test whether a quota pool may enhance economic
14 profitability and reduce discards. It's three years, right, and
15 you're testing the program, and so a lot of the comments, and the
16 concerns, seem to come from the fact that this isn't going to do
17 exactly that, but we don't know that, right, from what I hear the
18 discussion, and so just something to consider.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think that's a fair point, Mara. Captain
21 Walker.

22
23 **MR. WALKER:** I had the same thoughts, listening to the need be
24 read, that, you know, this -- The couple of points there where
25 it's enhance profitability, and we really -- What we're hearing is
26 the profitability is not that big of an issue at the moment,
27 especially at the level that this kicks in. Quota is always going
28 to be cheap at that higher level and above, and so I agree that,
29 if you're going to move forward with this, then maybe we should
30 adjust the need, because, to me, it's more important to test the
31 program than, you know, try and increase profitability this way.
32 I think it's more of a test program than a profitability issue.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Maybe Captain Walker can think about text to
35 adjust that, if need be, but I'm going to go to Dr. Allen first.

36
37 **DR. MIKE ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I attended one of the
38 public hearings, and learned a lot from the comments there, and my
39 question is with regard to the problem and need as well, and it's
40 about the reduced discards. Is this actually going to do that?

41
42 The fishers were saying they did not think it would, because the
43 discards are basically -- There's not any discards, except for
44 size limit discards, regulatory discards, and so how would it do
45 that?

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Andy, would you like to respond?

1 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I think this gets back to what Mara was
2 saying, right, which is will it do it, or should we test whether
3 it will do it, right, and I think that's been our intent all along,
4 is testing it. Then, while I have the mic, some of you were at
5 the council table when we updated the goals and objectives for the
6 program, and so these are in 59A.

7
8 A lot of the purpose in need is really, in my view, built upon
9 some of those goals and objectives, right, and so, you know, I
10 think it was 2023 that we adopted these, to improve opportunities
11 for participation to enter the program, appropriate alternative
12 mechanism for equitably redistributing shares and allocation to
13 accounts harvesting IFQ species, and that's exactly what we're
14 trying to do with this quota pool program. Create an allocation
15 bank quota pool to reduce barriers to fishing privileges, and
16 reduce discards is another component of this, right, and so all of
17 those are kind of woven in here.

18
19 I guess my question is to the council staff, and do we need a
20 motion, or can we just wordsmith us on the screen right now? Okay.
21 **I'll make a motion to modify the purpose and need section of the**
22 **document as follows: The need for this action is to test whether**
23 **a quota pool may enhance it, and the rest of it is the same, but**
24 **just adding that language.**

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We've got a motion on the table. Let's
27 wait until Bernie gets it situated, and she highlighted the
28 addition. Do we have a second for the motion? Okay. Second by
29 Jason. Any discussion? Dr. Allen.

30
31 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just -- I'm trying to
32 understand the mechanism under which this would reduce discards.
33 I don't -- I don't see how that would operate. How would -- How
34 does that work in here?

35
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** In terms of reducing discards?

37
38 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes. Specifically reducing discards, and how would
39 this amendment do that?

40
41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, and this is where Captain Walker or others
42 can certainly weigh-in. You know, when the price of quota is
43 higher, it can be a barrier, obviously, to people purchasing
44 allocation, and, therefore, they're then discarding those fish
45 that would ultimately be retained, right, and so, in this
46 situation, it may not be a huge barrier, because of the low price
47 of quota, but the fact that we are, if this moves forward,
48 distributing some of this quota pool to people that only lease

1 allocation, right, and then they would be receiving quota to cover
2 fish that potentially could be -- Would be discarded if they didn't
3 have that allocation.

4
5 **DR. ALLEN:** Okay. I understand that. Thank you.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Sanchez.

8
9 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I just want to point out the fact that we're tinkering
10 with the purpose and need language in a document at a final hearing
11 suggests it's not worth doing. I'm just going to point out the
12 obvious.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That's another fair point. Okay, and so we do
15 have a motion on the table modifying the purpose and need, and you
16 can see the highlighted section there. Is there any further
17 comments, or discussion, on this motion? **Is there any objection**
18 **to the motion? The motion carries unanimously.** Okay. I'm going
19 to kick it back over to you, Assane, to continue on with the
20 document.

21
22 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Bernie, if you would, let us
23 go to Chapter 2, Management Alternatives, and we'll start with
24 Action 1, and Action 1 would determine the amount of quota to be
25 held in the quota pool. We have the no action alternative, which
26 would not establish a commercial quota pool.

27
28 Alternative 2 would establish the commercial quota pool, but with
29 conditions. If the commercial quota is at or below 2.79 million
30 pounds, the quota pool is set at zero, but if the commercial quota
31 is above this threshold of 2.79 million pounds, then we have four
32 options from a to e, in 5 percent increments, starting with 15,
33 and so from 15 to 30.

34
35 Let's say take Option a, 15 percent of the commercial red grouper
36 quota increase above 2.79 million pounds, meaning, if the quota
37 falls below 2.79, no quota. Above, you take the amount of the
38 increase above that threshold, 15 percent of it, 20, 25, or 30,
39 but this is not the council's preferred.

40
41 Next is Preferred Alternative 3. Bernie, please scroll down a
42 little bit. Thank you, and, for this, you would establish a quota
43 pool program, a three-year commercial quota pool program,
44 beginning in 2027. If the commercial quota is at or below 4.28
45 million pounds, the quota pool is set to zero, but, if the
46 commercial quota is above this threshold of 4.28 million pounds,
47 the commercial quota pool would hold, for example, under preferred
48 Option 3d, 20 percent of the commercial red grouper quota increase

1 above 2.79 million pounds.

2
3 Where did we get, I guess, these numbers from? The 2.79 million
4 pounds is the quota in the books until 62 is implemented
5 officially. The 4.28 million pounds would be the quota in 2026 in
6 Amendment 62, and that is in the preferred alternatives, and so
7 those are the reference points that were taken here, and this is
8 then the council's preferred alternative.

9
10 Finally, there is an Alternative 4, which was added during the
11 last council meeting, and it would establish a three-year
12 commercial quota starting in 2027. If the commercial quota is at
13 or below 4.28 million pounds, the quota pool would be set to zero,
14 but, if the quota is above 4.28 million pounds, the quota would be
15 between 15 and 30 percent of the red grouper quota increase above
16 4.28 million pounds, and so these are the four alternatives in
17 Action 1, including your preferred alternative and options which
18 are in the Alternative 3.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Assane. We've got a hand. Captain
21 Walker.

22
23 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it's worth pointing
24 out here that the fleet has not caught 2.79 million in three or
25 four years, and so quota above 2.79 million will be dirt cheap
26 anyway, and allocation above 4.2 million pounds will essentially
27 be free, because there will be millions of pounds of quota nobody
28 even needs.

29
30 If you think about it this way, which I have a lot, you can't help
31 but question the utility of all of this at this time. Things can
32 be different in the future, but the fleet will not catch half of
33 that number where this kicks in for some time, if ever again, the
34 way things are now, and so I'm really fading on support, and, you
35 know, practicality of this. I support the concept, but the quota
36 is going to be nearly free anyway, and I don't know that we even
37 need to do this, and that was consensus, what I heard, at the AP.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Walker. I've still got two
40 more actions to walk through, but Mr. Sanchez, and then Mr.
41 Strelcheck.

42
43 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I would echo what Ed says, and it kind of
44 seems like the genesis of this was the quota was increased
45 dramatically with the last assessment, and then we're rushing to
46 try to take advantage of that surplus, to do this, when everyone
47 on the water is saying this fishery is not that healthy, and we're
48 not catching that, and I think, the start to this season, it's

1 probably one of the most dismal starts in the last fifteen years
2 or so.

3
4 It doesn't look like now is the time for this fishery to be trying
5 to find a way to have new entrants come in, or to accommodate them,
6 when the fish just aren't seemingly there, and why are we trying
7 to encourage something that's just a deviation from anything that
8 has to do conservation? This makes no sense.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

11
12 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So those that would qualify for the quota pool
13 would be anyone that's landing red grouper in the most recent two
14 years, and so they're already participating in the fishery, right?
15 They may be newer entrants, but they're not brand-new entrants,
16 where we're adding capacity to the fishery.

17
18 In terms of the comments about the size of the quota, right, that's
19 a stock assessment issue, and, at least the way the alternatives
20 are laid out, just to be clear for everyone, these are thresholds
21 so that, if the quota did come back down after Amendment 62 is
22 implemented, assuming it is implemented, then this quota pool would
23 go away under certain threshold levels.

24
25 The lower we set that threshold, the more likely the quota pool
26 will exist, right? If we set the threshold higher, then the quota
27 pool will not exist if the quota comes back down, right, and so
28 that's the intent of this, and then, obviously, depending on what
29 amount that you're basing the quota pool off of, right, that will
30 determine the size of the quota pool, and so there is some options
31 that we have available to us to reduce, or increase, that size of
32 the quota pool based on the alternatives that are laid out.

33
34 I still go back to the premise though that it would be a lot more
35 difficult conversation around this table for us to be having if
36 the quota pool was set exactly right, and lease allocation prices
37 were considerably higher, right, because there's much more value
38 for those lease allocation prices then to be transferred away from
39 someone to another participant in the quota pool, and so I still
40 see value in this.

41
42 It's probably going to be much more limited than originally
43 envisioned, but, because it's a pilot, I'm going to continue to
44 support, obviously, the pilot nature of it, and I think we could
45 think about some options to consider some of the concerns addressed
46 around the table.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. John.

1
2 **MR. SANCHEZ:** When Alternative 4, when I came up with that, it was
3 to put some additional guardrails to the existing ones. When you
4 consider that, I guess from 2009 all the way to 2017, there has
5 been landings upwards of 2.79, and so, I mean, there's years there
6 where -- 2011 to 2016, where they were upwards of four million
7 pounds.

8
9 What that suggests, to me, is that, if the fish are there, and the
10 stock is healthy, the industry can catch them, and so I didn't
11 feel like going back down to 2.79 to do this, you know, allocation
12 at a certain percentage, and I thought that would be disruptive to
13 an industry that has demonstrated the ability to catch upwards of
14 four million pounds when the fishing conditions are right, and
15 that's kind of why I did that.

16
17 Yes, that would give you less fish, per se, for this experiment,
18 but it is an experiment, and so, I mean, how many fish do you
19 really need to do this social experiment? I'm thinking if you
20 went with the 30 percent option, 4d on Alternative 4, it gives you
21 enough fish to test this experiment, if that is the will. I'm not
22 sure that people even want to go down that road.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. Any more discussion?
25 Okay. Assane, maybe we can start walking through Action 2 here.

26
27 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, Mr. Chair, and Bernie, if you would, let's go to
28 Action 2, and this action considers eligibility criteria for
29 participation in this quota pool. We have the no action
30 alternative. Essentially, do not establish eligibility criteria
31 for participation in the quota pool.

32
33 Second, Alternative 2 is the council's preferred alternative. To
34 receive annual allocation from the quota pool, IFQ account holders
35 must possess a valid or renewable federal commercial reef fish
36 permit and have minimum red grouper landings during a two-year
37 reference period of at least, Option a, 300 pounds, Preferred
38 Option b, 500 pounds, and, finally, Option c, 1,000 pounds.

39
40 The two-year reference periods that are mentioned here are
41 indicated below, and so that would be two years, but on a rolling
42 basis. For the first year, 2027, of the pilot program, January 1,
43 2025 to December 31 of this year, and then sliding forward by one
44 year, if you would, to January 1, 2026 and December 31, 2027, for
45 example, in 2028, and so that is Action 2.

46
47 You have a preferred alternative, and a preferred option, and this
48 range was determined by the council during a previous meeting, and

1 that is what's reflected in the document.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any discussion on Action 2? This is speaking
4 to what Andy was just highlighting, that these people would be
5 engaged in the fishery in the past. All right. Not seeing any
6 hands, Action 3, Assane.

7
8 **DR. DIAGNE:** Bernie, if we could go to Action 3, please, and Action
9 3 -- Thank you. Action 3 addresses the distribution methods that
10 are going to be used to distribute the red grouper annual
11 allocation to the eligible accounts.

12
13 Alternative 1, no action, do not distribute allocation in the red
14 grouper quota pool. Alternative 2, and, before I read the
15 alternative, the two remaining alternatives, in each one of these,
16 2 and 3, you first determine the distribution between groups, and
17 then you determine the distribution amongst eligible participants,
18 and so it's a two-step thing, which is why, for example, in
19 Alternative 2, you distribute 60 percent of the quota pool
20 allocation amongst IFQ accounts with a permit, and red grouper
21 landings, but no red grouper shares. That's the first group.

22
23 Essentially, everybody needs to have landings and a permit, but
24 you have those that have shares and those who don't, and so that
25 would be the two groups. Here, 60 percent would go to those with
26 no red grouper shares, and the remaining 40 percent would go to
27 those with red grouper shares, and, as a reminder, 10 percent of
28 the amount held in the quota pool would initially be set aside to
29 address potential appeals.

30
31 Option 2a, the allocation now within each group, and allocation
32 would be distributed to qualifying participants with no red grouper
33 shares, either equally or proportionally, based on red grouper
34 landings, and the Option 2b would consider the allocation for the
35 group with red grouper shares, and, within that group, it could be
36 done equally, or proportionally, based on landings. That is
37 Alternative 2.

38
39 Preferred Alternative 3 is built essentially in the same way, but,
40 here, this alternative would split the amount in the quota pool
41 equally and give 50 percent to the group with no red grouper shares
42 and 50 percent to the group with red grouper shares, and this is
43 your preferred alternative for now.

44
45 The preferred options would distribute proportionally based on red
46 grouper landings to the group without shares as well as to the
47 group with red grouper shares, but this is your preferred
48 alternative as it stands today.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne. All right, and so those
3 were the three actions within this document here. Any discussion
4 before we move into codified text with Ms. Levy? J.D.

5
6 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. I have a question for Mr.
7 Strelcheck. Andy, do you see it beneficial going to 59 before
8 this? Am I missing something? What am I missing?
9

10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So let me just walk back. So, maybe pre-meeting,
11 or even knowing you, J.D., I was actually the program manager for
12 the IFQ program, and so I'm pretty knowledgeable about the
13 programs, and I helped to stand up the grouper-tilefish program.
14

15 What I've seen around the council, for the last decade, is an
16 appetite to make some changes to the IFQ programs, but it's never
17 getting across the finish line, right, and so I think 59A is
18 certainly a valid amendment that we should roll up our sleeves and
19 work on as well.
20

21 59B is something that we should dust off and consider, but my fear
22 is here we have another action, that potentially has some
23 potential, and we're going to back off of it and decide to go a
24 different direction, without the uncertainty of whether or not
25 we're going to complete 59A or 59B, right?
26

27 When we've had these large quota increases for other species, we've
28 missed the opportunity, right, and I recognize that there are some
29 valid reasons why maybe we shouldn't proceed with red grouper,
30 because of the health and status of the stock, right, but that's
31 why I was asking the questions I was this morning of the AP,
32 because I feel like, if we were still considering 63, and the quota
33 was set at the right level, it would actually be a much harder
34 conversation around this table, because there's a lot more value
35 associated with those shares and allocations than there is now.
36

37 I think the benefit to 63 continues to be it's a pilot, small
38 scale, and we can, obviously, see what the results are, and
39 determine whether or not it was useful or not after a three-year
40 period, and so I say all that because I think we should work on
41 59A and B, but I don't see a need to necessarily postpone 63 to do
42 that.
43

44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Anymore -- Captain Walker.
45

46 **MR. WALKER:** I agree, and I feel the same way about this never-
47 ending delays on trying to do even the simplest thing in the IFQ
48 reform idea, and so I'm of the mindset that we don't connect things

1 that are going to slow other things down. If we've got something
2 that we can actually do, we shouldn't attach things that make it
3 impossible, or could make it take longer.

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

6
7 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I don't see it like that at all. I see this has
8 motivated the rubber to meet the road on 59A and B and for the
9 industry to get the message that, hey, it's time to finally do
10 something with this, and I would much prefer going in that
11 direction, in a meaningful way, and I would make a commitment that
12 I will work towards that, rather than doing this experiment, which
13 isn't really going to have the benefits it has touted, and I really
14 don't think the status of the stock is as healthy as the assessment
15 suggests. I'm against doing this Amendment 63. I would much
16 rather resolve, more globally, IFQ issues with 59A and B.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Geeslin.

19
20 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Yes, and so I've been sitting here and
21 listening to a lot of the -- You know, some of the economic factors,
22 the market conditions. Folks, there may not be these greater
23 barriers to entry at the time, but I guess, in my mind, those
24 conditions aren't static, and there's no certainty that those
25 market conditions and economic factors will be low enough to allow,
26 or encourage, new entrants.

27
28 If I'm remembering correctly, this was designed as somewhat of a
29 proof of concept, to demonstrate that innovative approaches,
30 different strategies, would work to achieve some of the goals that
31 -- I'm glad Mr. Strelcheck went back and revisited some of the
32 goals that we spent substantial time on developing for IFQ
33 programs.

34
35 I don't think this is a silver bullet. It's not going to solve -
36 - To Mr. Sanchez's point, thinking about the bigger-picture IFQ
37 strategies, I wholeheartedly agree, but I think this is worthy of
38 pursuing and running this pony around the track, to see if this
39 proof of concept is able to stand up to work towards achieving
40 some of those goals in the IFQ.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dakus. Any other comments? Okay.
43 Ms. Levy, maybe we can get into the codified text, and review that,
44 please.

45
46 **MS. LEVY:** Sure, and so, if you want to follow along, it revises
47 a couple of the existing IFQ regulations, just to note that we're
48 having this separate little program, and so, if you scroll down to

1 the second page, you'll just see where it adds a sentence that
2 says, except as provided for in paragraph (c), up until three
3 years, the rest of the paragraph applies, and so there's a couple
4 of places like that.

5
6 If you scroll down to the next page, page 3, it also has those
7 notations about adding paragraph (c), and then, if you scroll down
8 to the fourth page, that's where we're actually adding the language
9 for the quota pool.

10
11 The first part is saying that the quota pool is being established,
12 and that it's described in the FMP. That first paragraph also
13 notes that the quota pool allocation is non-transferable, and must
14 be used before any other red grouper allocation. The second
15 paragraph has the duration, and so this whole thing is only valid
16 through December 31, 2029.

17
18 The third paragraph, at the bottom of page 4, talks about what
19 allocation is available to the quota pool, right, and so it's only
20 available if the commercial quota is greater than 4.28 million
21 pounds, which is your preferred, and then the quota pool allocation
22 is 20 percent of the quota that's greater than 2.79 million pounds.

23
24 Then, if you continue to scroll down, it actually has the numbers
25 of what would be in the quota pool, based on what's in the document
26 there, and it talks about the eligibility requirements in the next
27 section, and so you have to possess a valid or renewable commercial
28 reef fish permit, and it talks about the landings requirement. I
29 will note that this says the average red grouper landings of at
30 least 500 pounds, but it should say total, right, and so it's a
31 total of 500 pounds over two years, and so we're going to change
32 that language to indicate the total, as opposed to the average.

33
34 It talks about the appeals process, at the bottom of page 5, and
35 what you can appeal is in this paragraph as well. That's in the
36 middle of page 6. A person's red grouper commercial landings
37 information, permit status, and share status can be appealed, and
38 then it talks about distribution, right, which is that Action 3,
39 and so 50 percent of the quota pool allocation to shareholders, 50
40 percent to accounts with no red grouper shares, and then it will
41 be distributed proportionally based on commercial landings that
42 that same two years use for the eligibility and the 500 pounds,
43 and so that's it. It's pretty straightforward for something that
44 seems complicated. If you have any questions, let me know.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mara. Any questions for Ms. Levy?
47 Okay. Seeing none, all right, ladies and gentlemen. This is a
48 final action document. I can see, based on the discussion that

1 we've had, that maybe we might want to wait until Full council on
2 this, but at least hear from the public during public testimony,
3 but I will offer, if someone wants to push this forward in this
4 committee for final action, using the standard language that we
5 have, and now would be that time, or something else. Mr. Sanchez.
6

7 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Or something else. I agree with you. Given this is
8 a final, and we've had some good input from the APs as of recent,
9 and there seems to be some folks in the audience, and I would ask
10 that we wait until public comment, and then we can make our
11 decision.
12

13 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Looking around the table, I'm seeing
14 some heads nodding, and that might be the appropriate way to go
15 here. Okay. I think we've taken this as far as we're going to
16 during committee. Be ready for Full Council, when this comes back
17 up here. We will need to make a decision one way or the other,
18 but I think, Mr. Chair, we're at a potential breaking point here,
19 and I'll turn it back over to you.
20

21 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes. Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Let's take a fifteen-
22 minute break, and let's come back at 10:05.
23

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

26 **MR. DUGAS:** All right. We're going to get started, if we can quiet
27 down in the back of the room. Can the folks in the back of the
28 room please take your conversation outside? Thank you, Emily.
29 All right. I'll turn it over to Dr. Sweetman.
30

31 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. All right, and so, next
32 on the agenda, we have Draft Options: Reef Fish Amendment 55 and
33 Snapper Grouper Amendment 44: Mutton and Yellowtail Snapper
34 Management Measures. This is a joint amendment with the South
35 Atlantic Council, and I will kick it over to Mr. Rindone to run
36 through the action guide.
37

38 **DRAFT OPTIONS: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 55/SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT**
39 **44: MUTTON SNAPPER AND YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER MANAGEMENT MEASURES**
40

41 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, sir. Like C.J. said, Reef Fish
42 Amendment 55/Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 is joint between us and
43 the South Atlantic Council. It talks about modifications to
44 southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper
45 management. Both of these species are considered to be single
46 stocks across the southeastern U.S., concentrated around Florida,
47 and recent stock assessments for both found that both stocks were
48 healthy.

1
2 Another thing that's noteworthy about both stocks is that both
3 councils have heard, through public comment, about range expansion
4 for both of these animals in their respective regions, and there
5 were data to support these observations that were featured in both
6 stock assessments.

7
8 This amendment is going to consider modifications to the respective
9 stock catch limits, jurisdictional apportionment of the respective
10 stock acceptable biological catch and setting of regional annual
11 catch limits, and South Atlantic sector allocation for both species
12 within the South Atlantic's jurisdiction.

13
14 In the Gulf, we don't use sector allocations on either species,
15 and so those Actions 3 and 4 in the document, that focus on sector
16 allocations for the South Atlantic, that's exclusively South
17 Atlantic action, and so we won't focus on that today.

18
19 This version of the document also contains some updated fishery
20 closure analyses that will be very easy for me to summarize. There
21 aren't any closures expected, and these are found in an appendix
22 in the document. It's not Appendix D anymore. I think I ended up
23 changing that.

24
25 The councils will have to ping-pong this document back and forth
26 to make sure that they all agree on the same preferred alternatives
27 before taking final action. I'm not asking you guys to make
28 preferred alternatives today, because we're still in the options
29 phase, and so don't feel like you have to if you don't want to,
30 but, if you feel just overwhelmingly compelled, I won't stop you
31 either.

32
33 You guys should review the actions and alternatives and recommend
34 modifications to the councils, as appropriate, and we will plan to
35 work on public hearing drafts for you guys to look at later in the
36 fall.

37
38 We can go to the document, and, Bernie, if we want to just lead
39 off hit with the map, the Figure 1.1.3, and I want to talk about
40 that first. All right, and so this map right here shows the survey
41 areas that are used by the State of Florida's State Reef Fish
42 Survey Program, and the catch limits that you guys are going to
43 see, the proposed catch limits, are inclusive of SRFS units.

44
45 When we were talking about how we were going to deal with the data
46 for both species, we had to think about how the for-hire data,
47 which are still collected by MRIP, were going to be apportioned,
48 and so, if we scroll down to Table 1.1.2, you guys will see here

1 a description of how the recreational landings from southwest
2 Florida are going to be attributed, and so, using SFRS, we're able
3 to attribute the landings from the western Keys at Area D.

4
5 Bernie, if you just scroll back up real quick, just to remind
6 folks, and we can take the SFRS landings from Area D, and those
7 are easily attributable to the Gulf, and the same is also true for
8 the headboat fleet.

9
10 For the federal for-hire fleet, we've used the fraction of landings
11 between Areas D and E from SFRS to create an apportionment for the
12 for-hire landings, to attribute those that we would assume to come
13 from Area D to the Gulf. It's a small fraction, and that's detailed
14 in Table 1.1.1, and so you can see how that breakdown looks right
15 there, but just trying to give you guys the greatest level of
16 precision of divvying out these landings that we can, and this
17 would be used for future quota monitoring purposes, also.

18
19 Then, for shore landings, because of the nature of shore landings
20 in the Keys especially, you know, coming from state waters inside
21 Monroe County, it's easiest just to attribute that to the South
22 Atlantic, since that's where most of that is occurring anyway, and
23 so just to give you an idea of how the landings have been addressed.

24
25 We'll go down to the purpose and need. The purpose of these FMPs
26 -- Even though it's one document, it's amending both FMPs, Reef
27 Fish in the Gulf and Snapper Grouper in the Atlantic. It's to
28 revise the southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper
29 stock overfishing limit, stock acceptable biological catch, based
30 on the results of the SEDAR 79 and SEDAR 96 stock assessments,
31 respectively. SEDAR 79 was mutton, and 96 was yellowtail. The
32 amendments would also revise the jurisdictional apportionment
33 between the councils, the regional annual catch limits, and South
34 Atlantic sector allocations.

35
36 The need for these FMPs is to update existing catch limits,
37 jurisdictional apportionments of the ABC for both species, and the
38 sector allocations in the South Atlantic, to be consistent with
39 the best scientific information available and achieve optimum
40 yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social
41 and economic effects.

42
43 I'll kind of breeze past the breakdown from the stock assessments.
44 Generally speaking, both stocks were found, or were estimated to
45 be, healthy. In the case of mutton, mutton is very healthy, and
46 actually showed quite a few larger, older fish in the population,
47 and the proportion of length compositions that made up those
48 larger, older fish has been increasing in recent years, which is

1 --That's like a dream to see, and so mutton is in great shape, and
2 yellowtail is in healthy shape.

3
4 If we're looking at what the catch limits look like for mutton
5 from the SSC, from the stock assessment, we'll go to Table 1.3.2.
6 There you go, Bernie. This is a large increase for mutton snapper
7 over where we currently are.

8
9 Right now, the OFL for the stock for mutton is inclusive of MRFSS
10 units, which is the legacy federal program that predated MRIP. It
11 was 850,000 pounds, and we're already in 2026, and so we don't
12 expect those catch limits to be able to be implemented, and so
13 we're looking more at 2027 here. We're basically going from
14 850,000 pounds of MRFSS units to 3.3 million pounds, approximately,
15 for 2027, in units that are inclusive of SRFS, and so mutton is
16 doing great.

17
18 There's a breakdown of the current regulations, if you guys are
19 interested, on Table 1.3.4. We're not currently recommending any
20 changes to any of the retention limits in this document, and so
21 those are there mostly just for your own edification.

22
23 If we're looking at the landings in recent history for the Gulf,
24 and this would be in Table 1.3.5, and I would call you to look to
25 the third column from the right down there at the bottom for 2020,
26 or let's say 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. In 2024, we landed about
27 144,000 pounds of mutton, and these units are inclusive of SRFS
28 for private rec vessels, and so, you know, this is comparable to
29 what our proposed ACLs would be.

30
31 Just to give you an idea as we go into the Action 1, which, Mr.
32 Chair, I might like to do that, just go from this part of the
33 background into Action 1, and then we'll go back to the background
34 for yellowtail, and then we'll go to Action 2, if that's okay, and
35 so, Bernie, if you would go to Chapter 2 for Action 1, please.
36 Perfect.

37
38 Like we mentioned, the current OFL is 850,000 pounds. The ABC is
39 about 800,000 pounds, and this is split 18 percent to the Gulf and
40 82 percent to the South Atlantic, based on a weighting of the
41 historical and recent time series from when this was put in place
42 back when we did the Generic Annual Catch Limits and Accountability
43 Measures Amendment, and so it looked at 50 percent of the catch
44 history from 1990 to 2008, and then 50 percent from 2006 to 2008.

45
46 We can't use Alternative 1 anymore though, because we don't use
47 MRFSS anymore, and so these units are not applicable. They're not
48 consistent with the best science, and so we'll scroll on down to

1 Alternative 2.

2
3 Alternative 2 essentially uses the same 82 and 18 percent split
4 between the councils, but applies it to the catch limits that have
5 since been recommended by both councils' SSCs, and so you can see
6 how that breakdown looks right there, recalling in the back of
7 your mind that, in 2024, we were estimated to have landed about
8 144,000 pounds of mutton in the Gulf, and so, obviously, looking
9 great here, with plenty of wiggle room.

10
11 Alternative 3 would modify the OFL and ABC for the jurisdictional
12 apportionment based on one of a couple of options here. Option 3a
13 would use 50 percent of the landings from a twenty-year time
14 series, but it's a more recent one, and so 2004 to 2023, and then
15 50 percent from 2021 to 2023, and this is just because, when we
16 were working through all of this, we didn't have 2024 finalized at
17 that point. The difference between doing that though is minuscule.

18
19 This would apportion -- If we use that twenty-year time series in
20 Option 3a, then that apportions 16 percent to the Gulf and 84
21 percent to the South Atlantic, and, if we use the most recent ten
22 years in Option 3b, and so 2014 to 2023, and then 50 percent from
23 2021 to 2023, then that gives 15 percent of the Gulf and 85 percent
24 of the South Atlantic.

25
26 In either case, again thinking about 2024's Gulf landings being
27 144,000 pounds, the Gulf is still looking at, you know, a 400,000-
28 pound ABC, with the ACL set equal to the ABC, and so the Gulf is
29 still sitting pretty in either circumstance. Mr. Chair, I'll pause
30 there for you, if you like.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Yes, this is a good
33 situation to be in relative to mutton here. I think, you know,
34 we're not looking at any closures for either of the respective
35 councils. I think that was an overarching goal for this joint
36 amendment for both of the councils here, for both mutton and
37 yellowtail, but are there any questions about what Ryan has
38 presented thus far? Basically, a couple options, right, of keeping
39 the 75-25 split, but updating it with the new catch limits.

40
41 **MR. RINDONE:** 82-18.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Sorry. Wrong one. Yes. 82-18, and then,
44 also, you know, considering this Bowtie Method that factors in
45 recent years as well as historical landings there, and we've kind
46 of got two options in there for the Bowtie Method, one focusing on
47 the last twenty years and then another on the last ten years, and
48 so any comments, questions, discussion for Ryan or the committee

1 here?

2
3 **MR. RINDONE:** Obviously, like the -- You know, we're talking single
4 percentage point differences, and so it's really a principle
5 decision, as far as what you guys ultimately want to choose for
6 this. Practically, there's plenty of room under either one to
7 allow for range expansion that was mentioned during the stock
8 assessment process and by public comments.

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

11
12 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and this is a good place to be.
13 My question is about the precedent. I would lean more towards,
14 with regard to the historical time, consider to do like the last
15 ten years, the more recent one, but the other option is the twenty-
16 year, and is there a precedent for that in the past?

17
18 **MR. RINDONE:** I think it's more -- It's not so much about precedent,
19 I think, as it is what you think is going to be most relevant
20 moving forward, and so, given that the stock assessment mentioned
21 range expansion, and seeing more landings further up the coast of
22 Florida in the Gulf, and, you know, we're starting to see them off
23 of Tampa Bay more, and I think they're starting to see them up in
24 the Big Bend in some cases, in deeper water, and so, obviously,
25 these landings are moving into areas of, you know, higher
26 population centers, and more anglers, and so we would expect some
27 increase in landings.

28
29 Trying to -- You know, being frank, if we're thinking about like
30 what happened in -- Was it, you know, 2004, and that wasn't
31 happening in 2004, but it was starting to happen in 2014, and so
32 using a more recent time series is a little bit more reflective
33 of, you know, observations that have been coming in more recently,
34 and so, if you were trying to capture that as part of your decision-
35 making paradigm moving forward, then you would opt for Option 3b.

36
37 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and I agree with you. Thank you though, Ryan.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any more comments, or questions? Mr.
40 Strelcheck.

41
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I'll just add, from the data standpoint,
43 SRFS, I think, has existed in the South Atlantic since 2020, or
44 2021, and I don't know when yellowtail was incorporated in the
45 Gulf, but you started SRFS in like 2016, or 2017, right, and so a
46 more recent time series, obviously, is reflective of the SRFS data
47 being collected for the majority of that time period.

1 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Good point, Mr. Strelcheck. Any more on mutton
2 here? Okay. Mr. Rindone, maybe we can move over to yellowtail,
3 whenever you're ready.
4

5 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure, and so, Bernie, let's go back into the
6 background information, the Section 1.4, which covers yellowtail.
7 All right, and so, like mutton, yellowtail is healthy. Yellowtail,
8 thankfully, has been healthy across numerous assessments. It has
9 the benefit of spawning year-round, with the highest concentration
10 of spawning activity occurring during the summer months.
11

12 The fishing season for yellowtail runs from August 1 through July
13 31, with the intention being that, if there ever was going to be
14 a closure, either for the Gulf or the South Atlantic, that it would
15 occur during the peak of spawning, and have a better probability
16 of protecting some of that activity.
17

18 We're starting to see more yellowtail up both coastlines.
19 Yellowtail in the South Atlantic are caught as far north as North
20 Carolina, and, in the Gulf, they're starting to be caught up in
21 the Big Bend area as well. Typically, in the Gulf, they're caught
22 out beyond about 120 to 150 feet, and so you've got to have a boat
23 that can get out there to get to them for most of the Gulf, but,
24 in the South Atlantic, you know, especially like around Monroe
25 County, they can be caught from shore.
26

27 Let's move on down. Let's go to -- There we go, the OFLs and ABCs,
28 Table 1.4.2. These are the proposed catch limits for yellowtail,
29 and these are inclusive of SRFS units, and so, for 2027 and 2028,
30 both years, we're looking at OFLs of about 4.3 million pounds for
31 the stock, and ABCs of about 3.9 million pounds. We'll scroll on
32 down a little bit further, and so the current catch limit is in
33 MRFSS units, and, for the stock, we have not been hitting this
34 value.
35

36 The current regulations for yellowtail are shown in Table 1.4.4,
37 and again, like mutton, we're not considering changing anything
38 about the retention limits at this time, and so this is really
39 just for your edification. Scroll on down.
40

41 For the landings for yellowtail, we're only showing you guys from
42 1992 forward, and that's because those are the landings that were
43 used in the stock assessment. Landings prior to 1992 were subject
44 to some very low APAIS intercepts, with some interesting intercept
45 data there that caused some unreasonable ballooning of the
46 landings, and so, during the stock assessment process, the best
47 course of action to move forward was decided to start the
48 recreational landings time series at 1992, and so that's why that's

1 what you guys are being shown here.

2
3 If we scroll on down on those landings for yellowtail, you'll see,
4 for 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and, again, we're looking at that third
5 column from the right. The highest landings in those recent years
6 was 2022 for the Gulf, at about 605,000 pounds, but, lately, you
7 know, if you were looking at it over a little bit longer time
8 series, say maybe 2017, which, again, had a lower number of APAIS
9 intercepts, and then there's a little bit of ballooning suspected
10 there, but not quite to the degree that we saw prior to 1992.

11
12 We're looking at, you know, 400,000 to 500,000 pounds that is
13 typically seen coming out of the Gulf, and these are in units
14 inclusive of SRFS.

15
16 For the Gulf, most of the landings, until recently, have been
17 coming from the commercial sector, but a growing proportion have
18 started to come from the recreational sector, and so, if we go to
19 Action 2 in Section 2.2, we can talk about the jurisdictional
20 apportionment and catch limits for yellowtail, and so, presently,
21 the split for yellowtail is 75 percent to the South Atlantic and
22 25 percent of the Gulf, again using the historical application of
23 that Bowtie Method that Dr. Sweetman had mentioned.

24
25 The years are a little bit different for yellowtail. It's 1993 to
26 2008, and 2006 to 2008 for the no action alternative, and, again,
27 this is inclusive of MRFSS units, and so this one isn't considered
28 consistent with the best scientific information available.

29
30 Also established in the Generic ACL/AM amendment, you guys put an
31 11 percent buffer between the ABC and the ACL for the Gulf, and so
32 this is something that you guys could consider keeping or losing,
33 and, as far as precedent, Dr. Allen, typically you guys don't apply
34 a buffer between the ABC and the ACL when the stock is healthy,
35 but it's ultimately you all's decision about whether to keep or
36 lose that.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Just a real quick question, just like
39 procedurally, Ryan, and so could we add that into this document
40 here, or would that need to be something separate?

41
42 **MR. RINDONE:** Add what?

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Removing the buffer, if that is the --

45
46 **MR. RINDONE:** It's part of it. It's part of it already, and so
47 we'll read through that when we get to that, and so we'll go to
48 Alternative 2 next. Alternative 2 would modify the OFL and ABC,

1 essentially to adopt the recommended catch limits that were put
2 forward by the councils' SSCs, and you have the option, under
3 Alternative 2, Option 2a, to retain that buffer between the ACL
4 and the ABC, or, under Option 2b, to set the ACL equal to the ABC
5 for the Gulf. The South Atlantic already sets its ACL equal to
6 the ABC, and so that's why it's not mentioned as part of those
7 options.

8
9 You can look at the table there, and you can discern what the
10 difference is for the Gulf, as far as what its catch limits would
11 look like under a 75-25 split for yellowtail and with or without
12 the buffer between the ACL and the ABC.

13
14 If we move down to Alternative 3, and I'll just go ahead and tell
15 you that the results for Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 are the
16 same, as far as the percentages that shake out of it. Alternative
17 3 uses a Bowtie Method for the historical period of 2004 to 2023,
18 and then 50 percent from 2021 to 2023, just like that that was
19 proposed for mutton.

20
21 Alternative 4 uses 2014 to 2023, and then 2021 to 2023. Both
22 result in a split of 83 percent to the South Atlantic and 17
23 percent to the Gulf, and then you guys would ultimately have to
24 decide whether you wanted to retain that buffer between the ACL
25 and the ABC or not.

26
27 Worth mentioning is the highest recent landings for the Gulf from
28 2022 was 605,000 pounds, and so the proposed catch limit for
29 retaining that buffer between the ACL and the ABC would be below
30 that highest level of landings, which might be a discussion point
31 for whether to keep or not for that buffer. If you don't decide
32 to retain the buffer, then it gives you about a 10 percent, or
33 about a 60,000-pound, difference between the proposed ACL and the
34 highest landings that we've seen from the Gulf in the past few
35 years. I'll pause there, Mr. Chair.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. I mean, that's
38 certainly something that I think we should consider here. Even
39 just looking at the historical landings for yellowtail, it seems
40 -- I do know that there's an appendix down here, and this one is
41 a little bit more coming close to respective quotas on both sides
42 of the councils, I will say, both South Atlantic and Gulf, and so
43 I think, in the Gulf here, from my perspective, considering the
44 stock is healthy, I think it is warranting of consideration to
45 remove that buffer, to give us a bit more wiggle room there, so
46 we're not dealing with that, or any closures there.

47
48 Like I said, that was kind of the main purpose for what we're

1 trying to accomplish with both councils, is no closures, and so
2 I'll just throw that out there, but I'll see if there's any
3 discussion points, any questions for Ryan relative to yellowtail
4 snapper. Captain Walker.

5
6 **MR. WALKER:** I fully support what you said. Since we don't have
7 to have this buffer, and it puts us up against a potential, you
8 know, going over, I support removing it if it's not required.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Captain Walker. Mr. Strelcheck.

11
12 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Sorry, Ryan, if I didn't catch this. For the
13 South Atlantic, how close are we coming to their catch limit, in
14 terms of landings in recent years?

15
16 **MR. RINDONE:** There's about a five-hundred-and-something-thousand-
17 pound buffer for them. Their highest level of landings in recent
18 history is also 2022, and so they're looking at about -- Under
19 Alternatives 3 and 4, if we modify the jurisdictional
20 apportionment, which is kind of what the staff is expecting the
21 councils to consider doing, they've got about a five-hundred-
22 thousand-pound-and-change buffer. Let me see, and I'll tell you
23 what it is. Hold on.

24
25 At 17 percent, they have a 514,000-pound buffer for 2027, and a
26 518,000-pound for 2028, and that's between what the proposed catch
27 limit is and their landings in 2022, which were about 2.7 million
28 pounds.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Allen.

31
32 **DR. ALLEN:** So, following that logic, Ryan, how much -- If we went
33 with 4b, the 17 percent, we would be looking at around a hundred-
34 and-something-thousand-pound --

35
36 **MR. RINDONE:** No. It's 17 percent for the Gulf, and you be looking
37 at just a couple pounds under 60,000 pounds for 2027, and then
38 60,800 pounds for 2028, as far as the difference between the
39 proposed Gulf ACL with no buffer and the Gulf landings in 2022.

40
41 **DR. ALLEN:** In 2022.

42
43 **MR. RINDONE:** So it's about a 10 percent difference, but about
44 60,000 pounds.

45
46 **DR. ALLEN:** About 60,000 pounds. Okay. Thank you.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that, and I'll also just say

1 some of the justification I think that Andy gave for mutton, in
2 terms of the time that we're looking at here, I think that's very
3 applicable to yellowtail as well, and so just highlighting that.
4 Mr. Strelcheck.

5
6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Knowing that there's going to be some back-and-
7 forth with the councils, do we want to go ahead and start selecting
8 preferreds today? It seems like that would be prudent, given the
9 upcoming council meeting for the South Atlantic.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I agree. I think, if that's the
12 desire of this committee, we can certainly do that. We've
13 discussed this a few times. I think the options that we have
14 available to us -- It's not like they're drastic changes relative
15 to any of the options, and so I think that is certainly within the
16 purview of this committee to select preferreds right now, but I'll
17 look at -- I'm seeing the heads nod. Okay.

18
19 **MR. RINDONE:** So, yes, and I'm definitely not going to stop you
20 from doing that. I would call to your attention the fact that, in
21 Action 2, Alternatives 3 and 4 have the same percentage, and, at
22 this point, you guys have discussed, based on what Mr. Strelcheck
23 brought up about the timing of SRFS and everything, and the
24 inclusion of SRFS data relative to the proposed time series, or
25 reference period that's being used, that it makes -- The inclusion
26 of SRFS makes up more of the time series for Alternative 4 than it
27 does Alternative 3, and they're both resulting in the same
28 percentages, and so you might consider removing Alternative 3 to
29 Considered but Rejected.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay.

32
33 **DR. ALLEN:** May I ask a procedural question?

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, sir.

36
37 **DR. ALLEN:** Mr. Chair, should we do these separately for each
38 species, the preferred?

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes.

41
42 **DR. ALLEN:** Okay. So then, for mutton snapper, for the first one,
43 I would argue for 3b. 3b, the most recent time series is 3b, and
44 it being the preferred option.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay.

47
48 **DR. ALLEN:** I would like to make that, make a motion that that be

1 the preferred option.
2

3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so, Bernie, the motion would be, in
4 Action 1, to make Alternative 3b the preferred, and that translates
5 to a jurisdictional apportionment of 85 percent to the South
6 Atlanta Council and 15 percent to the Gulf Council. I have a
7 second from Captain Walker. Any discussion around the table, while
8 Bernie is getting us up there? Seeing none --
9

10 **MR. RINDONE:** So, in the summary, I'm putting recommend to the
11 councils, since this will ultimately go to both councils, and both
12 councils will ultimately need to agree on the preferred
13 alternatives, in order for things to go final.
14

15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and how about -- Can I make a friendly
16 suggestion here for Option 3b as the Gulf preferred option?
17

18 **DR. ALLEN:** I'm fine with that change.
19

20 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Just to be clear.
21

22 **DR. ALLEN:** Just to be clear.
23

24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes. Captain Walker, you okay with that?
25 Okay. Any further discussion on this? **Is there any opposition to**
26 **the motion?** This is for mutton. **Seeing none, the motion carries.**
27 Thank you for leading us forward on that, Dr. Allen. Now, do we
28 want to navigate yellowtail?
29

30 **DR. ALLEN:** I'll follow-up with the same thing, but for yellowtail,
31 to make Option 4b the preferred option for the Gulf, the Gulf
32 preferred option.
33

34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Let's wait until Bernie gets that on the
35 screen. 4b, again, is using that similar time series, 2014 to
36 2023, and then ultimately gets 83 percent to the South Atlantic
37 Council, and 17 percent to the Gulf Council, and, by choosing 4b,
38 that removes the 11 percent buffer between the ABC and the ACL.
39 Do we have a second for the motion? Captain Walker.
40

41 **DR. ALLEN:** Just for a bit of context, a reminder from this past
42 discussion, this gives -- That option would give a reasonable
43 buffer to both councils, in that situation, to prevent a closure,
44 which it seems like we can easily avoid a closure, given the rosy
45 state of these assessments.
46

47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Allen. Any further discussion
48 on the motion on the table? This is for yellowtail. **Seeing none,**

1 is there any opposition to the motion on the table? Seeing none,
2 the motion carries.

3
4 Okay. That was helpful. That will help move this along. There
5 are a couple other actions in there, but those are specific to the
6 South Atlantic Council, and I don't think we necessarily want to
7 be sticking our nose in their business, in the same way we don't
8 want them sticking their nose in our business. Anyway, and so,
9 Ryan, did you want to walk through that at all, since it's a part
10 of the formal document?

11
12 **MR. RINDONE:** No, I don't. They're still working on ironing out
13 exactly what alternatives they're going to include. They have an
14 allocation tool that they use to propose alternatives, and they
15 have those listed in there. If you guys want to look at it, you
16 know, you're more than welcome to, but, like Dr. Sweetman said, it
17 doesn't affect the Gulf in a measurable way, but, because it's
18 something -- Because everything that happens in Actions 1 and 2 is
19 going to have an effect on what comes out in 3 and 4, it's included
20 in this document.

21
22 Ultimately, once the South Atlantic has preferred alternatives for
23 Actions 3 and 4, the expectation is that the Gulf will review
24 those, and then likely select concurrent preferred alternatives
25 with the South Atlantic, and then that will allow the document to
26 go forward to final action.

27
28 In the back-end of the document, we have a couple of appendices.
29 We moved the history of management for both species into Appendix
30 A, and so you guys can review that there if you like. The classical
31 bit about recreational data collection programs is Appendix B.
32 There's a bit about the South Atlantic essential fish habitat and
33 ecosystem-based fishery management initiatives, and that's in
34 Appendix C, and the fishery closure analysis, by species by region,
35 is in Appendix D, and the Cliff Notes version of Appendix D is
36 that closures are not predicted at this time, based on the proposed
37 catch limits and the recent latest. Mr. Chair, that's what I have.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Any more questions for Mr. Rindone?
40 I think we've done our due diligence with this document here,
41 trying to move it forward, and do you need anything else from us,
42 Ryan, on this?

43
44 **MR. RINDONE:** Not on this.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right.

47
48 **MR. RINDONE:** I guess, just for scheduling, for you all's

1 edification, so the South Atlantic will next look at this probably
2 in -- I think they will have some discussion of it this month, but
3 then they'll also look at it again in September, and get some more
4 fleshing out done of Actions 3 and 4 especially.

5
6 We'll have to talk with the IPT on timing and see as soon as we
7 can -- As soon as we have alternatives nailed down, then we can
8 move forward with a public hearing draft to bring to you guys, but
9 it would be our goal to do that as quickly as is practical, so we
10 can keep the ball rolling on this.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Anything else on this?
13 All right. I think we can move into the next agenda item here.
14 Just orient myself, we are looking towards Dr. Suitor with Draft
15 Options: Modifications to Red Snapper Private Recreational Post-
16 Season Accountability Measures. Ms. Levy.

17
18 **MS. LEVY:** Just related to this, my colleague Kate Zamboni is on
19 the IPT for this, and so she's going to come to the table for this
20 one.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. We will let Dr. Suitor
23 run through the action guide whenever she is ready.

24
25 **DRAFT OPTIONS: MODIFICATIONS TO RED SNAPPER PRIVATE RECREATIONAL**
26 **POST-SEASON ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES**
27

28 **DR. ANABELLE SUITOR:** Okay. Council staff will provide an overview
29 of options for modifying private recreational accountability
30 measures for red snapper. Presently, if a Gulf state's landings
31 exceed its state-specific annual catch limit in a fishing year,
32 then, in the following year, that state's annual catch limit will
33 be reduced by the amount of the overage in the previous year.

34
35 This presentation will review alternatives to modify the post-
36 season accountability measures. The committee should review the
37 information presented, ask questions, make recommendations, and
38 discuss next steps, as needed. Thank you, With that, Bernie, can
39 you please move to the presentation? Thank you.

40
41 Today I'll provide a presentation on the options document we've
42 been developing for modifying red snapper private recreational
43 accountability measures. We've developed a document following an
44 earlier presentation on flexibility measures, after which the
45 council recommended that we modify specifically accountability
46 measures, and so, in this presentation, we'll be discussing
47 developments from the document, including the purpose and need,
48 the alternatives, and we'll provide examples to demonstrate how

1 these alternatives would work.

2
3 We would like the council to consider the purpose and need, the
4 alternatives and options available, and to provide next steps,
5 which could include guardrails to prevent frequent overages, and
6 further discussions on how to develop this document further.

7
8 To give a history of this document, it emerged out of an earlier
9 discussion on carryover provisions, and so, in April of 2024, there
10 was a motion to develop a document to adjust private recreational
11 accountability measures. In January 2025, the council received a
12 presentation on private recreational red snapper accountability
13 measures.

14
15 In 2026, the council requested to discuss additional flexibility
16 measures, including potential carryover and/or ACL sharing among
17 states. This was presented in April 2026, following which the
18 council made a motion to direct staff to develop a document to
19 modify the private recreational red snapper postseason
20 accountability measure, and so, as a reminder, this document does
21 not consider carryover or ACL sharing, but just modifies the
22 accountability measures for infrequent or nominal overages.

23
24 The accountability measures that are currently in place were
25 established in Amendment 50A. The postseason accountability
26 measure is a payback measure where, if the state exceeds their
27 state ACL, they will have a reduction of next year's ACL by the
28 amount of their previous overage, and this occurs even if the total
29 private recreational ACL is not exceeded, and so, in this document,
30 we will be modifying that specific accountability measure.

31
32 I'll walk through this table that was shared with the council
33 previously in Ms. Gardiner's April presentation, and so this is
34 current red snapper catch limits, which were established in 2023,
35 and so the ABC is 86.25 percent of the OFL, which is a relatively
36 small buffer, and it is the only buffer between ACLs and the stock
37 undergoing overfishing.

38
39 The ABC is further divided between 51 percent commercial and 49
40 percent recreational. The recreational ACL is divided 42.3 percent
41 for-hire and 57.7 percent private recreational. The recreational
42 sector is then divided into states.

43
44 The federal government manages the private recreational sector in
45 CHTS units, while states manage red snapper through their own
46 state-specific units, and so state units are calibrated to CHTS
47 units based on specific calibration ratios, and so, for much of
48 this presentation, I'll have both the CHTS federal units and the

1 state units.

2
3 For the rest of this presentation, I'll share what has been
4 developed in our draft options document, starting with the purpose
5 and need, and so I'll read this. The purpose of this action is to
6 modify the current state-specific post-season accountability
7 measures for the red snapper recreational sector private angling
8 component.

9
10 The need for this action is to provide additional management
11 flexibility in a manner that retains the integrity and
12 effectiveness of state management, while achieving optimum yield
13 consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery
14 Conservation and Management Act, including preventing overfishing
15 and providing sustained access for recreational participants and
16 members of fishing communities and states across the Gulf. If
17 there's no questions, then I'll move on to discussion of the
18 alternatives. Thank you.

19
20 The first alternative is the status quo alternative, which is that
21 payback provision that I mentioned that was implemented in
22 Amendment 50A.

23
24 The second alternative has four options, and so the language we've
25 developed was modified slightly by the IPT, for the sake of
26 clarity, and, as a reminder, the council made a motion previously
27 that gave the prior language.

28
29 The options in this alternative, if selected, would specify the
30 maximum allowable overage for a state as a percentage of that
31 state's ACL. A state could reach up to that percentage if the
32 total private recreational ACL is not exceeded. A state could not
33 exceed that threshold, and, if they do exceed that amount, they
34 would have to pay back that amount in -- They would have to pay in
35 full that amount in the following year.

36
37 If the total private recreational ACL is exceeded, each state has
38 to pay back their ACL by their full overage, even if that threshold
39 is not exceeded, and so the options we have available are Option
40 2a, which is up to 2.5 percent of the state ACL could be exceeded
41 without requiring payback, and that is, again, if the total private
42 recreational ACL is not exceeded. Option 2b is 5 percent, 2c is
43 7.5 percent, and 2d is 10 percent.

44
45 This table displays, for each state, the equivalence of each
46 option's percentage in pounds of fish, which are all in state
47 units, and so the amount listed would be the maximum allowable
48 overage for each option that would not require payback in the

1 following year, if the total private recreational ACL is not
2 exceeded.

3
4 If the private recreational ACL is exceeded, or if the listed
5 amount is exceeded, to reiterate this point, a state would be
6 required to pay their overage in full, and so, to provide an
7 example here, if Option 2a was selected, and Alabama went zero to
8 16,614 pounds of fish over their ACL, they would not be required
9 to pay back in the following year if the total ACL was not exceeded.
10 If Alabama went over by 16,615 pounds, they would have to pay back
11 that full amount in the following year.

12
13 Similar, if Alabama went five pounds over, and the total private
14 recreational ACL was exceeded, Alabama would have to pay back those
15 five pounds, even though it did not exceed the 2.5 percent
16 threshold, and so, for the rest of the presentation, we'll
17 demonstrate how these options would work based on examples of
18 historic overages.

19
20 This table displays the frequency and percentages by which states
21 have exceeded their ACL. The overages are listed, while the
22 underages are left blank, and, if you would like more detail about
23 state-specific landings, that will be available in the document,
24 in Tables 2.1.2 to 2.1.7, and that's available for each state.

25
26 As you can see, these overages are primarily nominal, and so, for
27 the next part of this presentation, we will specifically discuss
28 how the options listed would work for the years 2021, 2023, and
29 2024.

30
31 Here the overages are written in red, while underages are written
32 in black, and so this year is 2021. This year was before
33 calibration, and this year the total private recreational ACL was
34 exceeded. The full recreational ACL was not over, as the for-hire
35 industry was under, and so, in this year, Florida and Louisiana
36 both had overages.

37
38 Payback -- If Alternative 2, Options 2a to 2d were selected,
39 Florida and Louisiana would be required to pay back their full
40 overages. Even though Louisiana did not go over 2.5 percent, they
41 would still have to pay back that full 0.85 percent, because the
42 total private recreational ACL was exceeded.

43
44 This year is 2023, which is the year that calibration started, and
45 so the majority of states went over in this year. The total
46 private recreational ACL was not exceeded, but Florida, Alabama,
47 and Mississippi all went over. Under Alternative 2, Options 2a to
48 2d, Florida and Alabama would not be required to pay back their

overages. Mississippi, however, would be required to pay back their full overage, and that would not be reduced by, if 2d was selected, the 10 percent.

In 2024, again, the total private recreational ACL was not exceeded, and this year only one state went over, Louisiana, and so, under Alternative 2, Options 2b to 2d, Louisiana would not be required to pay back their overage. Under Option 2a, Louisiana would be required to pay back their full overage, and so that full 39,632 pounds. Are there any questions?

CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN: Captain Walker, then Dr. Overton.

MR. WALKER: Do you know how many times the total Gulf ACL has been reached?

DR. SUITOR: We have -- From the years that we have, 2020 to 2025, the private recreational ACL was only exceeded in that 2021 year, but I'm not sure the longer history.

DR. FROESCHKE: We would have to look. I mean 2017, I guess, but, I mean, that was such a different management regime, and then you have to think about it now, like in the total ACL, really, and are you talking about the recreational, the for-hire, the combined recreational and commercial, or, you know, the total.

Really, there's no buffer on any of that stuff, and so, if every sector caught their allowable, and, if any of those went over by even one pound, that it would push you over, but, in general, the commercial has never gone over, the for-hire hasn't gone over, to my knowledge, since we've had sector separation, and then, since the state management, just the single time.

CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN: Thank you, Dr. Froeschke. Dr. Overton.

DR. ANTHONY OVERTON: Kind of following up on Ed's comment, percentages kind of work well for me in terms of the overages for the recreational, and are they just 1 percent over, 2 percent over, or 30, and just kind of give me a perspective of, when they're over, what's over, you know, because all of this is contingent upon whether or not the ACL is exceeded by the recreational catch, and that's like another percentage, and then the frequency would be nice to know, too.

DR. SUITOR: Yes, and that would be -- So are you asking for individual states? Okay, and so I think that would be available in the tables that we have on the options document, the 2.1.2 to 2.1.7. We also have the percentages, if we want to go back to

1 slide 9.

2
3 **DR. OVERTON:** So these are the recreational percentages, and not
4 the overall?

5
6 **DR. SUITOR:** Yes.

7
8 **DR. OVERTON:** Okay. Thank you.

9
10 **DR. SUITOR:** Yes, and so the overall amount -- Bernie, if you can
11 go to slide 10, please, and so the landings were 4,284,611 pounds,
12 and the ACL was 4,269,000 pounds, and so it was a relatively small
13 amount that was over by.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Any more questions for Annie? All
16 right. Seeing none, back to you, Annie.

17
18 **DR. SUITOR:** Okay. Bernie, can you please go to slide 13? Okay,
19 and so the IPT discussed a potential other alternative that would
20 put no cap on a state's overage and manage to the full private
21 recreational ACL. This was largely proposed as a point of
22 comparison.

23
24 A pro of having this additional alternative, which the council can
25 consider, would be that it would allow states with smaller ACLs
26 more management flexibility. A con would be that it would
27 undermine state management, and so, if we would like to consider
28 this third alternative, we would also have to reconsider the
29 purpose and need, which emphasizes that this document is meant to
30 support state management.

31
32 It would allow states with smaller ACLs to exceed their ACL over
33 100 percent. It could increase the chance of private recreational
34 overages. It would need more guardrails, and it would be
35 challenging to implement, as the current management we have is
36 designed for state management, and this would manage to the full
37 ACL, which would be very similar to what it was like prior to state
38 management. If there's no questions, next slide, please.

39
40 This is our last slide. If the council wants to go ahead with the
41 document, the next steps would be to discuss the options available,
42 as well as potentially develop further guardrails, and so we would
43 be interested in any feedback on the range of options.

44
45 We do feel that the options available could address issues
46 expressed about states wanting more flexibility for inadvertent or
47 nominal overages. However, there has not been anything to develop
48 for guardrails against frequent overages, and so there's no limit

1 on frequencies, and so we don't have -- There's nothing to stop a
2 state, for example, from selecting an option as a new ACL, and to
3 open up their red snapper season earlier, assuming a state with a
4 larger ACL could be under their ACL, and this would create
5 substantial management instability, and so I think it would be
6 beneficial for us to consider some limits on frequency.

7
8 So with that, Bernie, could you please go to slide 9? We can
9 consider the historic overages when we think about limits on
10 frequencies, and so we could consider, for example, a limit on
11 back-to-back overages.

12
13 If that was selected -- We could take Louisiana, and Louisiana
14 could go over, and say, if Option 2b was selected in Louisiana,
15 all states could go over by 5 percent, or, actually, I'll say
16 Option 2c, 7.5. Then Louisiana would be allowed to go over in
17 2024, but, if we created a limit on back-to-back overages, they
18 would have to payback their 2025 overage.

19
20 We could also consider the establishment of a timeframe, and so,
21 for example, we could say that there could be only two overages
22 for every five-year period, and so, in this example, again, the
23 states would be allowed to go over two years in this time, but
24 then, as you can see, Louisiana went over a third time in 2025,
25 and so that 2025 overage would have to be paid back if there was
26 a limit for this time period.

27
28 With that, Bernie, can you return to the slide 14? To help staff
29 develop this document further, we would need the council to develop
30 a motion to move forward with the document as-is, or make a motion
31 for guardrails, and, with that, I would like to open up for
32 discussion.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Annie. Appreciate the presentation.
35 It's pretty straightforward, I mean, the options that have on the
36 table here. It's one action, and either we do something or we
37 don't do something, and then we need to figure out what that
38 percentage points are.

39
40 I do have, I guess, one question, before I open it up for
41 discussion, and so relative to -- So we, obviously, have like an
42 upcoming stock assessment for red snapper, and so what happens in
43 a scenario, worst-case scenario, if we have like a stock status
44 change, or anything like that?

45
46 I get a little bit uncomfortable with this kind of a mechanism in
47 an event like that, right, and so I'm just wondering, maybe as
48 part of one of the guardrails, so to speak, and it's not

1 necessarily about individual states or anything like that, but
2 more about the health of the stock, if there's a stock status
3 change, or potentially, you know, a substantial quota reduction,
4 and I think that's just something that we need to think about, big
5 picture, with that looming assessment coming down the pipeline.

6
7 I just wanted to put that out there for people's thoughts, and
8 discussion, but we are looking to try and give Annie some guidance
9 here, whether to move forward on this document, and, again, if so,
10 what are those options, and then maybe we talk about the guardrails
11 after that. All right. Any discussion around the table? Chris.

12
13 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so I guess, going along with what you just
14 pointed out, I think, if there were stock status changes, and the
15 stock somehow were deemed, you know, overfished, or a
16 categorization such as overfishing or something like that, it
17 should supersede these, you know, changes, and I'm not sure what
18 the mechanism is, or, as a council, we just come back and put
19 accountability measures fully back in, right, and, I mean, it's
20 just as easy to reverse this, I'm pretty sure.

21
22 Andy can probably specify more details on that than I can, but I
23 agree with what you're saying. I think that would be important to
24 consider, if there was a major change. However, with that said,
25 if there was a change in the overall Gulf ACL for the private
26 recreational sector, it would just reduce what the percentages
27 equal, and they would still be in place, right?

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I agree. Mr. Strelcheck.

30
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, I mean, I'm not sure if a change in
32 stock status would really matter all that much in that event. If
33 we have a lower catch limit, a lower overfishing limit, right, you
34 still would pursue the same concept, is you're trying to maintain
35 catch levels within the overall private recreational ACL, right?

36
37 Where I think the important conversation is, it's, obviously, the
38 guardrails, because, when we laid out state management years ago,
39 it was intended to, obviously, build upon the state surveys, and
40 ensure accountability of each of the states, and so that there are
41 some sideboards, obviously, for those guardrails.

42
43 I wanted to go quickly to the purpose and need, and just have a
44 quick conversation about that, and so slide 5. I just wanted to
45 note that we talk about achieving optimum yield consistent with
46 MSA. Optimum yield is for the fishery as a whole, and not just
47 the recreational sector, and I agree with the including preventing
48 overfishing.

1
2 I'm wondering if we need the last part of that sentence, because,
3 to me, the providing sustained access to recreational participants
4 and members of the fishing community is the actual program as a
5 whole, and not this recreational accountability measure provision,
6 and so I just wanted to mention that, and see if people agreed,
7 and we could just strike after "prevent overfishing".
8

9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'm looking around the table here. I'm seeing
10 some heads nod. That makes sense to me, Andy. Do we need a motion
11 to do that, or is it just, at this point, can we just strike that?
12

13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we
14 could put that in the committee report, and think about it some
15 more, if that's okay.
16

17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** It sounds okay to me. General Spraggins.
18

19 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** I mean, I understand all the things that
20 you all are looking at, and I know you want to talk about the
21 measures of how we manage this, you know, a little later, but we
22 don't want to forget something when we look at that, and that is
23 the fact that we have all talked about, you know, that we could
24 swap among states, and then, you know, that's still out there,
25 that we want to be able to do that.
26

27 You know, if one state came in way low one year, and then they had
28 plenty left over, and they wanted to be able to help another state,
29 that they could do that, and this is an after-the-fact thing, I
30 believe. It's not the thing that, you know, that you go in.
31

32 The other thing is I don't -- You know, I don't like the idea of
33 building in something to say that you can go over this amount and
34 not pay back, and, you know, I think that we ought to have
35 accountability down to the exact what we should do, and I
36 understand that, and I believe, you know, when you use the two
37 years, it's back-to-back, or something like that, and I would like
38 to look at a lot of different things on it before you all --
39

40 I know that's down the way, and it's not something we're going to
41 make a motion on right now, but I just think we need to look at
42 that a little bit better, to the fact that, you know, if you give
43 them X amount, the idea is not for you to go over, and, if you do
44 go over by -- Because of some reasoning, then we have this
45 flexibility to move among states, to be able to take care of it,
46 as long as the ACL is not exceeded.
47

48 I don't know, and maybe I'm missing something here, but I just

1 don't understand why we would want to put some kind of
2 restrictions, or give people opportunities.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I hear what you're saying, General.
5 I think that is a completely separate document. I think we're
6 trying to tackle some of these issues piecemeal, but they are
7 somewhat related. They are kind of trying to address similar
8 issues here. Dr. Froeschke.

9
10 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, just to think about the way it's structured,
11 you can only exceed in a particular state if the total ACL is not
12 -- Or if the private ACL, and so, in theory, if every state, other
13 state, caught all their fish, then no state could exceed, and so
14 it really does address that concept, because you're going over,
15 but the total private ACL is not being exceeded, and so those fish
16 are really coming from another state.

17
18 Really, that's how the -- It sort of is a swap without requiring
19 a specific state-by-state agreement in the year. I mean, one of
20 the things we talked about is, in a particular year, the landings
21 aren't available enough, that one state is going to know if they're
22 under to give it to another state in a particular fishing year,
23 and so it would have to come after the fact anyway.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Any more discussion? Captain Frady.

26
27 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, it just occurred to
28 me that we're trying to not punish anybody if they do go over,
29 and, just as a thought, I'm like, if everybody is in the left lane
30 driving a hundred miles an hour, and they're more concerned about
31 making it to the end of the season without exceeding their ACL
32 that's been assigned by the state, has anybody even mentioned
33 about, why don't we just put a buffer in place, and just put the
34 buffer in place?

35
36 Instead of punishing someone who goes over, why don't we put a
37 buffer in place to make sure they don't go over, because that was
38 part of the original deal with the states, that they accepted the
39 responsibility to manage their ACL and not go over.

40
41 Now, if they do go over, then, all of a sudden, everybody is kind
42 of like, you know, how far are we going to let them go over, or
43 what the penalty is going to be, and so my thought is have we
44 talked about the buffer to put it -- To make the states increase
45 their buffer, and I'm not trying to be a peckerhead about it, but,
46 you know, this is just something -- Another way to manage it,
47 because this is getting real, and, you know, I just want to make
48 sure we all do what we agreed to do.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Frady. I do believe that
3 there was a buffer previously, and that was removed, but Dr.
4 Froeschke.

5
6 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, I'll just give you a little bit of the IPT
7 discussion, because we did talk about this in the development of
8 the document, and so a couple of thoughts. The buffer overall for
9 the stock is between the OFL and ABC. There's like a million --
10 More than a million pounds buffer, and so there is some buffer.

11
12 The tradeoff to imposing the buffer -- Because you could do that,
13 and we talked about that, is trying to balance the foregone yield,
14 and, you know, in the council policies, they want to be fairly
15 aggressive with this, and put the buffer at the end, which seems
16 -- You know, that's acceptable policy.

17
18 If you put that buffer in a priori, you're just going to make that
19 harder, and, you know, there are reasonable -- The way it's done,
20 if you have a three-day weekend, and the weather is just blue skies
21 and flat seas, where you could reasonably exceed it by a small
22 amount, through no wrongdoing of any -- You know, with that.

23
24 The limits on it, the 2.5 or the 5, it would -- The IPT's consensus
25 was that it would prevent intentional exceeding of it, and setting
26 your season structure up in a way that you would expect to just
27 absorb that new buffer, and new ACL, without trying to carve into
28 that foregone yield, which we understand is not desirable.

29
30 So, I mean, the buffer, you're just going to -- You're just causing
31 yourself a loss in yield out of the gate to prevent going over,
32 and so, I mean, it's a tradeoff either way, but that's kind of
33 what we talked about.

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

36
37 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I feel like it would be appropriate to talk about
38 how some of these overages occur, especially with LA Creel at this
39 point, and so maybe going back to the percentage slide that you
40 have, that shows the differences there, would help the discussion.

41
42 The most recent overages that we've had generally occur at the end
43 of the season, more towards the end of the season with LA Creel,
44 and what happens is, inshore trips that happen to catch snapper,
45 but then come in and target red drum or spotted sea trout or
46 something like that, or intercept it at the dock, and the initial
47 question, when you get dockside intercepted, is what were you
48 targeting, and they say redfish.

1
2 Well, that becomes an inshore trip, and the effort then is applied
3 to the inshore effort, which blows up the landings for snapper on
4 that trip considerably, and this generally happens as we get very
5 close to the end of the season, late in the fall or early winter,
6 and that's what causes these overages typically at the end of the
7 year.

8
9 However, most of these overages, with the exception of 2025 on
10 there, are within the relative standard error, RSE, of LA Creel,
11 and it's been certified at that level. It's about 10 percent, and
12 so the probability of an overage is just as equally as probable as
13 an underage of the equal amount, with the exception of 2025, which
14 exceeded that point.

15
16 If you look at the entire time series right there for state
17 management for LA Creel, overages and underages, and you add that
18 up, it actually equals about 14,000 pounds we've gone over in
19 total. That's it. That's 1.5 percent of our allocation, which is
20 well below the RSE of 10 percent, correct, and so the probability
21 of that, being plus or minus 14,000 pounds, is equal on that, and
22 so I'm just trying to point out what these percentages equal.

23
24 When you look at landings, you're talking about 934,000 pounds
25 that you're managing to, with a statistical system that's not a
26 census, and it's pretty tight, and so that's where these overages
27 occur, and so, you know, we have no problem paying those back.

28
29 I would suggest, when we look at those alternatives, when we
30 actually get to the document, the next step here, is that we
31 consider the 10 percent. That's technically the relative standard
32 error around the mean, right? 10 percent as the rule for paying
33 back, or not, would seem acceptable to me.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. I heard preference for one of the
36 options that's on the table there, and so, Annie, I'm trying to
37 figure out what the best way to get you this information is, and
38 what you need here. Do you want to walk through the document,
39 just to show the options? I mean, the options are basically what
40 we see here, and so I'm curious your perspective, and what you're
41 thinking there.

42
43 **DR. SUITOR:** Yes, and we can go to the document, Bernie, please,
44 and so, yes, the purpose and need in the document are exactly what
45 was written. We also included material here as well, and so we
46 already got feedback on the purpose and need. I think we could
47 get feedback on the options. I don't know if there's interest in
48 discussing the third alternative proposed by the IPT.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I don't know why I'm raising my hand. My
3 individual perspective is I think Alternative 3, and that was put
4 forward by the IPT, completely undermined state management and
5 managing to the entire rec ACL, or private rec ACL, and that's
6 just -- I'm not in favor of that, but that's my personal
7 perspective.

8
9 So, really, the decision points here -- I mean, feel free for
10 someone else to speak up, right, if they have a different
11 perspective on what the IPT put forward for Alternative 3, but,
12 really, these are our decision points right here.

13
14 Either we do something or we don't, and, if we want to do something,
15 what is that percentage, and then we can start talking about the
16 guardrails. I will leave it there. We heard one person, Mr.
17 Schieble, recommending for Alternative 2, Option 2d, is what I
18 heard there. That's all I have heard so far around the table.
19 Dr. Banks.

20
21 **DR. BANKS:** Just some quick math looking at Annie's table. It's
22 about 7.1 percent, on average, between all the states when we went
23 over, and so 10 percent would definitely cover that, or Option 2c,
24 and so I think either 2c or 2d is reasonable.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Allen.

27
28 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and I just wanted to speak as a follow-up to your
29 comment, Chris, and I was actually thinking the same thing. This
30 10 percent is -- We treat these as real numbers, but they're
31 estimates, right? These landings are all estimates, and there's
32 uncertainty in those estimates, and so it would make sense, to me,
33 to make 10 percent of these options, if we go down this road,
34 because that's within the bounds of what you might expect
35 uncertainty to be in the estimates themselves, and so I agree with
36 you.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right, and so I'm hearing some leaning
39 towards 2c or 2d here, potentially. Mr. Osborne.

40
41 **MR. OSBORNE:** Just looking at the table here, is there any way we
42 could add an option for 28.53 percent, just in case?

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'm not going to respond to that, Mr. Osborne.
45 Any more discussion? Dr. Froeschke.

46
47 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I think what we're looking for is just feedback on
48 the range, and you don't have to pick preferred right now, but,

1 for example, if the 2.5 is just too low, and you don't think that's
2 something you want to consider, you could take it out.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Heard loud and clear. Mr. Anson.

5
6 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I heard your comment about your preference
7 about the Alternative 3 that is not included in the document, and
8 I was just wondering if -- Was it offered to -- I don't recall
9 what that was, and maybe just a quick summary, maybe.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and it was on the IPT slide here. She's
12 pulling it up right there. Potential alternative that would put
13 no cap on a state's overage, and then, instead, you're managing to
14 the entire private recreational ACL, as opposed to a state-specific
15 one.

16
17 **MR. ANSON:** All right. Thank you.

18
19 **DR. SUITOR:** Largely just proposed as a point of comparison.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So not formally in the document, but they just
22 wanted to offer it up for consideration. Mr. Strelcheck.

23
24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I'll just voice my support for what you
25 stated. I don't support Alternative 3. I think it does undermine
26 the initial intent of the state management programs.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Mr.
29 Osborne.

30
31 **MR. OSBORNE:** Just assuming -- If we went to 2d, and the state was
32 at 9.5 percent, and another state was at 10.5 percent, which -- I
33 mean, I'm wondering -- Is there a mechanism where we could say, if
34 you went over that 10 percent threshold, and so you did the 10.5,
35 you still were able to deduct the 10, and you only paid the 0.5,
36 because, if the state was at 9.5, you know, and they're getting
37 the full benefit of that, but the state that's 10.5 is not.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'll look at council staff. Dr. Froeschke.

40
41 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I mean, you could do that. We talked about that.
42 I mean, the way I would see that is, if the state's ACL is say
43 100,000 pounds, and you allow them to go -- They went over ten-
44 and-a-half, and they only pay back a half, you really just made
45 their ACL 110,000 pounds, and so we were just trying to figure out
46 the balance, how to let these what I call inadvertent overages,
47 but I guess you call it something else, without just incentivizing
48 people trying to change their season structures, such that they

1 attempt now to have a new target.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think I'm tracking you there. Mr.
4 Geeslin.

5
6 **MR. GEESLIN:** Conceptually, I follow where Mr. Osborne is going,
7 but I would liken that to precision with a scalpel, and we're using
8 a machete. It is not that fine edge as we're monitoring through
9 the season, bi-weekly reporting, and there's some calibration that
10 goes into that.

11
12 I'm looking at my state director colleagues here. If anybody has
13 got a precision that fine, let's talk, but that's just not the --
14 In practicality, that's not how it works, and, oftentimes, it's
15 after the season that we're run into some post-season calibrations
16 that get us in that estimate, you know, and we're narrowing in on
17 our confidence intervals to really provide that estimate after the
18 season.

19
20 **MR. OSBORNE:** So, when you talk precision, you mean like exactly
21 matching your ACL? Would that be precision?

22
23 **MR. GEESLIN:** We attempt, and model, and project our landings
24 estimate and close the season when we project to reach that ACL.
25 It's an art rather than a science.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Good discussion there. All right, and
28 so it seems like, from reading the room here, Options 2c and 2d
29 are the ones that are in consideration. Do we want to remove any
30 of the options? We haven't heard any support for 2.5 or 5 percent,
31 and so I'm looking around the table. Dr. Banks.

32
33 **DR. BANKS:** I assume we need a motion for that, but I'll make a
34 motion to remove Options 2a and 2b from the document.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. We've got a motion on the table by
37 Dr. Banks, and seconded by Dr. Allen. We're going to wait until
38 we get that motion on the board and then go right to you, Mr.
39 Strelcheck. Okay. Motion on the board right there, seconded by
40 Dr. Allen. Mr. Strelcheck.

41
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I appreciate that we're managing maybe more with
43 a machete than a scalpel in some instances, but I think 5 percent
44 is still a very reasonable number. Five of the nine overages have
45 been less than 5 percent. I think the states have done a very
46 good job of trying to manage as close as possible to the catch
47 limit, so I would discourage eliminating Option 2b.

1 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any discussion?

2
3 **DR. BANKS:** That's fine. I'm happy to take that friendly
4 amendment. I'm looking at my seconder. **Mike is fine with that**
5 **too, and so we're going to amend the motion to leave 2b in the**
6 **document, and then we had a question.** Is it to remove or just
7 consider but reject?

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** No, and this is --

10
11 **DR. BANKS:** This is good? Okay.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so we've removed 2b from this. This
14 will stay in the document. The motion on the table would be, in
15 Action 1, to remove Option 2a from Alternative 2. Any further
16 discussion? **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none,**
17 **the motion carries.** Okay. Progress. Mr. Geeslin.

18
19 **MR. GEESLIN:** To Andy's point about -- I realize it's not a formal
20 action within this document, but I agree with Mr. Strelcheck about
21 the IPT proposal of Action 3. I think it speaks against the true
22 spirit of accountability from each of the states in managing to
23 our ACL. Mr. Chair, I don't know if we need to make a proposal,
24 and then I'll be quiet.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** We do not, just because it's not even in the
27 document yet, and so, if we decide we don't want it, then it
28 doesn't go in there. Okay. We've carried that motion forward,
29 and now I feel like we should probably start talking about
30 guardrails a little bit here. That's kind of one of the other
31 remaining items here.

32
33 I will -- One option that I heard through the presentation was,
34 you know, if it's an overage in back-to-back years, you would have
35 to pay that back. Any other thoughts from the committee? Dr.
36 Froeschke.

37
38 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So, just the kind of things we talked about, it
39 was either the no back-to-backs, for example, or no more than X
40 number in, you know, two and three years, or three in five years,
41 or --

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and like three exceeding once every three
44 years or something like that.

45
46 **DR. FROESCHKE:** The other nuance, since I'm talking about it, with
47 these kind of things is, if the quota is whatever it is, and you
48 modify either up or down, do those reset, and so, if you get to a

1 point where we're doing interim analyses, and changing the quota
2 every year, does that play in that system or not, and so I don't
3 know if we need anything formal for that, but just think about how
4 you would like to handle that.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that's a good point. That's kind of
7 what I was trying to bring up before, just whether it's an interim
8 analysis or the results from the stock assessment. I mean, I heard
9 what was said, but, I mean, that might change the perspective of
10 the council for wanting to move forward with something like, or
11 continue on with something like this, and so I agree.

12
13 I don't necessarily think that needs to be decided today, but it
14 definitely is something for the council to consider there, and so
15 do we have any options that people want to throw out there? I
16 mean, Froeschke gave the idea about, you know, X amount of times
17 across X amount of years. Back-to-back years was in the
18 presentation, and I'll throw out you can't exceed it once every
19 three years, and I'll just throw that idea out there for people to
20 chew on, but Mr. Anson.

21
22 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I was just going to kind of reiterate what
23 you said, is that include that kind of in one of the alternatives,
24 I guess, is a back-to-back, and then once every three, or something
25 like that.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. That sounds good to me. Mr. Schieble.

28
29 **MR. SCHIEBLE** So you're thinking you need a motion to add an action
30 into the document for consecutive overages, or every three years,
31 and is that what you want?

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'm looking at council staff if we need a
34 motion for this.

35
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we're
37 having a sidebar here, and so I guess we're unsure if this actually
38 has to be an action alternatives, or this could be like written in
39 the text, and so I guess looking at Ms. Zamboni, and is it going
40 to be -- Would this be a codified potential part of this, or could
41 this just be like an internal mechanism that we follow?

42
43 **MS. KATE ZAMBONI:** Kate Zamboni, for the record. We could bring
44 it back with it built into the text that there's no payback, and
45 then we're basically stating the conditions that have to be present
46 for there to be no payback, and that would include it hasn't
47 occurred once -- You know, more than one time in three consecutive
48 years, and I don't think we need to say no back-to-back, because

1 that would be included in one time every three years.

2
3 Then, in the next version, if you don't like the way that looks,
4 we can, you know, present it in a different way, but I think our
5 goal was to try to use the current formulation of the
6 accountability measure so it's easier for people to understand,
7 and not totally change the way it reads, and so, to the extent we
8 can kind of work with that language, and build in all those
9 conditions, that would be what we strive to do.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that makes a lot of sense to me, and
12 that's pretty straightforward and easy, I think. Captain Frady.

13
14 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate you all
15 listening to me. This is just kind of a thought. You know, having
16 come from the banking industry, when -- You know, I look at
17 overages like checking accounts getting bounced, and there's
18 penalties if you overdraft, and they charge overdraft fees, and
19 so, in the thoughts of this, if someone goes over, why wouldn't we
20 -- I mean, you let them get by with it, and you go up to that
21 percentage, but, if they do it again the second year, why don't we
22 put a buffer in place that makes that state have a buffer so they
23 do not go over a third time?

24
25 In other words, put a clause in there where, if that state is
26 habitually doing it in consecutive years, but I think, that
27 discussion of putting the buffer in, the person who continues to
28 go over, it would reward them for staying under, and it would be
29 fair to the rest of the states if that one offender kept doing it,
30 and so a buffer would be ideal for that person who is a repeat
31 offender. I would like to discuss that. Thank you.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Osborne.

34
35 **MR. OSBORNE:** Troy, I'm following you a little bit, but I'm
36 curious, because I'm seeing this whatever percentage we have here
37 as the buffer, and so it would be an additional buffer on top of
38 that?

39
40 **MR. FRADY:** It's a buffer in the other direction. The buffer we
41 were talking about before is -- You know, buffers remove
42 uncertainty. This rewards uncertainty. If someone goes over, the
43 penalty doesn't kick in until after they go over 5 percent, or 10
44 percent, or seven-and-a-half percent, whatever that is.

45
46 I'm saying if you have a state that has agreed to abide by their
47 original plan of the understanding where they were going to
48 delegate the fishery and manage it, now we're asking them to give

1 themselves a 5 percent buffer, up to 10 percent buffer on this,
2 and my thought is, as a guardrail, why not -- If they're negligent
3 with their behavior, and they allow their people to overfish, and
4 hit their OFL, and their optimum yield, and exceed it every year,
5 why not take that person and put the guardrail in place to prevent
6 them from doing it in future years?

7
8 It's just an idea as a guardrail for the offenders, if they keep
9 doing it, in the form of a buffer. You reduce their ACL and put
10 that buffer in place to keep them in line. It's just an idea.

11
12 **MS. OSBORNE:** I hear you. I'm just trying to understand where the
13 buffer comes into play. Does it come into play before this 10
14 percent, or seven-and-a-half percent or 5 percent?

15
16 **MR. FRADY:** No, sir. If someone comes up here and they hit their
17 5 percent, or whatever we agree upon, and then next year they do
18 it again, or whatever that thing I, it triggers another guardrail
19 to say, okay, we've trusted you to do it, and you keep pushing the
20 limits. Therefore, this next year, we're going to put a buffer in
21 place and pull you back under, and rein you in, so you don't
22 eventually just keep going over. It's just a guardrail. It's
23 just a buffer that would be a guardrail for the repeat offender.

24
25 It doesn't -- There's no buffer on the front end, but, for the
26 repeat offender, you put a buffer in place to keep them from
27 exceeding their ACL. It's just an idea for a guardrail. That's
28 it.

29
30 **MR. OSBORNE:** Gotcha.

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

33
34 **MR. GEESLIN:** I guess what we're really talking about here is a de
35 facto, in my mind, a de facto -- As Mr. Osborne pointed out, a de
36 facto buffer there, and, to your point, Captain Frady, if we wanted
37 to talk, you know, punitive measures and rewards, a true reward
38 would be a carryover provision, a carryover provision, because we
39 are seeking to manage right up to, and this is where we get into
40 the art of this, right up to that ACL without going over.

41
42 That's the true intent. In the last few years, four of the five
43 states haven't been able to get there, just due to lack of
44 pressure, but I guess I'm -- You know, we're getting into this
45 evaluation, and discussion, of trying to formalize guardrails in
46 terms of a frequency of occurrence, how many times you are able to
47 exceed, given a small percentage, and how many times you're going
48 to be able to continue doing that.

1
2 I'm on the fence there, whether it's two out of five years, one
3 out of seven years, and pick your poison, or back-to-back years,
4 however we frame that, but we're really discussing a frequency of
5 occurrence now.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Frady.

8
9 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin, and I understand. This whole
10 thing comes back to -- I'm out there every day, and, no matter
11 what fishery you're in, if you're hitting your optimum yield, in
12 my experience, the fishing quality goes down, and so, if every
13 state, or every charter-for-hire industry, is out there trying to
14 get our optimum yield -- In the past five or six years, our fishing
15 quality, in my perspective, in the customer's perspective, the
16 happiness of the angler --- Mr. Anson and I have talked about this,
17 and where are people going to be happy?

18
19 If we continue to pull out in the left lane, and we hammer down,
20 and we go to hit optimum yield, or hit our quota, there's an
21 unhappiness going on out there, because the average weight
22 continues to fall down. People are having to go farther, and
23 localized depletion gets worse.

24
25 From a conservation aspect, I understand where the states, or any
26 user group, would want to get out there and go and catch their
27 quota. I'm just a conservative person. I know there's a happiness
28 factor out there, and so, whenever I say something, it's not trying
29 to be punitive to the states, and, you know, I certainly don't
30 want to get into where you reward people for not going over,
31 because that just makes the fishing experience get worse as you go
32 in time, unless something miraculous happens, like year classes,
33 cohorts get brought into the fishery, those things.

34
35 I'm just throwing these things out there, because I see things
36 from the perspective of a fisherman who is on the water, you know,
37 over 180 days a year, and I just want to do what's right by the
38 fish, and not necessarily by the fishermen, because, if we take
39 care of those fish, and we're not continually going over every
40 year, the happiness factor comes back in, the conservation measures
41 are met, and we all win, and the fish win, and I thank you for
42 listening to me. It's just my perspective. Thank you.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Troy. Dr. Banks.

45
46 **DR. BANKS:** I kind of look at this more like this is fixing an
47 oops. Like Dakus and many others have said, this is, you know,
48 not a science. It's an art of modeling, and so the state did the

1 best they could at projecting. You went over by a percent, and
2 you're not now penalized for the one year that you went over, and,
3 instead, I mean, the next year, if they go over again, they become
4 that habitual offender, and then they don't get this 10 percent.

5
6 They're already managed to that ACL, and then we're going to drop
7 them by what they went over, and so they have that buffer that
8 kind of like triggers, like what you're saying, and I just think
9 that's kind of already built in, and so this is just like an oops,
10 something happened, and my model wasn't perfect, and I went over.

11
12 Like Mike said, the stats is kind of an art, and so that 10 percent,
13 or 7, or 5, or whatever we pick, kind of just gives us that oops,
14 instead of -- I mean, your bank analogy, you pay the twenty-five-
15 dollar bounce fee or whatever, and then it goes away, and you're
16 not penalized again, and so I think this just gives you the oops
17 before that twenty-five-dollar fee is hit.

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

20
21 **DR. FROESCHKE:** The other thing is there's so many levels to our
22 management, and so, five states combined, that's the private
23 recreational component, and so an individual state can only carry
24 it over if the five states in aggregate are under, and so there is
25 a buffer, so to speak, there. It's sort of self-regulating, but
26 it has to be there in order for this to work.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Froeschke. Good
29 discussion all around the table there. Mr. Schieble.

30
31 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Just a technical question, I guess, from my own
32 edification, and Ms. Suitor can maybe answer this, but where --
33 What is the next step, as far as the carryover provision and the
34 sharing of ACL that we discussed back I think it was in the April
35 meeting, because it seems like those two things go hand-in-hand
36 with this, and are we going to get a separate document eventually
37 with that, perhaps at the next meeting, or what's the schedule for
38 that?

39
40 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll take that,
41 and you guys can fill in where I missed it, but remember that you
42 guys directed us to start this document as a standalone document
43 to try to expedite the development of this document.

44
45 The carryover and transfer provision, which you received a
46 presentation on during your April council meeting, seemed to get
47 quite complicated quickly, and so you directed us to move forward
48 with this document first, and so it's on our list. It's kind of

1 far down the list, and so we can talk about it at Full Council.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Chris, you got anything else? You good?
4 Any other questions, or comments, around the table? Dr. Suitor,
5 do you think you have some guidance and direction here to kind of
6 move this forward, based on what we've heard?

7
8 **DR. SUITOR:** Yes. Thank you so much.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Last chance. All right. That
11 will close that one up, and, Mr. Chair, I think we're right at our
12 lunch break.

13
14 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We will take our
15 lunch break, and we will start back up at 1:30.

16
17 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on June 2, 2026.)

18
19 - - -

20
21 June 2, 2026

22
23 TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

24
25 - - -

26
27 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council reconvened
28 at The Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore in Tampa, Florida on Tuesday
29 afternoon, June 2, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman C.J.
30 Sweetman.

31
32 **MR. DUGAS:** Council members, back to the table. We're going to
33 get started. All right. Thank you. I hope everyone had a good
34 lunch, and so we'll pick up where we left off and turn it over to
35 Dr. Sweetman.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Next up on our agenda
38 is Draft Options: Reef Fish Amendment 59A: Permit requirements in
39 IFQ Programs, and I'll turn it over to Dr. Diagne to run through
40 the action guide and through the draft document.

41
42 **DRAFT OPTIONS: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 59A: PERMIT REQUIREMENTS IN**
43 **IFQ PROGRAMS**

44
45 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On with the action guide for
46 Reef Fish Amendment 59A, which addresses permit requirements in
47 the IFQ programs, staff will present an overview of Amendment 59A
48 and discuss the permit requirements as they relate to shareholder

1 account, shares, as well as annual allocation.

2
3 We will spend most of the time reviewing the recommendations made
4 by the Ad Hoc IFQ AP. During that same meeting -- I mean, in the
5 morning, they talked about 63, but, in the afternoon, they
6 essentially discussed 59A. The committee should review the
7 information presented, make recommendations, and recommend the
8 next steps, as needed, and so, Bernie, if you would, please let's
9 have the Ad Hoc IFQ report, the second section.

10
11 I would also mention, Mr. Chair, that, during the meeting, under
12 Other Business, the AP did discuss a series of items, and we did
13 indicate early on that we would highlight those at the end of the
14 discussion on 59A.

15
16 For 59A, IFQ permit requirements, if you recall, in January of
17 this year, the council did request that quota banks be considered
18 in the overall discussion as it relates to these requirements, and
19 so, in preparation for those discussions at the AP level, we had
20 two presentations on quota banks.

21
22 We heard from Ben Martens of the Maine Coast Fishermen's
23 Association, and the second presentation was given by Ashford
24 Rosenberg from the Shareholders Alliance.

25
26 Mr. Martens' presentation essentially discussed the Fisheries
27 Trust of Maine and indicated that his organization bought permits
28 from Maine fishermen leaving the fisheries for those permits to be
29 held in trust. Essentially, his organization provides quota at a
30 discount for their members, and the goal here is to keep the
31 permits within the community and support the newer generation of
32 Maine fishermen.

33
34 The second presentation discussed the Shareholders Alliance, which
35 is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, and most of the discussion focused on
36 the quota bank aspect, essentially, of that organization, which is
37 an industry-designed solution that is very similar to other quota
38 banks around the country. It was mentioned that, initially,
39 members of the board posted a certain percentage, I believe 1
40 percent of their shareholdings, and other folks also donated quota
41 to essentially fund, or seed, if you would, the quota bank.

42
43 On to discussing the recommendations of the AP after this
44 introduction and these presentations on quota banks. The AP
45 discussed Action 1, and we can stop there, Bernie, because, in
46 Action 1, we first reminded the audience that the council did
47 select a preferred alternative, and the preferred alternative you
48 selected is in front of us her.

1
2 It is Preferred Alternative 3, which reads as follows: In addition
3 to the U.S. citizenship or permanent residency requirements, all
4 applicants are required to possess a valid or renewable commercial
5 reef fish permit to obtain and maintain an IFQ shareholder account.
6

7 That is the first action in the document, and, as you recall, this
8 is how the program, the programs, plural, were in the first five
9 years. Essentially, the red snapper one, which started in 2007,
10 and, after the first five years, it was, quote-unquote, public
11 participation, and no more permit required, and, similarly, the
12 grouper and tilefish program, after its first five years, the
13 permit requirement also went away, and it became public
14 participation.
15

16 The AP discussed Action 2, which doesn't have a preferred at this
17 time, but perhaps we'll come back to that. One of the
18 recommendations from the council was to have a discussion and
19 consider the role that dealers may continue to play within this
20 process as we are considering permit requirements, and, in line
21 with that, an AP member asked whether dealer permits could be
22 recreated as a limited access permit and suggested that dealers
23 should at least show some activity by landing a certain percentage
24 of their own. We mentioned to them that there is a separate
25 component to this, meaning 59B, which will concentrate on the
26 participation requirement.
27

28 AP members mentioned that there are both perhaps opportunities and
29 challenges with carving out an exemption for dealers, as well as
30 requiring dealers to have refuge permits, keeping in mind that, as
31 of right now, the dealer permit is an open access permit, if you
32 would.
33

34 The different business arrangements were discussed, and it was
35 mentioned that many participants in the IFQ programs have a master
36 account and smaller accounts that are fed with annual allocation,
37 and, as written, Amendment 59A, with the preferred alternative
38 selected, would no longer allow that particular business model to
39 continue, because all accounts then -- To have the account, you
40 would have to have a permit.
41

42 There were some discussions related to share caps, but, given that
43 we talked about that earlier this morning, and Dr. Stephen
44 mentioned that, I will just continue on.
45

46 An AP member mentioned that, in the past, the council considered
47 grandfathering certain accounts. We did recommend to them, and
48 indicate to them, that, at this point, this is not something that

1 the council is recommending, or considering.

2
3 At the end, the AP made a motion to support the council's preferred
4 alternative in Action 1, which we have before us here, and so, in
5 Action 1, requirements to open and maintain shareholder accounts,
6 the Preferred Alternative 3 was approved by, or supported rather,
7 by the AP, and the motion carried with five for, one against, and
8 three abstentions. That is for the nine AP members that made the
9 meeting, and so should I stop here, Mr. Chair, or continue?

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'm looking around the table, but I think you
12 can continue, and we'll probably have a bigger discussion with the
13 amendment in general.

14
15 **DR. DIAGNE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The AP discussed Action
16 4, and, in Action 4, as you recall, it is the action that considers
17 the divestment provision should a particular participant become
18 non-compliant.

19
20 The council's preferred alternative selected at the time, and,
21 Bernie, if you would scroll down a little bit, so we can see the
22 motion. Thank you. Right there. The preferred alternative is
23 currently Preferred Alternative 2, meaning that NMFS will reclaim
24 shares from shareholder accounts that are not compliant with
25 requirements set in the previous action, and the Option 2a, in
26 terms of a grace period, one year following the effective date of
27 the final rule implementing these requirements.

28
29 In terms of non-compliance, one could be non-compliant at the
30 inception of the program, once it's implemented, or one can fall
31 out of compliance later on in the future, and so the second
32 preferred alternative deals with the latter.

33
34 Preferred alternative 3 is, after implementation of this
35 amendment, if a shareholder account is no longer in compliance
36 with the requirements set in the previous actions, the owners of
37 the account must divest of their shares, or the shares will be
38 reclaimed by NMFS, and the preferred option, in terms of the grace
39 period, one year following the non-compliant status. The motion
40 carried with no opposition.

41
42 The AP discussed the length, if you would, of this grace period,
43 and the motion was agreed upon after it was made clear that the
44 grace period would essentially cover a two-year period, because
45 you have one year during which your permit is renewable, and then
46 the second year afterwards.

47
48 An AP member indicated that, should the shareholders divest now or

1 in the near future, it may be too late, because they may not
2 receive the better price. The AP also discussed the potential
3 involvement, or continuous involvement, from non-profit
4 organizations and approved the following motion: The AP recommends
5 that changes to participation requirements in Reef Fish Amendment
6 59A not be applicable to 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that
7 serve commercial fishermen and fishing communities. This motion
8 also carried with no opposition. That is an overview, if you
9 would, of the summary that we prepared following the AP meeting
10 for 59A. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne, and so the next thing
13 that we have on the list is actually walk through the draft
14 document there, but, before we get to that, any questions to Dr.
15 Diagne regarding some of the motions that came forward regarding
16 59A?

17
18 Obviously, this motion that's currently on the screen right now is
19 not presently part of the document, and so that would be something
20 that this committee would need to consider, if they want to move
21 that forward, but any discussion right now? Mr. Sanchez.

22
23 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and, obviously, I'm in favor of accommodating
24 a group like this, that has this designation, that is in here as
25 a non-profit to do essentially what we're all trying to do, get
26 shares into the hands of people that need them. Is there any way
27 -- This is a question for Andy and Jessica, and is there any way
28 we can do some research to see if there's a way to accommodate
29 that and not disrupt this practice that has benefited a lot of,
30 you know, fishermen?

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Stephen.

33
34 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, and I've done some thinking on this since the
35 AP meeting. I think we would probably require some submission of
36 paperwork to prove that it's a non-profit, which should be easily
37 enough done, right?

38
39 They have to file all this information for federal reasons anyhow,
40 and tax purposes, and then we would probably have a different type
41 of application, where we would have them affirm that they're a
42 non-profit, under perjury of law and so forth, and that could be
43 our mechanism to assert that it is a non-profit, and then I would
44 probably use that as a way to technically build it into the system.

45
46 We would probably want to talk a little, explore a little further,
47 what sort of the requirements are for that non-profit, so that
48 we're not opening a big loophole, or a door, going through, but

1 I've spent some time thinking about this.

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

4
5 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I want to thank you for that, very much,
6 and is that something you could bring back at a subsequent meeting,
7 the results of, you know, what your research is showing you, as
8 far as requirements, so that that universe of people that are non-
9 profits will know, all right, these are going to be the hoops
10 you're going to have to jump through in the future to maintain
11 viable as a non-profit in this --

12
13 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, and I think we can gather some of that
14 information and bring it back at a later meeting.

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

17
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** In response to that, John, I think it will be
19 helpful today to maybe delve into a little bit more detail.
20 There's a lot of gray areas here, and what does it mean to serve
21 commercial fishermen and fishing communities? What do we want
22 that to look like?

23
24 As Jessica mentioned, you know, we potentially want to consider
25 this, but we don't want to create a loophole. Are we wanting to
26 establish some cap on the proportion of shares that could be
27 actually held in these non-profit accounts, and so I think there's
28 a lot of questions that we'll want to think about, but, overall,
29 what's kind of the purpose that we would want to accomplish, and
30 how would the Fisheries Service be able to validate that, in fact,
31 this 501(c)(3) is accomplishing what, you know, we're trying to
32 lay out here?

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks for that, Andy. I mean, from my
35 perspective, I understand why this motion is coming forward. I do
36 get a little nervous just about exemptions to something like this
37 in general, just because, similar to what Andy was highlighting,
38 there's some language in this motion in particular that I think we
39 would need some more clarification on, but I've got hands going
40 up. I'm going to go to Mr. Anson, and then Dr. Banks.

41
42 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with your comment about
43 some hesitation about exemptions. In this particular instance,
44 you know, I would also be concerned about, you know, whether or
45 not it would be open for future groups. I guess we'll have to
46 look at something that they've historically been in the IFQ
47 program, and participating in such capacity that maybe they can
48 move on, but, you know, what's the potential for additional groups

1 in the future, and maybe somehow limiting that, potentially.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Kevin. Dr. Banks.

4
5 **DR. BANKS:** To complicate matters further, we're also looking at
6 59B, which would have, for better lack of a term, activity
7 requirements, and so what does the activity look like? I mean, if
8 we exempt them here, what do you do in the next step, and so just
9 for future planning. I'm happy to have this discussion, and I
10 think it's, you know, a well-worth discussion, but we do have to
11 think about that next following amendment that is building on this
12 one.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes. Good point. Captain Walker, and then
15 Mr. Strelcheck.

16
17 **MR. WALKER:** I would also echo the same comments. I'm supportive
18 of a legitimate quota bank, although I have some hesitancy about,
19 you know, the definition of a quota bank, and opportunity to
20 exploit that, leave a loophole open for just the kind of things
21 that we're trying to work around here, and so I like the concept.
22 We just have to find a way to police it properly, and validate it,
23 if that can even be done.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Ed. Mr. Osborne.

26
27 **MR. OSBORNE:** My concerns too are how would the shares be -- Once
28 they're in the 501(c)(3), what requirements would that non-profit
29 have for somebody to get those shares, and fish those, that
30 different than what we're establishing through the already
31 approved process?

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Did you want to chime-in, Jessica?

34
35 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, and so, for shares, we'll do the share cap the
36 same way we do everything else, but I think what you're talking
37 about is how would they use the allocation that they're receiving
38 from the share, and so that could be part of what we delve into
39 with this consideration that might fall more closely into 59B, as
40 a potential way of using it, but we haven't really dug into that,
41 but those are all kind of the questions that we need to consider
42 by opening up this loophole, and thinking what we can do to make
43 sure it's a very narrow loophole.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so it sounds like we need to do a
46 little bit more thinking about this, and consider, maybe at a
47 future meeting here, you know, getting a follow-up based on some
48 of your findings, Jessica, and then we can figure out how to

1 navigate this, and how this works with 59A or not. Mr. Osborne.

2
3 **MR. OSBORNE:** One other thing I would be curious to find out is,
4 if somebody is donating their allocation to a non-profit, then I
5 assume they're getting a tax benefit from that, and how is that
6 tax benefit treated every year? If those same allocations are at
7 the non-profit every year, are they getting another benefit from
8 that, and so, to the point of a loophole, are we just creating
9 another system where somebody can benefit financially?

10
11 **DR. STEPHEN:** I would say, to the tax purposes, that would be
12 outside the IFQ's programs purview, right, and they could do that
13 through other things as well, and just donate to non-profits. In
14 our case, we would be looking at more of what the non-profit is
15 doing with the allocation, in order to keep their non-profit.

16
17 **MR. OSBORNE:** Yes, and I understand what our responsibility is,
18 but I do think that that is something that I think would be helpful
19 from our perspective, is to understand how that money is --

20
21 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, and I will say that it was way past my knowledge
22 of economics.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.

25
26 **MR. WALKER:** So if we end up getting a dozen, quote-unquote, non-
27 profit quota bank applications, and some of them are giving out
28 allocation for five-dollars, or \$5.25, a pound, you know, that's
29 not really -- That's the same thing we have now, really.

30
31 I know there's some goalposts on a 501(c)(3), but what's a profit?
32 You could say that you're making money on it, but you're rolling
33 it back in to buy more shares, and then it's a non-profit. You're
34 buying more shares with the money that you're raising, and you end
35 up having all the shares, but the idea that somebody could continue
36 leasing out allocation for five-dollars, which is high, in my
37 opinion, is kind of what we're trying to work against, and I'm not
38 sure that we have safeguards in this definition to keep that from
39 happening.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think, as we kind of flesh out this
42 concept, and maybe if this council decides to move something like
43 this forward, I think the language will probably need to be a
44 little bit different here, but it sounds like we're going to talk
45 about this once we get some more information at a future meeting,
46 and so any further discussion on this motion that the AP put
47 forward, or their report, the AP report, relative to 59A? Dr.
48 Banks.

1
2 **DR. BANKS:** I did not listen into this entire AP, but, earlier in
3 the minutes, it stated something about dealers also having some
4 portion, or inclusion in this, and, Assane, maybe you can refresh
5 my memory, and is that something we should be also exploring while
6 we're looking at this, or is -- No motion came forward, and so we
7 are just thinking more like that?
8

9 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. Strictly based on the AP discussions, and the
10 motion that they approved, it seems that special consideration
11 beyond the preferred alternative the council has selected is not
12 warranted at this time, because, at the end of the day, the AP
13 said we support what the council has done, and this, you know, has
14 some, I guess, implications in opening and maintaining a
15 shareholder's account.
16

17 In some discussions, it was mentioned that, and actually this
18 report, that serious dealers already have permits anyways, and so,
19 at this point, my take on it is that we could just proceed with
20 Action 1 and the preferred that you've selected, as shown on the
21 board.
22

23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Diagne, a real quick question before we
24 move on, and so we've -- The AP made motions for Actions and 4.
25 Did they -- I know we don't have preferred selected for Actions 2
26 and 3, but did they talk about that at all?
27

28 **DR. DIAGNE:** They did. Those actions were presented, and they
29 discussed it, but I think they also understood that the most
30 binding one, really, would be the first one, which is what
31 essentially this council did. If you are not allowed to open and
32 maintain an account, it is going to be tough, in the medium-term,
33 for you to own shares, or maintain them, or for you to own
34 allocation, and so that's part of the reason I think why they
35 didn't really offer any motion.
36

37 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that makes sense. Okay, and so, with
38 that, any more discussion on the AP report here? Then I think we
39 can --
40

41 **MR. WALKER:** While it's here, I just thought I would share my
42 thought process from the AP meeting, while we're still talking
43 about it, and so I've kind of reached a bit of a frustration point
44 that we've never been able to pass a single anything on IFQ reform
45 in the two-and-a-half years I've been here, and not even something
46 as simple as a permit requirement, which the program had at the
47 beginning.
48

1 During the meeting, I asked Dr. Diagne why is it so hard to go
2 back to a permit requirement that we had for the first five, and
3 why is it so impossibly difficult, with a full page list of
4 tentacles of what about this, and each individual's personal
5 situation, and his answer was that, when the program changed,
6 people adjusted their business model, and their program, to the
7 situation in the program, which was the right answer, but then,
8 the more I thought about that, more I realized that the same thing
9 can work this way.

10
11 We are never going to solve every single permit holder's personal
12 situation, every LLC, every partnership, everybody's uncle that
13 owns some shares. We'll never get to the end of that, where it
14 works perfectly for everybody, and so I've -- Based on that thought
15 process, I've reached a point, personally, where I think we should
16 stop trying to solve everybody's problems and put the permit back
17 as a requirement, you know, with a couple adjustments if we need
18 to, but not everybody's, and people can adjust their business
19 models with the rule back the way it used to be, just like they
20 adjusted them the other way.

21
22 I'm quite frustrated that we've never -- We've sat here and
23 listened to everybody's, you know, I don't have enough money, or
24 my uncle owns the shares, but I keep them in this thing, and we
25 will never figure that out, as a council, and I don't know that -
26 - We do our best to try and accommodate that, but we can't solve
27 all of it, but it should not keep us from moving forward on doing
28 some improvements to this program.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that perspective, Captain Walker.
31 I echo your sentiment, and the frustration with seemingly lack of
32 progress. I feel like 59A and B have just been out there for a
33 long time, and I agree.

34
35 I mean, 59B, you know, where they would consider more of a landings
36 requirement, that one, you know, will be probably even more
37 challenging, but this one is at the very basic level with a permit
38 requirement, and so, with that, Dr. Diagne, I think it's maybe a
39 good time to roll through the document. Keep in mind, committee,
40 that we've selected preferred alternatives for 1 and 4, and we do
41 not currently have preferreds for Actions 2 and 3.

42
43 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, just before we go over the
44 document, just for completeness, I would mention that, at the end
45 of the meeting, we did receive comments, I mean, open public
46 comments, from folks that were there, or called in, and,
47 specifically related to 59A, there was a comment in support of
48 this amendment.

1
2 There was a comment that essentially was a caution against
3 unintended consequences, due to the different business
4 arrangements that were just mentioned. One of the comments
5 expressed support for quota banks, and specifically for the
6 Shareholders Alliance, and the last comment, and we had four of
7 them, did express frustration, and concern, over the folks leasing
8 shares that are not fishing, and I quote: "These people are taking
9 advantage of the working man", and so, you know, from those
10 comments. With that said, we could now go over the document, and
11 review the preferred alternatives, and then finish the Other
12 Business items.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Before -- Yes, that sounds good. Before we go
15 there, Mr. Sanchez, did you have something?

16
17 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I had a question. Just for history, can
18 somebody refresh my memory on, when we used to have the permit
19 requirement in place, what was the discussion, or the action items,
20 that got rid of it? Where did that come from? I'm trying to see
21 the genesis of that.

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

24
25 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and Mr. Strelcheck or Dr. Stephen could as well
26 say it, but it was baked in, meaning, if you go read Amendment 26,
27 and I believe that's the red snapper one, and the other one was 29
28 for the grouper and tilefish, it explicitly says that, after the
29 first five years of this program, the permit requirement is going
30 to lapse, and that is how the council at the time thought that
31 this is the way to proceed.

32
33 I mean, there is ample testimony from commercial fishermen who at
34 the time said, I guess over there, that this is not a great idea,
35 but, I mean, the council did think that it was a great idea, and
36 so that's why we have it.

37
38 **MR. SANCHEZ:** That kind of answers it, but, more specifically,
39 like who led the charge on that? Does anybody have that piece of
40 history?

41
42 **DR. DIAGNE:** My best answer is I do not recall.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Now we want to roll through the
45 document? I think now's a good time to pull that up. Thanks,
46 Assane.

47
48 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Bernie, and, if you would, let us just

1 review the purpose and need, please. All right. The purpose of
2 this action is to update the goals and objectives of the red
3 snapper and grouper-tilefish IFQ programs, plural, and we have two
4 of them, and to revise requirements to participate in the IFQ
5 programs.

6
7 The need for action is to promote participation by fishermen
8 engaged in the harvest of reef fish species included in the IFQ
9 programs and improve opportunities for new participants to enter
10 the IFQ.

11
12 You would notice that the first part here of the purpose and need
13 would be to update the goals and objectives of the programs, and
14 this body discussed those, I mean, a long time ago it seems, but
15 this is the amendment where we wanted to formally, essentially,
16 write them into essentially an amendment, but it's been a lingering
17 piece, and so hopefully soon, when we take final action on this,
18 those goals and objectives would become, quote-unquote, official,
19 and so that's the purpose and need.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any discussion, or comments, on the purpose
22 and need? All right. Seeing none, we can continue on, Dr. Diagne.

23
24 **DR. DIAGNE:** On to Chapter 2, please, Bernie, in Action 1. Thank
25 you. The first action here looks at requirements to open and
26 maintain shareholder accounts. We have a no-action alternative,
27 which would leave everything as-is, and we wouldn't then establish
28 new requirements to obtain or maintain IFQ shareholder accounts,
29 and current requirements would continue to be applicable.

30
31 Alternatives 2, in addition to the U.S. citizenship or permanent
32 residency requirement, all applicants are required to possess a
33 valid or renewable commercial refuge permit to obtain an IFQ
34 shareholder account, and so, essentially, if this became the
35 preferred, presumably then you would grandfather those that have
36 already obtained the account, and, even if they let their permit
37 lapse in the future, given that they already have it, they will
38 still be able to participate.

39
40 Your preferred alternative, which is Preferred Alternative 2, in
41 addition to U.S. citizenship or permanent residency requirements,
42 all applicants are required to possess a valid or renewable
43 commercial reef fish permit to obtain and maintain an IFQ
44 shareholder account, and this is your preferred alternative as it
45 stands.

46
47 **MR. WALKER:** Just to correct, you said Preferred Alternative 2,
48 and it's 3.

1
2 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and so probably it is, you know, my challenges
3 in counting. Thank you. Preferred Alternative 3.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so, previously, the council, and
6 this committee, had selected this as the preferred alternative.
7 Is there any further discussion on Action 1 right now? Mr.
8 Osborne.
9

10 **MR. OSBORNE:** (Mr. Osborne's comment is not audible on the
11 recording.)
12

13 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think we're okay, because it's already
14 selected, and so we already have that one as preferred, and so
15 there is no action that needs to be taken here, unless the council
16 wants to change something up. Okay. I'm seeing heads nod around
17 the table. It looks like we're good. Dr. Diagne, to Action 2.
18 This one, we do not have a preferred alternative selected.
19

20 **DR. DIAGNE:** On to Action 2, and this is looking at requirements
21 to obtain and maintain IFQ shares. Alternative 1, no action,
22 essentially, no additional requirements would be established.
23 Alternative 2, to obtain IFQ shares, in addition to the citizenship
24 or permanent residency requirement, a shareholder account must be
25 associated with a valid or renewable commercial reef fish permit,
26 just for the obtention of it.
27

28 Alternative 3, to obtain and maintain IFQ shares, in addition to
29 the U.S. citizenship or permanent residency requirement, the
30 shareholder account must be associated with a valid or renewable
31 commercial reef fish permit.
32

33 That's the action, the three alternatives in there, and so there
34 may be probably questions as to the relevance, quote unquote, or
35 why would this be needed, if you would, if you have a very strong
36 requirement when it comes to the shareholder's account itself. It
37 seems to me part of, I guess, the reason would be, during the grace
38 period, and so, essentially, one could presumably be able to obtain
39 or maintain shares within the two-year grace period that we would
40 have once, let's say, for example, the requirement in Action 1 was
41 established.
42

43 Actions 2 and 3 would essentially close all the loopholes, meaning,
44 when 59A becomes final, there is no other alternative to get, even
45 on a temporary basis, shares or allocation.
46

47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. We've got hands going up here. I
48 got Mr. Sanchez, and then Mr. Osborne.

1
2 **MR. SANCHEZ:** In the interest of, I guess, consistency with the
3 first action, I would make a motion that we choose Alternative 3
4 as the preferred for Action 2.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We've got a motion on the table, Bernie,
7 in Action 2 to make Alternative 3 the preferred. Mr. Sanchez, and
8 then a second from Dr. Banks.

9
10 **MR. OSBORNE:** I just have a question on the language, just so I'm
11 clear, because it says must be associated with the permit, and,
12 when we talked in the first action, we talked about that scenario
13 where two people have an account together, or a business together,
14 and one has a permit, and the other one doesn't, and are we saying
15 must be associated meaning that each person --

16
17 **DR. DIAGNE:** Bernie, could you bring the language, please, of the
18 alternative, and the association here is with the shareholder
19 account, with the understanding that perhaps yourself and I could
20 own that account, either, you know, with a corporation that we
21 share, or some other business arrangement. Because the shares are
22 held in a shareholder's account, that is why the terminology is as
23 follows, and it's the shareholder account that would have to be
24 associated with the permit, and I would let Dr. Stephen clarify.

25
26 **MR. OSBORNE:** Am I making sense of what I'm saying?

27
28 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, and so I think I'll clarify it. I answered
29 this earlier today with someone else, too. In order for the permit
30 to be attached to the IFQ account, you have to have the exact same
31 names on the permit that you have on the IFQ account. Therefore,
32 whoever has a permit, that's what the IFQ account becomes, the
33 same names, and so, if you have two people on it, they both jointly
34 own the permit, and they both jointly own the IFQ account, and so
35 the only linkage is exactly the same names have to be on both of
36 those.

37
38 **MR. OSBORNE:** All right. I guess I was confused, because I thought
39 that that was one of the discrepancies of it. We have all these
40 different business arrangements, and then they would be impacted
41 by this.

42
43 **DR. STEPHEN:** What we have sometimes are people are separating
44 their permit from their shares, by creating a different business,
45 and so it's actually a different company name, or it would be a
46 different combination of people, depending on whatever business
47 model they run, and, therefore, they're not exactly the same.
48 Therefore, they would not tie together and get the permit

1 requirement by just having a person's name in common. It has to
2 be the exact same entities.

3
4 **MR. OSBORNE:** Okay.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So back to the motion that we have in Action
7 2 to make Alternative 3 the preferred, and you can see the
8 alternative there to obtain and maintain. Any further discussion?
9 **Is there any objection to the motion on the table? Seeing none,**
10 **the motion carries.** Okay. Back to the document, and back to you,
11 Assane.

12
13 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you. On to Action 3, please, Bernie. For
14 Action 3, this deals with the requirements to obtain annual
15 allocation, and here there is no portion really to consider
16 maintaining annual allocation, given that they are temporary, that
17 they lapse, you know, at the end of the year anyway, and so it's
18 either you do it or you don't.

19
20 We have a no action alternative, do not have, or do not establish
21 additional requirements, or Alternative 2, which reads to obtain
22 annual allocation, in addition to the U.S. citizenship or permanent
23 residency requirement, a shareholder account must be associated
24 with a valid or renewable commercial reef fish permit. That's the
25 action.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne. I've got hands. Mr.
28 Sanchez.

29
30 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I guess I'll pick another preferred, Alternative 2,
31 in Action 3, to make Alternative 2 the preferred.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Bernie has already got it up there. Okay. Do
34 we have a second? Mr. Osborne seconds.

35
36 **MR. SANCHEZ:** If I could add to that --

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, sir.

39
40 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I just want everyone to note that, as I promised in
41 my rant on Amendment 63, that I would roll up my sleeves on 59,
42 and I'm demonstrating that.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** A true hero, John. Captain Walker.

45
46 **MR. WALKER:** I speak in favor of the motion. I think it helps
47 address non-participants being in the allocation shucking
48 business, and I support it wholeheartedly.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Any further
3 discussion? Mr. Strelcheck.
4

5 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I would just like the record to note that he's
6 wearing a short-sleeved shirt and did not roll up his sleeves.
7

8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** The record will show as much. Okay. All
9 right. Any further discussion? Otherwise, I think we can vote on
10 this here. **Is there any opposition to this motion that's on the**
11 **table? Seeing none, the motion carries.**
12

13 Okay, Assane, and then we just have one more action, which we
14 already selected a preferred, but if you would like to walk through
15 it, too.
16

17 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. On to the last action, which is Action 4, which
18 deals with divestment measures from non-compliant accounts.
19 Alternative 1, no action, a shareholder account must be compliant
20 with the requirements set in previous actions by the effective
21 date of the final rule implementing these requirements or their
22 shares will be reclaimed by NMFS, and so the no action alternative
23 does not offer any flexibility at all. The minute the amendment
24 is implemented, presumably, everything would be recovered from the
25 non-compliant accounts.
26

27 Your preferred Alternatives 2 and 3, and, as mentioned earlier
28 today, one deals with non-compliance at the inception of, I guess,
29 these requirements, and the second deals with non-compliance in
30 the future.
31

32 Preferred Alternative 2, NMFS will reclaim shares from shareholder
33 accounts that are not compliant with the requirements set in the
34 previous actions. Preferred Option 2a is one year following the
35 effective date of the final rule implementing these requirements.
36 Preferred alternative 3 is, after implementation of this
37 amendment, if a shareholder account is no longer in compliance
38 with the requirements set in the previous actions, the owners of
39 the shareholder account must divest of their shares, or the shares
40 will be reclaimed by NMFS, and the preferred option, again, here
41 is one year following the non-compliant status, and so those are
42 the two preferreds that you selected.
43

44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Action 4, dealing with divestment.
45 I see a hand over there, and who is that? Mr. Anson.
46

47 **MR. ANSON:** So I'm wondering if Alternative 2, Option 2b, allowing
48 two years from the effective date of the final rule, and so how

1 does that mesh with what is written in Action 1 regarding
2 requirements to open and maintain shareholder accounts if we
3 establish that they must maintain, or must possess, a reef fish
4 permit?

5
6 So, if they don't get a reef fish permit within two years, they're
7 still able to receive allocation in the second year of this two-
8 year window, even if they don't have a reef fish permit, or is
9 this even an option, Option 2b, because of the mechanism provided
10 in Action 1?

11
12 **DR. DIAGNE:** So the divestment measures here essentially would
13 give you a grace period if you are not in compliance with any of
14 the previous requirements, and so, the case in point, if you don't
15 have a permit, you are going -- Even with the Preferred Alternative
16 2a, this one year really, in effect, is two years, right, because,
17 by the time your permit lapses, you have one year to renew it,
18 and, at the end of that, then it becomes two years, and so then
19 you would have the two years in which -- I mean, in practical
20 terms, you are still going to be a full participant in this
21 program.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Anson.

24
25 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so, basically, that would supersede, or give
26 guidance to the Action 1 regarding the time period then. I'm just
27 thinking of the second year, when allocations come out for the
28 second year, and they're still in the pool with everyone else who
29 already acquired the permit, these other accounts that didn't have
30 a reef fish permit, or is that --

31
32 **DR. STEPHEN:** Sorry, and I had to do a little thinking when you
33 asked that question. Because of your preferred alternative now in
34 Action 3, which, in order to obtain annual allocation you need the
35 permit, they might still have their shares, and time to divest
36 their shares, but we would most likely not distribute that
37 allocation to them, because they don't have the permit in order to
38 obtain the allocation. I just had to think about that before
39 answering.

40
41 **MR. ANSON:** So then, just going back to my comment about the two-
42 year period, is two years even an option under this scenario that
43 we're talking about for them to have allocation, you know, given
44 to them, and be able to use, or be able to be in possession of,
45 and not use, but just have it being doled out in that second year?

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I see some thinking over there.

1 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, Mr. Anson. And I think we need to think about
2 this a little more, because the divestment measures here say, if
3 you are not in compliance with any one of the requirements, you
4 know, set forth, you have essentially two years to make it right,
5 or we would reclaim what you have. Presumably within the two-year
6 window grace period, you should be a full participant in the
7 program.

8
9 **MR. OSBORNE:** Yes, but I guess, to his point, say this goes into
10 effect January 1 of next year, 2027, and they've already been given
11 their allocation for 2027, but they don't have the -- They don't
12 meet the requirements. At the end of 2027, you're not -- At the
13 beginning of 2028, you're not giving them -- You're holding back
14 the shares, because they're not in compliance with 1, 2, 3, ,or 4.

15
16 **DR. STEPHEN:** So it would be the allocation. The allocation that
17 they get from shares would not be distributed in 2028, assuming we
18 went live sometime in 2027, right, because they don't meet that
19 permit requirement. Now they would still -- The shares, which,
20 again, are the long-term, higher-value portion of it --

21
22 **MR. OSBORNE:** They would have the shares, but not the allocation.

23
24 **DR. STEPHEN:** They still have the shares, right, and they would
25 be divesting themselves of the shares because they wouldn't be
26 able to --

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I've got Mr. Anson, and then back to Captain
29 Walker.

30
31 **MR. ANSON:** To that point then, to that specific scenario, then
32 Dr. Stephen, I mean, they would -- So how would the rest of the -
33 - If they're not going to be issued allocation, then the other
34 folks that do have the permit, and, you know, meet the
35 qualifications, they will be issued, essentially, their allocation
36 for that second year, or are you going to have to hold that
37 allocation back to give them an opportunity for the second year in
38 case they, six months later, after January, sometime in June, they
39 were able to get the permit, and then they can come back and get
40 their allocation.

41
42 **DR. STEPHEN:** I've got to think a little bit more, but I think
43 there's a solution in there. If you don't mind, we can come back
44 with it later, but I think, if they are in the process of obtaining
45 a permit, we would probably have an ability to release it when
46 they did have it, but I would have to go back and think about that.
47 I think, a couple of years ago, we talked about it, and so let me
48 go through all my old notes.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and maybe this is something we can flesh
3 out a little bit more at Full Council here, but good points, Kevin.
4 I'm definitely thinking now, too. Captain Walker, did you have
5 something to add?
6

7 **MR. WALKER:** That's a good question, really, but I was just going
8 to point out that, if the guy doesn't get his allocation, but he
9 still owns the shares, he can still sell the shares, and cash out
10 of the business, which is kind of the goal if you're a non-
11 participant here. You're not -- It's not being taken away, and
12 you can get something for it, call it a win, and move on, and so
13 it's not a direct takeaway. It's an opportunity for them to get
14 out if they're not participants in the fishery.
15

16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Any more discussion
17 here? Okay. Not seeing any, Dr. Diagne, I recall you referencing
18 that there were some other motions, or comments, that were -- Once
19 we dispensed with 59A, from the AP meeting that you wanted to
20 address before we kind of leave this topic in general.
21

22 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, Mr. Chair, and thank you for bringing that up.
23 At the end of the meeting, this was added, of course, to the agenda
24 under Other Business, and the AP discussed several items. The
25 first one had to do with a red grouper landings and commercial
26 CPUE. For all of us to follow, Bernie, if you would let us go to
27 the AP report, and, at the very bottom, under Other Business, there
28 are a few items there.
29

30 **MR. OSBORNE:** I just have a quick question, and so, the 501(c)(3),
31 is that not something we're going to talk about here or is that
32 Full Council?
33

34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** We are going to come back at a later meeting
35 with some more information, after Dr. Stephen does some research
36 into that, and figure out how that could be applicable. We're not
37 taking final action on 59A, and so there would still be an
38 opportunity to include that, if this committee deems that the way
39 to go. At least that's how I am reading it, but I'm looking at
40 council staff, and they're nodding their heads.
41

42 **DR. DIAGNE:** So the first item Under Other Business that was
43 discussed had to do with red grouper landings and commercial CPUE.
44 An AP member requested that NMFS develop commercial CPUE indices
45 on all reef fish species related to the IFQ program.
46

47 The AP discussed this, and recognized the workload and time
48 limitation considerations, and that is why they, for the first

1 time, limited their request to a single species, red grouper, and
2 they approved the motion in front of us here to request the council
3 ask NMFS and the Science Center for commercial CPUE for red
4 grouper, and this motion carried without opposition.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Any discussion
7 on this AP motion? I figured there would be something from you,
8 John. Go ahead, Dr. Walter.

9
10 **DR. WALTER:** I guess it would be valuable to get a little more
11 clarity on what the purpose of this is for, and if someone who was
12 there could clarify. In particular, the sentence of, when there
13 is more CPUE, there is less fish, and vice versa, is usually the
14 opposite of how the stock assessment interprets CPUE, and so, if
15 there's a different purpose for this, it would be good to get a
16 little clarity on where the AP thinks they would be using it.
17 Thanks.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** It looks like Captain Walker might want to
20 chime in.

21
22 **MR. WALKER:** My read on it was that the red grouper fishermen were
23 hoping to demonstrate statistically that the fishery is not as
24 good as the stock assessment says it is, and they felt like CPUE
25 might be a really good indicator of what they're actually seeing
26 out there, versus what the stock assessment says. That was my
27 interpretation.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Also, I mean, this was part of the reason why
30 I think we -- Well, not this motion in particular, but I think
31 we've recognized some of the concerns we had with the last red
32 grouper stock assessment, and so prioritizing that through the
33 SEDAR Steering Committee, and the timing of trying to get that
34 moving forward as quickly as possible, but, yes, and I guess I
35 would like a little more information about this, too. Dr. Diagne,
36 do you have any further information for --

37
38 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and, I mean, not much more than what Captain
39 Walker offered, and so, essentially, that it would be a good
40 indicator for where the fishery is, essentially. You know, a
41 greater catch per unit effort presumably, you know, would be
42 telling them that the fishery is in a better position, essentially,
43 but, because they were saying that the CPUEs are very low, and
44 they don't see the fish, and so on and so forth, then this would
45 either, you know, validate, or support their claims, or, you know,
46 provide them something tangible otherwise.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you. I mean, I find incredible value in

1 fishery-independent efforts there for what is actually going on
2 with the stock, that is independent of direct fisheries
3 interactions. I mean, fishery-independent efforts aren't exactly
4 -- You know, they're not 100 percent reality, but they're also not
5 subjected to some of the pressures that are associated with the
6 fishery, but I see hands going up here. Mr. Anson.

7
8 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, and, relative to this request, I thought we
9 received a presentation from Dr. Karnauskas, and she and her group
10 -- Granted, this is before some of the staffing changes that
11 occurred here last year, but I thought she was working on some
12 sort of relatively automated process that would generate kind of
13 this information, as well as maybe some environmental data that we
14 could look at that, again, could influence metrics like catch rates
15 potentially, like wind or sea temperature, you know, differences,
16 that type of thing, and so I just wonder maybe, Dr. Walter, if you
17 can recall that, and, if you do, if you can maybe provide an update
18 as to where that stands.

19
20 **DR. WALTER:** Sure. Yes, and I believe that was the ecosystem
21 status report that was going to be automated, and I think we have
22 at least one iteration of that, and I think there was a request to
23 whether that could be automated on a more routine basis, and that
24 was fully our intention, but a few of the people who were tasked
25 with that are no longer on that project, and so we hope to, and
26 intend to, be able to do that at some point, but right now it's
27 not routinely available. Thanks.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, John. All right. A couple of hands.
30 Dr. Allen, and then Mr. Schieble.

31
32 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just going to make a
33 comment that I think fishery-dependent CPUE data can be very
34 useful. I think both are important, both fishery-independent and
35 fishery-dependent data.

36
37 This comment in here from the AP, and I wasn't at this meeting,
38 but it brings -- It's similar to a discussion that we heard at one
39 of the public hearings about Amendment 63, which is that there had
40 been historically, and I don't know all the history here, but there
41 had been historically some hesitancy to use the commercial CPUE as
42 an index since the IFQ program came into play, and I think that's
43 -- You know, I can certainly understand how the IFQ might change
44 the interpretation of CPUE data, but it's been enough years now
45 that I think that should be considered in the future, to look at
46 that as an index, and so I just wanted to make that point, that
47 this rings similar to the comments I heard in that public hearing.

1 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Dr. Allen. Mr. Schieble.

2
3 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman, and so, to follow along
4 with what Dr. Allen and you just said, I think this sort of matches
5 up with what we already do as the five state directors in giving
6 our reports in April and October of every year for the private rec
7 snapper landings.

8
9 We give you fishery, you know, dependent survey results that are
10 from the dockside intercepts, and we also give a CPUE analysis,
11 and so I understand the logic behind this, and why they would like
12 to see it, and so I agree.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

15
16 **MR. STRELCHECK:** You know, a lot of points been made. One of the
17 big challenges, obviously, with CPUE under the IFQ program is the
18 myriad of different behaviors for fishermen who have allocation,
19 who don't have allocation, targeting certain species on certain
20 trips versus others, and so I know that the Science Center, at
21 various times, has looked at some of these analyses.

22
23 I think the challenge is the reliability of it, and whether or not
24 this would be fruitful to pursue or not, in terms of the dependent
25 data. If the AP is really most interested and concerned about,
26 you know, the relative status and health of red grouper, it seems
27 like then the request should be an interim analysis with some sort
28 of index of abundance that would be looked at.

29
30 An index of abundance doesn't necessarily tell you anything until
31 you compare it to some period of time as the benchmark, right, and
32 so, if things have fallen off, or declined, since the terminal
33 year of the assessment, then that, obviously, would indicate things
34 have gotten worse, and so I just wanted to maybe clarify kind of
35 what we're after.

36
37 Certainly CPUE would be valuable to have before the council, like
38 was suggested, on a regular basis, but, if we're really concerned
39 about the health and status of the population, and overestimating
40 the catch levels right now, then maybe an interim analysis is a
41 better option.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Andy. Captain Walker.

44
45 **MR. WALKER:** It was my interpretation that that's exactly what
46 these individuals are looking at, is some means to demonstrate
47 that the fishery is not in the best shape. They put this forward,
48 but, if you think interim analysis would be more effective at

1 demonstrating that, then I would be supportive of that.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Andy.

4
5 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I'm throwing it out there just for
6 clarification. I don't know what the capacity of the Science
7 Center is and when the next red group or assessment is going to be
8 in the works.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I believe that is scheduled for 2028. Dr.
11 Simmons.

12
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I thought
14 the council and SSC got an interim analysis before we took final
15 action on 62, and I was trying to remember when that was. I
16 thought it was in January, correct?

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I believe it was just a health check that we
19 got, right?

20
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and I was just looking at --
22 Trying to remember, and let me dig it up, if it's NMFS bottom
23 longline, but we got an interim analysis on red grouper before we
24 took final action on 62, and so we can dig it up. I thought we
25 had a standing request to look at that.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That's what I was thinking, too.

28
29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Let staff take a look at that and
30 circle back, maybe, towards the end of the meeting.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and let's do that. All right. Good
33 discussion there. Any further discussion on this? It sounds like
34 we might have a little bit more at Full Council here, but I also
35 see -- Never mind. Dr. Walter, go ahead.

36
37 **DR. WALTER:** I just wanted to follow up on the fishery-dependent
38 CPUE, because I do think there's merit there in looking at it, and
39 giving it a fresh look, and for a number of reasons. The reason
40 I asked the question is because there's two ways you can use that.

41
42 You can either use it directly in the stock assessment, thinking
43 that it's proportional to abundance, or you can use that as an
44 indicator of how the fishery is doing, and, if the fishery has to
45 work twice as hard to catch the same number of fish, presumably
46 the stock is not doing that well.

47
48 It may not be directly proportional to abundance, and so it's one

1 of those things that's valuable, I think, to a decision body such
2 as this, and that may or may not directly be something you can
3 input to the stock assessment, but might then help tilt the
4 balance, in terms of a decision process, and the nature of risk,
5 and I think that's where it could be valuable.

6
7 I think that's something that would be useful to convey in either
8 -- I would say a motion could be useful here, in terms of our task
9 in saying, hey, take a fresh look at it, and we're many years past
10 the ITQ changes, and now the fisheries have stabilized.

11
12 Also, in terms of reference for assessments where it might be
13 useful to develop that index, potentially with or without a strict
14 inclusion in the stock assessment, but simply for some other
15 qualitative analysis, may be helpful, and I think that's where it
16 avoids the direction to a SEDAR panel to say thou shalt, or must,
17 use this, because that's being a bit presumptive, but thou shalt
18 produce it for valuation I think is a -- If that is indeed the
19 intent here, that I think is a fair ask. Thanks.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** It looks like we've got a couple -- Just real
22 quick from me, and so just the Science Center has capacity to do
23 an analysis like this, and potentially bring something back? If
24 we give you a motion, and that's why I'm asking, John, is you sound
25 like you're saying it's a good idea.

26
27 **DR. WALTER:** A motion helps us to then prioritize, for sure, and
28 I think, in terms of where we have the capacity, I'll have to check
29 with staff as to whether we have -- I mean, we usually, once we
30 get that motion, that request, then we negotiate the timeline, and
31 if there's other things that might wind up having to get moved
32 down, in terms of meeting that, but I think clearly, if there's a
33 desire to stay in your request for a 2027 interim, that's already
34 on the books, which I think we'll need to check, and then I guess
35 we're already on the hook for that, and then the 2020 stock
36 assessment, and so those are two entrees for what I just said, the
37 2020 assessment terms of reference and the 2027 interim, possibly
38 with a fishery-dependent index for qualitative information.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I agree with everything, how you put
41 that forward, John. Dr. Allen.

42
43 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and I was just going to say, Dr. Walter, I think
44 you said that a lot better than I did, and I agree with what you
45 said a hundred percent. Thank you.

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

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, and so
2 we pulled up the report that was given to the council on red
3 grouper during the January 2026 council meeting. The Science
4 Center conducted an interim analysis. Historically, they had used
5 NMFS bottom longline, but, for this one, they use G-FISHER, and
6 the index is going up. We can send that around to the council
7 again, but we just saw this information in January of this year.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Okay, and so all I
10 guess I'll say here is that there was kind of a request for a
11 motion, if this is something that we want to see move forward to
12 the Science Center. Captain Walker.
13

14 **MR. WALKER:** I mean, if you think it has some value, unless -- I
15 mean, if we already have one up through January, or did we just
16 see it in January?
17

18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Just to clarify, and so not the interim
19 analysis. We're talking about commercial CPUE for red grouper,
20 which would be something different, and John was looking for a
21 motion.
22

23 **MR. WALKER:** I would make that motion, word-for-word from the AP.
24 I don't know if it needs a time series. Is that a five-year,
25 looking back five years, or is that just a recent thing? I'm not
26 sure how CPUE is measured out.
27

28 **DR. WALTER:** Probably as long as possible, to create a continuous
29 time series.
30

31 **MR. WALKER:** I don't know. We'll just leave it general like that,
32 and, if possible, you guys can do it, and then you know how to do
33 it better than me.
34

35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Okay. We've got
36 a motion on the board. Do we have a second?
37

38 **DR. ALLEN:** I'll second it.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Second from Dr. Allen. Any further discussion?
41 Any objection to the motion on the board? Mr. Rindone.
42

43 **MR. RINDONE:** So, obviously, not objecting or anything, but would
44 it be useful to provide a time series or something like that for
45 the Science Center to evaluate?
46

47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So that was what we were just kind of talking
48 about.

1
2 **MR. RINDONE:** I get that, but just like for clarity, for people
3 that, you know, might be wondering, for somebody that reads this
4 that maybe doesn't have a full context of the minutes, or something
5 like that historically, because we've only been using commercial
6 CPUE through 2009, and just to say, you know, through 2025, since
7 that should be available. I get that the Science Center
8 understands from the discussion, but, for somebody else that's
9 reading it --

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think that's fair. So, to Captain Walker,
12 the motioner, and the second, are you good?
13

14 **MR. WALKER:** So, obviously, we would like up to the most current.
15 How far back, I mean, I don't know how far is reasonable to ask,
16 or if it would go to the one that we already have.
17

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

20 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, to me, you would ask for the period of which
21 the IFQ program has been operating, because that's the period in
22 which we don't have it.
23

24 **MR. RINDONE:** So the current years for that would be 2010 through
25 2025.
26

27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So there you go. 2010 through 2025. Is the
28 primary motion maker and seconder okay with that?
29

30 **MR. RINDONE:** CPUE for 2010 through 2025.
31

32 **MR. WALKER:** That's okay with me if it seems like a practical ask.
33 If it's not, you know, maybe not, but it seems to be what people
34 smarter than me think is a rational ask.
35

36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Any further discussion here? **Is there**
37 **any objections to the motion on the table? Seeing none, the motion**
38 **carries.** Thank you, Bernie, and we will come back at Full Council
39 with any information regarding interim analysis or anything like
40 that, whether we've got a standing request? Got it. Yes. All
41 right. Dr, Diagne, is there anything remaining with Amendment 59A
42 or other motions that were put forward at the AP?
43

44 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, Mr. Chair, and I believe we still have two or
45 three items to cover, but hopefully those are going to be very
46 quick.
47

48 The next item here is essentially just a bit of information. An

1 AP member, Mr. Guindon, informed the AP about the creation of the
2 USDA Office of Seafood and emphasized that fishermen now have
3 representation within the USDA. He noted that, once in place,
4 this office could help finance fishermen, provide opportunity for
5 disaster relief, and possibly finance a new infrastructure. This
6 was just a bit of information as to the fact that now fishermen
7 are farmers of the sea, as I guess someone said during that
8 meeting.

9
10 The next item, they tied it into the executive orders, which we
11 disposed of a while ago, but the AP made a motion to recommend
12 that the council initiate documents addressing the following
13 items: sea turtle gear for the for-hire and commercial; hook
14 limitations past fifty fathoms; and the crew limitations on dual-
15 permitted boats. This motion also carried without opposition.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Diagne. I already know
18 that, in Other Business, we are going to look to address that first
19 one there.

20
21 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So I think we can talk about that when we get
24 there. The other two items, the hook limitation past fifty fathoms
25 and crew limitation on dual-permitted boats, any discussion here
26 on the committee? Okay. Hands are going up. Mr. Anson, and then
27 Captain Walker.

28
29 **MR. ANSON:** I thought the crew limitation on dual-permitted boats
30 was more of an issue on Coast Guard restrictions. No? It was an
31 IFQ thing?

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.

34
35 **MR. WALKER:** So, originally, this rule was intended to keep people
36 from running a charter on a commercial trip, right, and that was
37 a very long time ago. At the beginning of the IFQ program, if you
38 were dual-permitted, you had a VMS on your boat, and you had to
39 declare whether you were on a charter or a commercial trip, and,
40 in my opinion, at that time, this rule was never -- You know, no
41 longer necessary.

42
43 Amendment 34, which is in 2012, added one more person, but some of
44 the things it said, and I quote, in Amendment 34, is "due to recent
45 changes in the reef fish commercial fishery, the crew size limit
46 regulations may no longer effectively serve their original
47 purposes because of the VMS and the declaration".

1 Further in that document, it said that "historically limiting the
2 crew size on a dual-permitted vessel when fishing commercially was
3 intended to prevent a vessel from taking out a number of passengers
4 under the pretense of making a charter trip, but subsequently
5 selling the catch. Having a VMS onboard makes it clear when a
6 vessel is operating as a commercial vessel".

7
8 The question is, is this rule necessary anymore, since VMS has
9 come out, because, on all other commercial boats, there's no crew
10 size limit. You can bring fifteen people on any commercial boat
11 you want. Only if he has a charter permit is he limited to four
12 people now, and, personally, I would like to see people with dual-
13 permitted commercial boats have the same crew size limit as all
14 other commercial boats when they declare a commercial trip.

15
16 I don't think that's an unreasonable ask, and it's kind of funny.
17 When I looked back on this back in 2011, most of the letters that
18 were written to this topic were by me, because I've had some
19 problems with this before, and I really -- You know, when -- I
20 didn't bring this up here, but, when it did come up, it occurred
21 to me this would also be a deregulatory action.

22
23 This would be a regulation that we could get rid of and maybe get
24 ourselves a little credit for, you know, getting rid of some to
25 get rid of others, and so I'm not going to press it really hard on
26 anybody, but I thought it would be nice if, since the AP brought
27 it up, that we could have some discussion on it.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Captain Walker. Any further discussion
30 here? John.

31
32 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you. Yes, and it was brought to my attention
33 too that the hook limitation, 750 hooks past fifty fathoms, that,
34 if that could be done away with, it might promote some efficiency
35 in the deepwater grouper fishermen.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, John. Anything else? Mr. Strelcheck.

38
39 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I'm certainly open to further evaluating
40 these. I think the questions I would have, and we're not ready to
41 answer today, would be, from a law enforcement perspective, some
42 of the pros and cons of some of these flexibility measures, and
43 certainly I hear where the industry is coming from, that this could
44 be some deregulatory actions that are beneficial.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks for that, Mr. Strelcheck. Anything
47 else here? All right. Not seeing any more hands, anything else
48 in the AP report, Dr. Diagne?

1
2 **DR. DIAGNE:** I'm afraid to say yes, but a very last item. The AP
3 did express support for the mandatory pilot program for permit
4 reporting, permit and reporting for deepwater grouper for the
5 recreational sector, something that this committee talked about,
6 I think, earlier, and this motion carried with no opposition, and
7 that's the very last thing on this report. Thank you.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Okay. Any -- We've
10 kind of already talked about the deepwater grouper and the
11 reporting issue already, and so I'm not sure we need to talk
12 through that again, but I'll look around the table. Okay. So I
13 think we're still -- Okay. Next item here, and we'll move on to
14 that.
15

16 Okay, and so we were -- Amberjack is the next item, but we all
17 know that's probably going to be a doozy, and so I think I would
18 recommend that we probably take a little break here, but Mr. Chair.
19

20 **MR. DUGAS:** Thanks, Dr. Sweetman. Let's take a fifteen-minute
21 break and come back at 3:15.
22

23 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)
24

25 **MR. DUGAS:** All right. If council members can get back to the
26 table, we're going to get started. Okay. Thank you. We're going
27 to start right back where we left off and turn it over to Dr.
28 Sweetman.
29

30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Moving right along here
31 in Reef Fish Committee, the next item that we have on the agenda
32 is Draft Amendment 65: Regional Management of Recreational Greater
33 Amberjack. I'll turn it over to Dr. Hollensead for the action
34 guide, and we can move through the document.
35

36 **DRAFT AMENDMENT 65: REGIONAL MANAGEMENT OF RECREATIONAL GREATER**
37 **AMBERJACK**
38

39 **DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, this
40 presentation, we're going to present some decision points and
41 options for considering regional management of recreational
42 greater amberjack.
43

44 You're probably aware, and we've been discussing this for some
45 time. We've certainly been discussing this approach sort of
46 abstractly, which is fine, but certainly, when it comes down to
47 now let's maybe start putting some ink to paper, and thinking about
48 how we're going to do this, we've come to some decision points

1 that, you know, some determinations will have to be made here at
2 the committee level, and discussed at the council level, before we
3 were to start putting together a document.

4
5 Also, there's some things about greater amberjack that makes sort
6 of maybe approaching this from maybe a conventional standpoint a
7 little difficult, and so we just wanted to highlight some of those,
8 and get some thoughts of the committee as we work on those issues
9 for this, and so, Bernie, if you wouldn't mind pulling up the
10 presentation, please.

11
12 Just some real quick background, and so greater amberjack is a
13 highly-desirable species targeted by both sectors, and so both
14 commercial and recreational sectors. It occurs Gulf-wide, and so
15 it's found throughout.

16
17 It's been intensively managed, but long overfished, and so, if you
18 recall, we sort of had that classic figure of all of the management
19 changes that have been made in recent history, and, actually, that
20 figure is so busy that I didn't put it in here, because it's
21 distracting at this point, but certainly to let you -- To jog
22 everybody's memory that, you know, rebuilding plans and management
23 changes have seemed to not achieve that desired outcome, despite
24 all of the recent management changes to this stock. The stock is
25 expected to rebuild by 2027, and so this is sort of what it's been
26 managing towards.

27
28 As a result of trying to reach that goal, there have been required
29 reductions in catch limits that have been substantial. There's
30 also been trip limits, in terms of the commercial sector, as well
31 as season durations have reduced angler satisfaction, and so the
32 seasons kind of keep getting shorter and shorter, and there are
33 certain times of the year that are not desirable for perhaps
34 everyone, and so, again, this has sort of contributed to this
35 reduction in angler satisfaction, and so that's sort of the crux
36 of the issue.

37
38 That's where we're at. There are some things on the horizon, and
39 so the outcome of the next greater amberjack stock assessment will
40 determine the effectiveness of that rebuilding plan, right?
41 However, a recent interim analysis that was reviewed by the SSC
42 indicated a stable, but not increasing population, but, again, the
43 stock assessment hasn't been done, but, you know, just sort of a
44 quick look under the hood. You know, it's, again, a bit of a head-
45 scratcher with this species.

46
47 I mean, if you don't take anything away from this presentation
48 other than greater amberjack are really weird, and so that would

1 sort of be a main point, but, if the stock continues to be
2 overfished and/or overfishing, you know, the ACLs are unlikely to
3 increase in the near future, and, when thinking about angler
4 satisfaction, that just adds another level of difficulty to this.
5 There's just not a whole heck of a lot of fish to go around.

6
7 That said, I'm sort of speculating, because, you know, if we do
8 get a favorable stock assessment back, a rebuilt stock could
9 provide considerably more harvest opportunities, and provide more
10 options for state-specific management, and that could be on the
11 future, but, you know, when we go to sit down and write these
12 documents, we can only go with what the information we have in
13 front of us, and maybe not necessarily what we might hope for in
14 the future, and so that's sort of where we're at, is just what we
15 have in front of us, and, right now, we've got an overfished and
16 overfishing stock.

17
18 Generally, when staff sort of sits down and thinks about the
19 documents, we certainly listen to council input. You know, it
20 comes in motions, or discussions, and we want to synthesize sort
21 of a purpose and need for the document. It sort of sets the tone,
22 and then you have the supporting actions and alternatives, and
23 economic and social contributions that sort of discuss all of that,
24 but it all builds out from this purpose and need.

25
26 Council staff here, we have just drafted this. This is just sort
27 of a thought exercise, and so let's just go ahead and try a purpose
28 and need, basically attempting to encapsulate what we've heard at
29 the council table, put this together, and just as a thought
30 exercise, an attempt to begin the first step of building out a
31 document.

32
33 The purpose would be to increase angler satisfaction while meeting
34 the goals of the rebuilding program, and so let's just say that's
35 a real quick thought exercise of how we do this, and angler
36 satisfaction is a little nebulous, and so I'll talk about that a
37 little bit more a little later in the presentation, what we could
38 be meaning about that, but, in this case, you know, state
39 management of the recreational sector could potentially provide
40 more desirable access windows, and so times of year when fishermen
41 may want to go out fishing for greater amberjack.

42
43 Improve recreational landings estimate and harvest monitoring, and
44 so these shorter seasons seem to sort of, you know, preclude the
45 need to have monitoring that is on that same level, right? If
46 you've only got a season that's open a few weeks, you would like
47 to have your monitoring at a weekly level, for example, and reduce
48 discards by targeting during desired seasons, and so when people

1 are out there fishing anyway. Okay, and so let's just start there,
2 in terms of our sort of thought exercise for this.

3
4 Okay, and so then the question comes to how do we improve access,
5 despite the data limitations that we have and the small catch
6 limits, and, again, we sort of talked about this in abstraction a
7 little bit, but to maybe give some examples that we can look at
8 here with just how limited is this data, and how small exactly are
9 these catch limits.

10
11 This is a graph with all the various species here represented by
12 the pictures of fish, and it's looking at the 2026 recreational
13 annual catch limits, and so here's some of our heavy-hitters right
14 here.

15
16 One of the things that I want to note is the Y-scale there, that
17 has got the annual catch limits and the numbers in pounds of whole
18 weight. It has that little squiggle there, right, because, if we
19 were to put this on a scale, I think red snapper would swamp all
20 of the other images of fish here, because that's how big it is,
21 and, if you look there at the fourth fish over, and so that's where
22 greater amberjack is for its Gulf-wide recreational annual catch
23 limit, at 404,000 pounds.

24
25 You'll note that it's tiny. You'll also note that it's sort of in
26 the realm, or the ballpark, of gag grouper, for example, and so
27 gag grouper also has a small recreational quota, but it is sort of
28 spatially distributed. It's constrained to sort of the west coast
29 of Florida, and Alabama a little bit, and you can already think
30 about -- We'll probably hear some stuff from the State of Florida
31 for their exempted fishing permits looking at gag grouper, and so
32 that has been a lot of time and resources associated by that state
33 to manage this small recreational fishery here.

34
35 Greater amberjack is on that same level, but now we're talking
36 about Gulf-wide, and so it's still just a small number of fish,
37 but now we're talking about including the entire Gulf, rather than
38 just talking about the State of Florida, for example, for gag, and
39 then, of course, again, you know, red snapper, we've got state
40 management for that, but we've got considerably larger quota there
41 to work with, and so, unfortunately, greater amberjack suffers
42 from sort of two things here. It's a small quota, and it's Gulf-
43 wide.

44
45 This slide -- One of the things that we try to do as staff as well
46 is we certainly want to have some supportive documentation when we
47 build out these documents, some things to look at, and so one of
48 the first things that we wanted to do is just to get to know the

1 data a little bit better.

2
3 Some of the ways that you can do that is start with just some
4 rudimentary things, where you just say, hey, let me just display
5 it on the graph, and let me see what it does, and so that was one
6 of our first sort of explorations through here.

7
8 Each one of these graphs represents a state. In the case of Texas,
9 that's in Texas' units, their state units. For Louisiana, this is
10 in LA Creel units, and then Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida are
11 in MRIP-FES, and so you're seeing three different data currencies
12 here for the recreational estimates, and so just keep that in mind.

13
14 With that in mind, also notice that the Y-axes are very different
15 for each of these graphs, right, and so Florida -- If I tried to
16 put these all on one, Florida would swamp out everybody. There's
17 lots of commas and zeros there, and there's not as much in the Y-
18 axes for the other states.

19
20 We were just a little curious, and so, again, exploring these data,
21 we wanted to -- We were interested in looking at the number of
22 intercepts, annual intercepts, and so, what this is, this is a
23 dockside sampler who has gone out and asked a recreational
24 fisherman, hey, did you catch a greater amberjack? They said yes,
25 and would you like to see it, and they said yes, and so now the
26 dockside sampler has eyes on that fish. This wasn't we were just
27 told about it, and this is the dockside sampler has actually seen
28 it.

29
30 We were curious how the number of intercepts in that case
31 translated to what the state estimate was for that, and so that's
32 what you see. The number of intercepts is the dockside sampler
33 actually laying eyes on the greater amberjack, and then the
34 associated annual total for that state. Also, in the legend there,
35 the darker colors indicate further back in time, and so this goes
36 back to like 2015, and then the most recent year is 2024, and so
37 that's the lighter colors, and you can kind of see them bouncing
38 around.

39
40 Some things to look at this, and it's sort of like, well -- I will
41 note that, you know, we just drew a line through this. Again,
42 this is a rudimentary analysis. Linear models, you know, you can
43 just go ahead and draw a line, and so they give you some idea of
44 what's going on, but they can certainly be misleading, and so, for
45 example, in Alabama there, it looks like there's this negative
46 relationship, but you can see that one yellow point there is really
47 driving the bus on that, and so, normally, if I was a statistician,
48 you might pull that out and look at some other way to do that.

1
2 I will tell you that, if you go further back, and like if you do
3 this same exercise for Alabama from 1986 on, you actually get a
4 trend that's very similar to the other states, and so it sort of
5 depends on -- It's very sensitive on what sort of years you look
6 at, and so just keep that in mind.

7
8 One of the other things that you might be interested in looking at
9 is, okay, well, what does this relationship look like let's say if
10 the number of intercepts that I have is adequately, you know,
11 estimating my total coming out of the state, and what you might
12 expect to see is something like an asymptote, and so it starts out
13 like maybe at a linear, like what you see here, and then it kind
14 of plateaus out, and kind of flatlines for a little bit.

15
16 You see this in kind of things when fishery biologists, for
17 example, look at the stomach contents of a fish. If you're
18 interested in what the diet is, you look at the number of stomachs,
19 and, the more stomachs you open to see what the critter is eating,
20 you're going to find more and more prey species, until you reach
21 some saturation limit, and there's no point in opening any more
22 samples of stomachs, because I have now reached the breadth of the
23 diversity of what this animal is eating, and now I can say, hey,
24 this is what this animal is eating.

25
26 Generally, what it looks like here, if you were to think of it
27 that way, and there's one way to think of it, is that there's the
28 potential that the number of dockside intercepts is being under-
29 sampled for greater amberjack, and that we don't see that asymptote
30 here. That's one potential thing that could be happening.

31
32 That is not to say, and I would never say, that any of these three
33 different sampling surveys here are in some way inadequate, or not
34 doing what they're doing. Again, greater amberjack is just very
35 odd. When you have sort of a generalized survey like that, and a
36 fish that is sort of encountered haphazardly, sometimes that may
37 not be captured in a generalized survey. That's all I'm saying.
38 There's no one right way to do it. It's just greater amberjack
39 are very, very odd in this sense.

40
41 It could be too -- For example, we look at the State of Mississippi
42 here, and we've certainly talked about this. I looked at these
43 data, and, from 1986 to 2024, the State of Mississippi has
44 encountered -- Their dockside samplers put eyes on a greater
45 amberjack eighteen times.

46
47 At most, it's two times in a year, and what does that mean when we
48 look at the data, or at least what that then translates to for

1 what we would estimate for a recreational greater amberjack coming
2 out of Mississippi, and I have the slopes down in those, all those
3 numbers down the slope, but, basically, one intercept where a
4 dockside sampler lays eyes on one greater amberjack translates
5 roughly to 79,000 pounds.

6
7 Obviously, there's something kind of odd going on here, and I think
8 that this has been known. I think it's just a way to sort of like
9 look at this, and to perhaps think about it, but it also makes
10 this a little precarious, for example, if we wanted to look at
11 something like landings history and how do we allocate between the
12 states of, you know, how we might want to distribute some of these
13 fish.

14
15 You look at the State of Mississippi, and you say, well, how
16 confident am I that that's how I -- That that's the mechanism I
17 would want to use to divvy up fish, for example, and so that's
18 where staff kind of already hit like a little bit of a wall, and
19 that's okay. I at least wanted to bring this to the attention of
20 the committee to discuss, and get some insights on what we might
21 do, or what you might be interested in seeing as we move down the
22 road with this.

23
24 Thinking a little bit of maybe how do we define improved access,
25 and so, you know, season duration, and so sort of what are the
26 goals that the committee might be interested in looking at here?

27
28 Is the goal to maximize the season duration within catch limits,
29 or is it, you know, more opportunity in a less desirable time of
30 year? In terms of time of year, the desired seasons coincide with
31 higher catch rates, and that makes sense, right? Like, the
32 summertime, kids are out from school, the weather is better, and
33 you're more likely to be out fishing. There's higher effort, and
34 there's higher catch rates associated with those months.

35
36 Targeting desired species simultaneously, versus having a
37 desirable species open year-round, and so, generally, you can
38 choose the best days or sort of the most days, just, you know, as
39 it's sort of from a decision point made. You know, the idea is
40 like, well, we just see more effort in the summertime, and we're
41 okay with a shorter, you know, season, because just June is when
42 everybody is out there anyway, and it doesn't help us to just open
43 it for the entire month of, you know, January and February, because
44 we can't be out there anyway, but you could have sixty days if
45 it's out there in January or February.

46
47 These are just various tradeoffs that we have to deal with when we
48 think about -- Just about season management for any species, but

1 greater amberjack is no exception.

2
3 You know, we looked at it from, okay, so here's what, you know,
4 some of the numbers are telling us. Well, what are the people
5 telling us, and so we looked back at some of the results from the
6 recreational initiative.

7
8 You all might remember that initiative that was done a year ago
9 that sort of asked recreational anglers, you know, hey, what are
10 some of your goals, or some things that you would like to see in
11 terms of fishery management for all of these, and so we asked the
12 group, hey, what are your desired months for looking at some of
13 these species, and now this was asked for all of these species,
14 and they could sort of put it together, and, when we did that,
15 greater amberjack came up in the fall months, this August and
16 September time, which is not too far off from what we have now.

17
18 Now, again, they were asked this question as sort of a broad
19 question, looking at all these species. They weren't asked
20 directly about greater amberjack sort of in a vacuum, and so you
21 might get different results, depending on what that is, but we
22 just wanted to provide this as an overview, as something that we
23 had gotten from the recreational initiative.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** It looks like we've got a question.

26
27 **MR. WALKER:** I just thought I would throw in that the rec initiative
28 was made up of people from all five states as well, and so this is
29 across five states.

30
31 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, it was from -- It was a small group, but it
32 was representative of all states, and, like I said, this was asked
33 for sort of all of these species together.

34
35 Addressing some tradeoffs to improve the satisfaction, and so, no
36 matter what, the solutions must adhere to the annual catch limit,
37 which is very tiny, and so, as Dr. Simmons likes to say, this is
38 like dividing up a truffle, right?

39
40 State management of the recreational sector could provide more
41 desirable windows of access, could improve the recreational
42 landings estimate and harvest monitoring, and so like, as these
43 seasons get shorter and shorter, you certainly -- It would be very
44 desirable to have monitoring that's on that same level, right, and
45 so it's the same level of precision, but very similar to the season
46 duration, so that you can make sure you're monitoring right to
47 your quota.

1 Also, there's certainly a desire, in any fishery, and, again,
2 greater amberjack is no different, to reduce discards by targeting
3 during the desired seasons.

4
5 Ms. Gardiner gave this presentation. She had, you know, this sort
6 of honeycomb plot. It's sort of been re-envisioned here as some
7 sort of pinwheel of a flower, but so we're making progress. What
8 we're going to do though is we're going to sort of -- Staff looked
9 at this, and we're going to sort of work around like clockwise
10 around this, and so, again, thinking about here are all of these
11 various factors, and I'm curious how they would work, in terms of
12 like sort of a hierarchy, where one domino sort of feeds into the
13 other, and so you can then begin to put together a document, but
14 these are all sort of high-level decision points that would need
15 to be made in conjunction with each other, and so that's what I'm
16 looking for your feedback on.

17
18 We're going to go through each of them one by one, and then we can
19 potentially talk about anticipated timelines for all of those range
20 of alternatives through all of those, and those kinds of things.

21
22 The first one we're going to look at is, you know, potentially,
23 when we're thinking about this, is there any desire to include
24 federal for-hire in this, and so, you know, for the committee's
25 feedback, and, Mr. Chair, I might think that I could go through
26 all of these, and we could certainly come back at any point, but
27 just make sure everybody sort of has the breadth of questions, and
28 then we can come back to them individually, if that's okay.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think that's a good idea, Dr.
31 Hollensead.

32
33 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay, and so, you know, maybe one of the first
34 decision points for committee feedback is should an action be
35 included to separate federal permitted for-hire vessels? If yes,
36 if that is what's desired, then that may require some sector
37 separation, and an allocation component for each of those, which
38 we would anticipate as having a fairly lengthy timeline associated
39 with that, if that was something that wanted to be included.

40
41 The next question we had is some feedback on the units of
42 management, and so certainly state-specific may be simpler in
43 concept, you know, the states having their own sampling designs,
44 and certainly they have geopolitical boundaries that sort of make
45 sense for law enforcement and that kind of thing.

46
47 However, unlike red snapper, for greater amberjack, at least in
48 this case, it may be that data may be sparse in some states, as

1 we've just kind of showed the case for Mississippi, and harvest
2 monitoring may be difficult, or uncertain, and that may not be
3 possible to have state-specific, or at least there's tremendous
4 uncertainty associated with that.

5
6 If you start talking about allocation, like, again, we would run
7 into the problem where there's the potential that you may be giving
8 quota to a state where it may just be a result of how -- You know,
9 the survey is designed that those fish are being given to that
10 state, rather than some biological underlying theme, and so regions
11 could reduce this effect, but how do you want those set up?

12
13 How would those states potentially, if they're lumped together,
14 talk to each other? Would they have agreements across state lines
15 of how they would like to handle those sorts of things, and their
16 protocols for sampling, and how the data would be collected, and
17 law enforcement, and so, you know, just some of those things to
18 have to think about.

19
20 Allocation, we're looking, again, for some feedback. We need to
21 determine allocations for each of those management units, whether
22 it's states or some sort of region. You know, would you want to
23 consider landings? Again, this gets a little sticky with greater
24 amberjack biomass, and maybe some estimates of that.

25
26 There's the Great Amberjack Count, but, again, that's going to be
27 sort of a snapshot in time, but is that considered enough? Are we
28 okay with that, or perhaps not, and maybe some negotiated agreement
29 among the states, where it's sort of, hey, I'm okay with this time,
30 if you're okay with this time of year, and sort of just settle it
31 that way, and we could certainly do that as well. If we came back
32 with some sort of agreement on that, we could write that up.

33
34 With any allocation, especially if we look at various data streams,
35 changing and incompatible data units, that requires some
36 consideration, and so how are we going to quilt those things back
37 together in a way such that we can, you know, monitor the stock in
38 totality, because, again, this is a Gulf-wide stock, and so it
39 would have to come in to some way to be able to monitor that, and
40 piece those things together, and that is not very different from
41 like what we're having to do with red snapper.

42
43 Again, getting this back again, so these things are really
44 interrelated, the allocation and the data currency, and so, again,
45 a common data currency is essential for combined harvest and
46 monitoring, and it's an ongoing challenge, as it would be for red
47 snapper, and historical landings data may also require a
48 calibration pending, and remember we're getting a potential MRIP-

1 FES update on top of -- You know, here very soon.

2
3 So, you know, which one do you sort of want to calibrate to, and
4 the timeline of that, and when would you want to align that with
5 this, and so some other things to have to think about here.

6
7 Then we get to looking into some state-specific management tools.
8 You know, one of the pros, certainly, is to be able to have that
9 desired management flexibility that works for various regions,
10 seasons, and timing those. Any minimum size limits, or within
11 ranges of bag or vessel limits, you know, that might work for
12 various states or regions could also be brought up, and any way
13 you do this can sort of also though constrain your harvest into
14 that -- You know, whatever allocation that you might have.

15
16 Then, lastly, looking at some accountability measures, and so would
17 the, you know, committee be interested in some sort of
18 accountability measures that are necessary or appropriate? Should
19 those flexibility measures be similar to red snapper, or something
20 else? Would stock status affect any of those accountability
21 measures?

22
23 Is there any sort of guardrails that you would like to put in
24 place, all of those sorts of things, and so, again, it's hard to
25 sort of think of each one of these things in a vacuum, because
26 they all sort of connect back, which is why we sort of wanted to
27 try to present this in sort of a hierarchical sort of thought
28 process of how we might lay it out in a document, so that we could
29 try to frame that out, but we just need a little more guidance on
30 that.

31
32 This is the last slide here, and so, you know, the IPT is going to
33 have to consider a lot of things, based on your feedback, and then
34 bring back a revised document integrating all of these pieces
35 together. There's no other way to slice it other than this is
36 going to be complex, and that's our known-knowns, is that it's
37 complex. There may be some, right, unknown-knowns, you know,
38 however that goes, where some unexpected challenges may arise,
39 especially if we start digging into data a little bit more.

40
41 Again, I already did sort of just sort of a really rudimentary
42 analysis, and this has already got a little bit of head-scratchers
43 in there, and, if we started looking at some other ways to piece
44 things out, some things may arise that I'm not sure of just yet.

45
46 The timeline, it's my understanding that, in terms of like
47 resources and workload, that when the red snapper state management
48 -- All hands were on deck, in terms of staff to handle that,

1 because there are so many pieces of human dimensions associated
2 with it, and so everybody was sort of all hands on deck with that.

3
4 I would imagine that would be the same here, and so like an Nth
5 degree, given the unique challenges to greater amberjack, and so
6 some other things may have to be, you know, rearranged to allow
7 staff time to be able to do that.

8
9 Also considering there's -- Again, I had mentioned earlier that
10 we'll bring this back, and the upcoming stock assessment is
11 supposed to be starting in mid-2027, with 2025 as the terminal
12 year for that, and be completed sometime in the fall of 2028,
13 assuming that that timeline goes through, and so there's some other
14 things that are floating out there a little bit in the ether that
15 you may want to align with this, so that you don't have to redo
16 this all over again, right, and you would have the most recent
17 catch advice with which to inform the document, and so some of
18 those timing things.

19
20 I will stop talking and hand it over to the committee, Mr. Chair,
21 if they have any questions, and certainly any feedback that can be
22 provided would be very much appreciated.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that presentation, Dr.
25 Hollensead. That was very informative. I've got one question.
26 Bernie, can you go up to the rudimentary analysis slide, with kind
27 of the plot there, and the trend lines? Let me see what page it
28 is. Slide 7. There you go.

29
30 Dr. Hollensead, does this -- So, these numbers here, is this just
31 private, or does this include for-hire, and the reason why I'm
32 asking is, in some of these years here, I know we explicitly have
33 displayed what the private rec intercepts have been, and they don't
34 seem to be matching up with some of these numbers here, and so I'm
35 just curious. Are most of this being attributed to for-hire? I'm
36 just -- I'm wondering.

37
38 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** It's for-hire and private.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so it's combined. Okay. Okay.
41 Thank you, and, also, just coincidentally, I do believe the Greater
42 Amberjack Count report is due out today, and so that's going to be
43 some late-breaking news that will be relevant here too, I think,
44 but any discussion around the table, questions for Dr. Hollensead,
45 and there is a lot to digest in here, and we might want to -- I'm
46 not sure, Dr. Hollensead, if you wanted to just go through kind of
47 the individual topics, and get the committee's feedback, or what
48 would be the most appropriate way, because there's certainly a lot

1 here, but, first, I'm going to go to Mr. Schieble.

2
3 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, that's why I was going
4 to ask you. Do you prefer to just go one-by-one through this, and
5 talk about each one, and have discussion around the table, and
6 then move to the next one?

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think that's fine. I don't necessarily think
9 we're going to be able to answer some of these questions today,
10 and give like explicit direction for where we need to go, because
11 I think there's going to be some more presentations, and just
12 analysis needed on some of these specific topics, to kind of help
13 the council make -- The committee make a decision one way or the
14 other, but that's just my two-cents, but, yes, Chris, that sounds
15 good to me. Bernie, if you wanted to go to slide -- Let's see,
16 and which one was it? Which is the first flower point decision
17 there?

18
19 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** That's slide 12.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** There we go. Inclusion of federal for-hire I
22 believe it's the first one. There we go. Okay, and so we've got
23 this up here, inclusion of federal for-hire. This is one of the
24 decision points there.

25
26 As you can tell, this would require, if we choose to go in this
27 direction, sector separation, allocation for each component,
28 basically similar to the way red snapper is somewhat managed there,
29 but go ahead, Chris.

30
31 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I guess I'll lead off with a couple of things, and
32 so I think this could be either way, could be included with federal
33 for-hire within the document under state management, as you've
34 heard me attest to that with snapper already, but I'm not
35 necessarily opposed to us working on some sort of Amendment 40
36 type of thing with amberjack allocation, to set that first, right,
37 and then include it in state management if necessary.

38
39 Dr. Simmons may be able to help me with this. Don't we currently
40 have an item, or an action, in the action guide for amberjack
41 sector separation, right? It's amberjack and triggerfish, in the
42 very bottom of the action guide?

43
44 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and it looks like we had a motion
45 from August of 2022 for sector separation. We had to consider
46 that for greater amberjack, gray triggerfish, gag, and red grouper.
47 I think some of that was based on the changes to the recreational
48 data, and new information coming online with the state surveys, of

1 course.

2
3 **DR. SCHIEBLE:** So what would be the preferred course of action?
4 Is to bring that back up, and work on that, or to work on it
5 separately within this, just for amberjack specific, and not those
6 other pieces you listed?

7
8 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** That's a question for the council,
9 and not for me, sir.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** From my perspective, Chris, I mean, we're here
12 now talking about this, and so, I mean, if we are going to be
13 including -- I mean, basically, this will be the decision point.
14 Like, if we want to do this sector separation, then, obviously,
15 that would probably supersede, at least from the greater amberjack
16 perspective in that other document, right, and so I guess the
17 decision point is here.

18
19 I mean, I will say from -- The reason why I was kind of asking
20 that question, Dr. Hollensead, was I was trying to figure out --
21 This is why I'm not so sure we're going to be able to answer this,
22 and I would like to be able to split out what private recreational
23 landings and for-hire landings would be like, to see kind of what
24 that impact is, and I kind of throw that out there as specific for
25 Florida's situation, because we are not -- Our State Reef Fish
26 Survey is not monitoring federal for-hire.

27
28 This would be something that we do not have information on
29 presently, in order to monitor and manage that component of the
30 fishery, and, with Florida representing the bulk load of the
31 landings there, I view that as a pretty significant issue. Any
32 other comments, questions, discussion here? Captain Walker.

33
34 **MR. WALKER:** Maybe it's the same question you were just alluding
35 to, but, Dr. Hollensead, is there a breakout between for-hire
36 landings and recreational, Gulf-wide?

37
38 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, and we were just talking about that. That
39 is something we could do. We could break it out that way, but
40 sort of calibration withstanding, and so these numbers would sort
41 of be in the different data courtesies, and it would be difficult
42 to parse them apart, but I could certainly -- By doing that, we
43 can look at within state allocations for for-hire.

44
45 **MR. WALKER:** Well, I'm thinking that it might -- It might surprise
46 some people, and it might make people go, wait a second, that's
47 not where we thought we were going. You know, I don't know, but
48 maybe the for-hire landings are more than the rec landings, and

1 would make this less desirable for one group or another.

2
3 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, and we could bring those back, and that's
4 something we've -- Given guidance here from the committee, we could
5 bring that back, if something that you all would like to look at,
6 and so that's good. We can do that.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. That sounds good, and, obviously, you
9 know, keeping in the back of our mind there that, if we decided to
10 move forward on something like this, you can see Lisa's comment in
11 there that the anticipated timeline would be lengthy, but I feel
12 like that's going to be a commonality for nearly every action in
13 here. Okay, and so good discussion on federal for-hire there.
14 Any additional points on this?

15
16 Then maybe we can move on to the states or regions. Okay. As you
17 can see in the bullet points here, state-specific may be simpler,
18 but, as Lisa also highlighted, data may be sparse in some regions
19 here, and, obviously, we've had some changes in surveys across the
20 Gulf here, but, as you have seen with a small quota here, and the
21 good old Mississippi issue with one fish translating into 300,000
22 pounds, that's a challenge. That's a significant challenge, with
23 such a low quota here, and how we would mitigate some of those
24 extrapolations there. Mr. Schieble, did you have your hand up?

25
26 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and just some comments in general, I think.
27 We need an action that's going to include options for individual
28 state management, but, also, we've previously seen a three-region
29 option. I believe, a few years ago, Ryan had a document for us
30 that had two regions and three regions in the Gulf. It was like
31 a Panhandle, southwest Florida, and then like a western Gulf
32 region.

33
34 I think it would be good for that to be included as well for us
35 for consideration. Those things can, obviously, be moved to
36 Considered but Rejected if not necessarily wanted by the committee
37 at that point, but I would like to see those included in there.

38
39 When it comes to, you know, discussion about things that have
40 occurred in individual states, with one intercept causing large
41 landings data, keep in mind the states, three of those states, now
42 are on a similar currency system, right, and so you've got MS
43 Creel, AL Creel, and LA Creel. They're getting certified, or are
44 certified, within that program as a replacement.

45
46 I think there's less likelihood of that type of thing happening,
47 or occurring, when you've got that system in place with a different
48 effort survey, for lack of a better term on that, and so I don't

1 see those as problematic any longer going forward, but I'll leave
2 it up to the committee to make some comments.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Or at least hopefully not as problematic. It's
5 certainly still going to be a rare-event species. Any further
6 comments there? We got some discussion from Chris about seeing
7 both states and regions, potentially, and highlighting some of the
8 potential options for a region. Captain Walker.

9
10 **MR. WALKER:** I'm just thinking out loud, and so the number, the
11 ACL I guess it's called, is almost the same as gag, which is
12 400,000, and, just in the State of Florida, that ended up being a
13 thirty-day season, and so, if we were to divide that somehow five
14 ways -- The point being a similar size quota divided up -- You're
15 going to take thirty days and split it up, and amberjack is
16 actually a bigger fish, and so it's probably going to be less than
17 that, and so I think, no matter how this is sliced, it's going to
18 lead to a very short season, probably shorter than most people
19 have now, just for reference.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I have Mr. Strelcheck, and then Mr.
22 Schieble.

23
24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'm certainly open to looking at this both on a
25 state or regional basis. You know, based on the presentations
26 we've had at prior council meetings, my main concern, and what
27 even Lisa shared today, is, the more we parse this out, the less
28 data available.

29
30 If we split for-hire from private, you know, there was some state
31 surveys that were showing no intercepts of charter, and so we're
32 really dealing with a fairly rare-event species unless, you know,
33 Mississippi and Alabama Creel starts to pick up more amberjack, or
34 we make some fundamental changes to some of our survey
35 methodologies to be able to pick up additional amberjacks. I think
36 we will need to carefully give some thought to is this a workable
37 solution, and, the more we parse this out, the more problematic it
38 might be for states to monitor.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Good point, Andy. Mr. Schieble.

41
42 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So I guess, back to Captain Walker's point, I
43 understand you're looking at 400,000 pounds roughly divided now,
44 but that presumes that the results of the assessment, by the time
45 this would go into place, would be still the catch limit advice we
46 would get from the SSC of 400,000 pounds on the ACL, right? We
47 don't know what that's going to look like.

1 To Mr. Strelcheck's point, I think the low intercepts are an
2 artifact of the short season structure, right, and so we're looking
3 at two months season right now. Perhaps, if that ACL changes, and
4 we have state management, those seasons wouldn't look like that
5 going forward.

6
7 Then the percent chance of having higher intercepts would be there,
8 and I think that point leads into what we're going to talk about
9 next, but I'll wait until we get to the EFP.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble, and I guess just
12 another question I have relative to -- I mean, it's kind of
13 interlinking other things we've been talking about, but,
14 obviously, we're trying to put forward SEFHIER 2.0, and, if for-
15 hire is included, I'm just curious how state management of like
16 this would interact with that federal data collection program
17 there. I'm just -- I need to wrap my head around all this. There's
18 a lot going on here. Mr. Schieble.

19
20 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Well, maybe I can help, and so the two would be
21 essentially redundant, because LA Creel, for example, would be
22 dockside intercepting federal for-hire boats at the same time
23 SEFHIER would be. That's not going to stop, and so that's why
24 I've always sort of advocated for -- LA Creel already does what
25 SEFHIER is planning to do, minus the economic component of it,
26 right, and so you're going to have those intercepts taking place
27 regardless of either -- Whatever system is there.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Any further comments, or discussion, on
30 the state or region component of this? I'm not really seeing any.
31 All right. Let's move on to the fun discussion of allocation.
32 Any thoughts here? I think certainly some of the options -- I'll
33 at least throw it out there, and I think that's certainly some of
34 the options you have on the table, Lisa, landings, biomass, those
35 are certainly relevant things.

36
37 I think we can potentially utilize the Greater Amberjack Count,
38 when some of that information comes out here, to help inform some
39 of this, but it doesn't necessarily have to be entirely based on
40 that. I understand some of the concerns coming out of like
41 landings might not be representative for a state like Mississippi,
42 or something like that, where there's very small intercepts, and
43 so I offer that out here for some discussion, to see what people
44 think. Mr. Schieble.

45
46 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I guess not knowing, you know, what this is
47 ultimately going to look like as a document yet, I would advise
48 Dr. Hollensead to go back and look at some of the allocation

1 options that we had in Amendment 50, where we had I think -- I
2 can't remember correctly, but 50 percent biomass and 50 percent
3 landings in the time series, as some examples, and different
4 percentages of those things going forward. Use that as a template,
5 because, in my mind, it's going to be very similar, once we get
6 the output of the assessment, where we can use those to fill in
7 those biomass numbers.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and there was -- I do see -- I think
10 certainly there are some options in there. Obviously, part of
11 that, as you know, Chris, was related to the allocation that was
12 negotiated between the states, and kind of piggybacked off that in
13 kind of Amendment 50A, but, yes, I agree that there's probably
14 20,000 options in there for how we could look at allocation splits,
15 and so we could certainly look at some of that. Dr. Simmons.

16
17 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we did
18 pull up the presentation that Ms. Gardiner gave to the council in
19 I think it was January of this year, which did have some
20 recreational landings information in it. If you go to slide 6, it
21 does have the split out for the for-hire, private, and then by
22 state. Some of it is preliminary, but that gives you just a
23 general idea. That was presented in January 2026.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That's interesting. Okay. Thank you, Dr.
26 Simmons, for bringing that up. Mr. Schieble.

27
28 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Just to reiterate a point that we're probably all
29 well aware of, but there's a multitude of management changes in
30 that time series there that affect those landings, and just saying
31 that.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and we've kind of thrown the kitchen sink
34 at this, from a regulatory perspective, for sure. Okay. That's
35 interesting. Anymore -- I think what Chris laid out there is
36 plenty, as far as allocation options there. That will give Lisa
37 more than enough. Okay, and so any more on this one? Mr.
38 Strelcheck.

39
40 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Maybe it was mentioned, and I didn't hear it, and
41 so, with Alabama and Mississippi now having their creel programs,
42 right, there's not a time series. Yes, they might be calibrating
43 back in time, right, but you essentially have new surveys coming
44 online, and so I'm not sure, if we talk about considering landings,
45 what we'll be looking at there, but I see that as an added
46 challenge, obviously, with the new surveys.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I agree. Any more discussion here? Okay.

1 Can we move to the common currency slide, please? Obviously, we
2 have some potential FES updates coming online soon here, too.
3 Obviously, not all states are utilizing that. However, as Andy
4 has highlighted there, there has been some changes to some of the
5 programs recently. We navigate this in red snapper already, but
6 it is definitely -- As we've learned, it's worthwhile to have this
7 discussion early on, rather than later, and so I'll leave this
8 open. Dr. Allen.

9
10 **DR. ALLEN:** Just a point here that the database that Gregg Bray
11 mentioned from the commission might be useful here, that are up
12 and running, and, you know, that may provide a mechanism to get
13 things in a common currency and look at this, and so just a thought.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and there's been a lot of discussion over
16 the years to get this going on a lot of different avenues. Dr.
17 Froeschke.

18
19 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I guess my thought on this is it would be logical
20 to do this based on the stock assessment, once we have that, but
21 I don't know when we'll have that exactly, but is that thinking of
22 the committee that, once we have the stock assessment, then we can
23 figure that part out?

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** From my perspective, and that's my perspective,
26 yes. I mean, I feel like this is being navigated to with red
27 snapper, this exact same point. They're trying to, you know, get
28 all these into some sort of common currency here to evaluate the
29 stock, and so, from my perspective, that makes sense, and I don't
30 necessarily know how we would do that otherwise before then,
31 because, yes, anyways, things are going to change. Dr. Allen.

32
33 **DR. ALLEN:** I agree. Given a lot of new information that's about
34 to come out for greater amberjack, it would make sense to wait on
35 that information, but we could start this process before then,
36 but, you know, we can't get specific until we know that, I wouldn't
37 think.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Schieble.

40
41 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I think, thinking back to when I made the motion to
42 get this started, the goal was to have this sort of in the queue
43 at the same time that the amberjack stock assessment was going
44 through the process, so that, by the time we got that endpoint,
45 this would be ratcheted up to the front, and ready to go, instead
46 of us waiting on crafting this after the assessment is done.

47
48 Then by the time we get, you know, an amendment in place, we're

1 working on two-year-old outdated stock assessment data. I want to
2 have this to where we're working on current data, that's just from
3 a fresh stock assessment, to give us the best advice to put this
4 together to move forward for this.

5
6 We got pretty lucky, I guess, in the timing of how red snapper
7 worked with state management. We had a 2020 assessment, and we
8 worked through all that, and we had the state management starting
9 after the EFPs in 2018 and 2019. It would be great if we have a
10 similar process here, I think.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Chris. Okay, and so this is
13 striking me as one that we're probably going to have to just hold
14 off on until we get some results from the assessment here, in terms
15 of figuring out some of the details, but, yes, I totally hear what
16 you're saying, Chris, trying to move this forward as much as we
17 can, so it can be ready when the assessment is done, but this one
18 strikes me, in particular, as something that kind of needs to wait
19 for the assessment. Okay.

20
21 All right, and so, in light of that, maybe we can move on. Unless
22 there's more discussion here, we can move on to state-specific
23 management tools. Okay.

24
25 These typically have been the tools that are available for
26 fisheries managers. These have been some of the tools that were
27 available for a private recreational red snapper, and so seeing if
28 there's any other ideas that we want Dr. Hollensead to consider
29 when we re-look at this at some point. Mr. Schieble.

30
31 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I think this could be one of those actions in a
32 document that is precluded by the previous action, which would be
33 allocation discussion, and so we go through allocation first in
34 the document, and we decide all that, and then, regardless of what
35 your state allocation is, you as a state should have the ability
36 to set those specific state management tools, pending the decision
37 on what the preferred action, or alternative was in the action
38 prior for allocation, and that's just my two-cents.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that's how I see it too, Chris. Any
41 further comments on the table about this? Ms. Levy.

42
43 **MS. LEVY:** I'm just trying to make sure I understand. But you're
44 going to specify the particular management measures that the states
45 have the option of picking, right? Okay, and so it sounded more
46 open-ended, like they're just going to be able to manage.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** No, and we would specify, but these are just

1 -- We're looking at the range of things that we might want to
2 consider in the document right now, and, yes, these are obviously
3 the common ones. Mr. Schieble.

4
5 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I was just thinking very similar to Amendment 50,
6 right, and so we've got season ability, bag limit, size limit, all
7 those things that are in Amendment 50, very much the same, but
8 they should be precluded by the allocation action first, because
9 amberjack is different than snapper, right?

10
11 Right now, we have a one-fish bag limit, you know, and we can't
12 allow four or five-fish bag limits if the allocation is not set
13 prior to that first for each state, depending on how they're going
14 to handle their allocation, and what those decisions are, and I
15 think that dictates what you could allow the states to do with
16 those actions.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Ms. Levy.

19
20 **MS. LEVY:** Well, I mean, if the point is to give the states
21 flexibility, I mean, you could put like a limit, right, and like
22 a bag limit, and each state can set their bag limit no more than
23 whatever many fish, but they're going to have to decide, based on
24 their allocation, what that bag limit is. To me, they don't seem
25 interdependent, but you can structure it any way you want.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think we're all kind of talking the
28 same language here, actually. Okay. Anything else on this? All
29 right. AMs, Bernie, and any comments here? Mr. Schieble.

30
31 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I would just recommend we model it after what we
32 have for Amendment 50, is that there's payback provisions in there,
33 and we have some guardrails, just like we have there for the
34 individual state and/or region, right?

35
36 If there's regions, we'll have to engineer some different
37 accountability measures that are shared among states, so they
38 understand that, you know, they have a common allocation that they
39 have to achieve, that they're all going to pay back if they're in
40 a shared zone, or whatever you want to call it, region.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So let me ask you a question, Mr. Schieble.
43 Obviously, just today, we're working on adjusting the
44 accountability measures in there, and are you thinking it would be
45 inclusive of some things that we've been working on right now, or
46 originally how those AMs were set up in 50?

47
48 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I would say we start with the original way, to see

1 how this works, because we can always come back to the drawing
2 board and do what we're doing now with snapper, correct?

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I just wanted to be clear. Thank you. I'm
5 looking around the table. Captain Frady.

6
7 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is kind of in response,
8 and I should have said something on the previous slide, but we've
9 flipped over here now on the accountability measures. You know,
10 I can remember, eight or nine years ago, we had long discussions
11 about the rebuilding of the greater amberjack fish stock, and how
12 this council went round and round about the breeding cycles of the
13 greater amberjack, and how they started spawning in April, and
14 we've seen eggs in them as far as up into September.

15
16 We took the pressure off the amberjack, management-wise, by opening
17 and getting the allocation moved from January 1 to August 1, and
18 my only concern is, if we're going to go down this road, in addition
19 to the accountability measures, I would like to see a conservation
20 message measure be included in this to consider all the things
21 that this council worked for for so many years, to make sure those
22 fish have a chance to breed, reproduce, or lay eggs.

23
24 The other concern I have is I can totally respect the State of
25 Louisiana, or any other state, who has totally maybe a similar
26 fishery, but different needs, different access needs, but, you
27 know, being on the water every day, you know, we already see any
28 kind of -- We're starting to see the amberjack recover. They're
29 not recovered. They're in the process of the eight years of hard
30 work and restraint.

31
32 I just want to make sure that what we do, the decisions we make
33 going forward, taking into consideration the reproduction of those
34 fish, and how hard we've worked to get it to where we can even
35 have these discussions going forward, because, without a
36 conservation message, or a conservation conversation in this,
37 we're setting ourselves up to leaving the seasons open, and more
38 flexible, to wherever they may open them during June and July,
39 when red snapper may be open, and we just killed the heck out of
40 a lot of fish that need to be breeding, and reproducing, and so I
41 just want to make sure that's a part of the conversation going
42 forward. Thank you.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Frady. Any further
45 discussion here? All right. Lisa, clear as mud for -- Okay.
46 Never mind. Mr. Schieble.

47
48 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I guess we're parting from this, and moving on next,

1 and is this everything you need, Dr. Hollensead, from us to move
2 to the next steps for an actual document, and, with that said, I
3 guess some discussion around here should be maybe the timeliness
4 of when we think we should see this back.
5

6 At the earliest, I'm thinking January, maybe, or the April meeting
7 next year, something like that, to where we can start discussing
8 this. It doesn't need to be on a fast track, I don't believe,
9 since we're dependent upon a Quarter 2 2027 potential stock
10 assessment, at the earliest, right?
11

12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** From my perspective, I think that there's maybe
13 some easier ones that could be brought back maybe in that
14 timeframe, but I think that there's some pretty critical decision
15 points that we won't be able to -- You know, is the juice worth
16 the squeeze at that point, until we have some of those major
17 decision points that we need to kind of embark down, Chris, but,
18 I mean, I think maybe some of the more simple ones, perhaps, but
19 I'm going to look at staff.
20

21 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Should I have said August?
22

23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Simmons.
24

25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I think
26 we were planning to bring something back in October, maybe
27 something that we could start making more decisions on. I this
28 continued draft I think is what we had there, but we can bring
29 something back in October, if you all want that. I mean, I think
30 some of it is just going to be proposed actions and alternatives,
31 potentially, without the data and analyses though, until you have
32 the assessment, and so it could be quite hypothetical.
33

34 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I'm fine with that. I think the main thing
35 that we could look at would be potentially discussion over zones
36 or state management. That's one thing that we could start working
37 on around the table here, potentially, but we still need allocation
38 discussions, and so I agree. If October is where you have it in
39 the queue, then I'm fine with that.
40

41 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Anything else you need, Dr. Hollensead?
42

43 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thanks to you and the committee for giving us
44 some insight. I appreciate it.
45

46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** You can thank Mr. Schieble. Mr. Osborne.
47

48 **MR. OSBORNE:** That was a great report, by the way. I really

1 enjoyed it, and I love that picture at the end. That guy seems
2 very shocked.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I agree. Thank you for the
5 presentation, Dr. Hollensead. Okay. That concludes that agenda
6 item here. All right and so next up on the list, a couple more
7 items here, and we've got the May 2026 SSC Meeting Summary, and I
8 have not seen -- Okay. Mr. Moncrief is virtual, and so, Bernie,
9 if we could bring up that presentation and get Trevor lined up
10 here.

11
12 **MR. RINDONE:** I texted him to be ready, and I can preface with the
13 action guide, if you like.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Sounds great, Mr. Rindone.

16
17 **MR. RINDONE:** It will give Trevor a minute to get back over to his
18 computer.

19
20 **MR. TREVOR MONCRIEF:** I'm there, but you can go ahead.

21
22 **MAY 2026 SSC MEETING SUMMARY**

23
24 **MR. RINDONE:** Look at that. He is on the ball and ready to go.
25 Mr. Moncrief is here with us today. He's the chair of the SSC,
26 and he's going to talk about the SSC's discussions surrounding the
27 Gulf Fishery Independent Survey of Habitat and Ecosystem
28 Resources, or G-FISHER survey, which serves as an index of relative
29 abundance and a source of composition data for many of our Gulf
30 reef fish species. The committee should review the information
31 presented, ask questions of Trevor, and make any recommendations,
32 as appropriate.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. I'm going to kick it over to you,
35 Trevor.

36
37 **MR. MONCRIEF:** All right, and so we spent a good bit of time, as
38 the SSC, going through this. Dr. Switzer basically gave us the
39 timeline of how the survey came to be, how it was combined across
40 all the other different video surveys, its shift in design, and it
41 basically was able to create more representative coverage across
42 different habitats.

43
44 I would say the biggest talking points that we had here, at least
45 from the SSC side, and it kind of was a springboard off of
46 amberjack, which was the potential for increasing coverage in the
47 central and western part of the Gulf.

1 When you looked at the sample size, and the sampling distribution,
2 it was very eastern heavy, with a lot of coverage. That, coupled
3 with the visibility issues and everything else over in the west
4 and the central Gulf, I mean, obviously, it had some impacts on
5 the ability to be able to have that coverage, but there was
6 discussion about, you know, drop cameras being used from the
7 Pascagoula Lab, and different things to try to basically answer
8 that question of is there a possibility to expand.

9
10 We had some discussions about consortiums, or partnerships, or
11 whatever else, to really try to find a pathway to be able to help
12 increase and get all the partners in place, and the reason that
13 was such a big part of the discussion is because you all have seen
14 this survey being used more and more, and we've seen it being used
15 more and more.

16
17 There's a lot of discussion, not only at the SSC level, but at you
18 all's level, of, you know, doing less with more, and a lot of that
19 is a shift toward, you know, index-based management, and being
20 able to look at stocks through simplified higher throughput methods
21 that would rely heavily on this kind of survey that would have
22 Gulf-wide coverage, and so that's kind of where our conversation
23 centered around.

24
25 Dr. Siegfried was there. She was able to, you know, prod the SSC
26 to have some additional discussion, obviously, for different
27 species and different selectivities across-the-board, which was
28 good, and then we ended with essentially, you know, what the future
29 of it looks like outside of just trying to increase the sample
30 size.

31
32 There were some discussions about eDNA, and the use of machine
33 learning to help identify, to be able to increase the throughput
34 of the survey, to have this thing really become a fine-tuned tool
35 to be able to use for Gulf fisheries management. That was kind of
36 the gist of the discussion, and so I'll take any questions you all
37 may have.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Trevor. Any questions for Trevor
40 about the SSC report and G-FISHER? Mr. Anson.

41
42 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Trevor, for the summary. Was there much
43 discussion on, or any examples, of where the G-FISHER data was
44 used and they had to truncate the data, or lop off some of the
45 data? Did you get into any of those kind of discussions, or do
46 you have examples to discuss?

47
48 **MR. MONCRIEF:** I think we talked about it, or I'm pretty sure we

1 did in fact, but I'm not positive as a specific example. I know
2 we talked about the one with lane snapper recently, just with the
3 increase in coverage coupled with the increase in sample size.

4
5 I think we talked about truncating. I don't think we ever went
6 there, but that was a part, and I think Dr. Siegfried's
7 conversation was, you know, there are times where that may be a
8 necessity, but we never talked about the specific instances, or
9 what would qualify the need for data truncation, but just that,
10 you know, it could occur.

11
12 **MR. ANSON:** All right. Thank you, and another question. These
13 other surveys, or use of additional cameras in other areas of the
14 Gulf where the visibility is an issue, any timeline on when there
15 might be some results from the comparison studies for that gear?

16
17 **MR. MONCRIEF:** So I didn't get any information on timeline. I did
18 stress, at least, you know, from our perspective in Mississippi,
19 that we're very interested in this, because we're one of those
20 entities that have shown success of drop cameras in our region,
21 and that a visual survey is absolutely possible through a majority
22 of the year.

23
24 Our next step was to basically reach out to that group over in
25 Pascagoula, since it was, you know, basically stated that the work
26 had been being done with drop cameras, with tangible results and
27 positive outcomes, because I think, you know, across-the-board,
28 that's the desire. If there is the ability to create a more robust
29 visual survey across the Gulf, then we need to take every measure
30 we can to try to pursue that, and so that's kind of where we left
31 it at.

32
33 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any more questions for Trevor? I'm not seeing
36 any. Dr. Walter, go ahead.

37
38 **DR. WALTER:** Thanks, Chair, and thanks, Trevor, for giving this
39 presentation, and I wanted to just put it out there, as to whether
40 it would be useful for this council to get maybe a high-level
41 overview of that survey, and I put this out there because I think
42 it's something that we're going to be relying on more and more in
43 the future.

44
45 I think it's indicative of, as Kevin said, probably some of the
46 key trends in species that we're going to want to be paying
47 attention to, either directly in stock assessments or
48 qualitatively in other advice, and the investment that's in it is,

1 I think, enough that it's covering most of the Gulf.

2
3 It's covering the areas that are the heavily-fished areas, both
4 artificial and natural reefs, and so I think it has got that
5 potential, particularly with the partnerships, if some of the
6 states, through SEAMAP, can take on some of that methodology, where
7 we could really have a comprehensive survey of key species and
8 habitats in the Gulf.

9
10 Something that would be probably an overview, a high-level
11 overview, and then repeated engagement, so that there's like maybe
12 here are the trends that we're seeing in it, to get that kind of
13 overview, just a view of how the system is doing, might be
14 something useful.

15
16 I brought that up to Ted, as to whether he might want to give that
17 to this council at one of the meetings, and I would offer that up
18 there, in terms of -- Not offering Ted's time, but I said that the
19 project would probably benefit from that, and this council might,
20 and so if this council -- If that's something that you would like
21 to get on the agenda, I think that group might really be interested
22 in that. Thanks.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I would certainly be supportive of
25 that. We are using G-FISHER a lot more recently, with lane
26 snapper, and red grouper, and, I mean, I think it's very relevant
27 to have that discussion here, to learn a little bit more about the
28 ins and outs of the program, because I think there's a lot of value
29 there, especially with how we're going to have to try and assess
30 these fisheries a little bit differently in some species that don't
31 necessarily have rigorous data behind it, and, as Clay likes to
32 say, the Cadillac of the stock assessment models, and we might
33 have to go with a more index-based, and this could be useful. Dr.
34 Allen.

35
36 **DR. ALLEN:** I agree completely. I think a presentation to the
37 council would be really useful. Ted's slides from the SSC meeting
38 were really good, and I think that would be good for this
39 committee, this council, just to see the extent of the data
40 sources, and it's going to be increasingly important in the future,
41 and so thanks.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Dr. Allen. Mr. Anson.

44
45 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I agree that it would be helpful to have a
46 high level description of it, but, you know, I don't know, and it
47 may already be on the website, Emily, but maybe that presentation,
48 and then we can build, over time, some others to focus in on, you

1 know, having that information available, easily available, for the
2 public when we start looking at some of these reports of these
3 kind of, you know, snapshots, if you will, and then we can have
4 that, have them look at that, so they can learn more about the
5 data and where it's coming from.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that sounds good to me. Mr. Rindone.

8
9 **MR. RINDONE:** Motion to request dot, dot, dot.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Well, I heard John just volunteer Ted's time
12 to give this presentation here. Dr. Allen.

13
14 **MR. RINDONE:** Ted will be thrilled.

15
16 **DR. ALLEN:** I'm happy to make a motion to request a presentation
17 that gives a summary of the G-FISHER database. I think that would
18 be very useful.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** We have a second from Mr. Anson. I think you
21 might need to help Bernie, just to repeat that one more time,
22 please.

23
24 **DR. ALLEN:** A motion to request a presentation that describes the
25 G-FISHER database.

26
27 **MR. RINDONE:** Survey.

28
29 **DR. ALLEN:** The G-FISHER survey.

30
31 **MR. RINDONE:** At an upcoming council meeting.

32
33 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. **The G-FISHER survey at an**
34 **upcoming council meeting.**

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Are you good with that, Kevin?

37
38 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and, I mean, request specifically of FWC, or I
39 don't know if that's needed or not, but --

40
41 **MR. RINDONE:** We could name Ted specifically if you want.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think this is okay. I think the message is
44 clear that it's going to probably be coming from FWC. Okay.
45 Motion on the table, and seconded by Mr. Anson. Any further
46 discussion? **Are there any objections to the motion? Seeing none,**
47 **the motion carries.**
48

1 Okay. Is there anything to come before Trevor and the SSC? Any
2 other further discussion here? All right. Not seeing any, thank
3 you, Trevor. Appreciate your leadership.
4

5 **MR. MONCRIEF:** Thank you, all.
6

7 **DISCUSSION: EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS**
8

9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Moving down the items here, next up on
10 the agenda we have a discussion for exempted fishing permits.
11 We've got one for greater amberjack and one for gag grouper. I'll
12 just go ahead and do the gag grouper one really quickly. I think
13 Mr. Schieble is going to be a little bit more long, but just one
14 highlight for here.
15

16 FWC is certainly interested in pursuing exempted fishing permits
17 to test state management in a new season structure for Gulf gag
18 grouper. We're currently reviewing options, and we will have a
19 draft EFP for council review later in the year, but, as you saw
20 the season this year, Andy had set it forward, as we'll talk about
21 later, but, if this EFP is approved, FWC would start setting the
22 fishing season in 2027, and so that's just my brief update there.
23

24 Not moving forward this year, but we're going to submit something
25 this year, and hopeful for 2027, but I'll pause for any comments
26 there. It's not really a detailed update. Okay. Mr. Schieble,
27 do you want to move on to greater amberjack?
28

29 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I'll kick it
30 off with I guess a little background information, and then move
31 forward to what Louisiana is working on currently, and then other
32 state directors can jump in after me.
33

34 So we had -- Obviously, we all had EFPs in 2018 and 2019 for red
35 snapper. The purpose of those was to test state reporting systems,
36 which also included mobile apps, as well as the creel systems that
37 we were working on at the time.
38

39 As a reminder, the output, or results, of those EFPs helped lead
40 to the state management, which is now in place under Amendment 50,
41 but it was also because we were able to ask certain questions
42 during LA Creel assignments, particular to those exempted fishing
43 permits that are now included within the LA Creel current design,
44 right, and so it helped lead to that, and I just wanted to add
45 that as a refresher course as to how we got to those in the first
46 place.
47

48 Then we spent two years, as a council, working on the recreational

1 fisheries initiative, and the output, or recommendations, that
2 came out of the recreational fishing initiative, and I'll kind of
3 go through a bullet point list here, is to have more overlap in
4 seasons, an opportunity to harvest multiple species, flexibility
5 in accountability measures, exploring finer-scale spatial
6 management, and so that could be potentially eastern versus western
7 Gulf or individual states, review alternative management
8 approaches.

9
10 Then we have Recommendation 4.3 that came from the Gulf Council's
11 prioritized workplan, and that was the council should explore
12 differentiating management measures, i.e., size limit, bag limit,
13 and season for greater amberjack between the eastern Gulf, Florida
14 and Alabama, and the western Gulf, Mississippi, Louisiana, and
15 Texas, given regional differences in fishery characteristics,
16 maintaining a single Gulf-wide annual catch limit.

17
18 Recommendation 2.4 from the council's final report on the council
19 regulatory process is to explore ways the council can play a more
20 active role in the exempted fishing permit process, and then, as
21 a final reminder, we have Executive Order 14192, which is
22 Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation, Management Reform, and
23 Species-Specific Management.

24
25 That all kinds of leads us to where we are with an exempted fishing
26 permit for amberjack, and so, Louisiana-specific, our goal is to
27 -- Let's see here. I have a whole rundown.

28
29 Test the use of near real-time landings data to flexibly manage
30 and provide full accountability for both the private angling and
31 for-hire components of the recreational greater amberjack fishery
32 in Louisiana as an alternative to the current Gulf-wide seasonal
33 approach.

34
35 The goal is to use LA Creel and the associated recreational
36 offshore landing permit, the ROLP, to monitor private recreational
37 and for-hire landings of greater amberjack in near real-time and
38 use the authority of the LDWF secretary or the commission to manage
39 the season based on landings estimates from LA Creel. In other
40 words, that means the secretary gets the authority from the
41 commission to have the ability to open and close the season based
42 on reaching a harvest threshold that's predetermined.

43
44 The EFPs would collect reliable landings data during a time of
45 peak angler effort, to reduce the error associated with fewer
46 greater amberjack encounters during the current season structure,
47 and so what we talked about a minute ago in Lisa's presentation
48 was that that rare intercept occurrence that has taken place, that

1 those graphs showed, right, and the idea would be for us to try to
2 get a better handle on intercepts, or more probability of getting
3 intercepts, to get better landings data.

4
5 Also, it would help to reduce discards if we can have an EFP that
6 takes the season structure and moves it to a time period when
7 anglers are already intercepting amberjack currently during the
8 snapper season, but then discarding them, and they would be able
9 to retain them, instead of having to put those back as a discard.

10
11 There's two, I guess, exemptions that we're going to specifically
12 ask for in our EFP. The first is the accountability measures,
13 which is the payback provisions that take place within that, and
14 the second is the seasonal closure structure, and so we're going
15 to be asking to move the season within our EFP from the September-
16 October current season to a June-July season, with the
17 understanding that the secretary then would have the authority to
18 close the fall season when other states would be fishing during
19 that time period.

20
21 We're moving and maintaining the same two-month season structure,
22 and so those are the guardrails. We're not changing the duration
23 or length of the season. We're just going to move the time series
24 on it, and then the secretary has the authority to do a declaration
25 of emergency to close the September-October season when it could
26 open for the rest of the Gulf off the coast of Louisiana, which
27 means that we're maintaining that season structure to not exceed
28 what we currently harvest during a two-month season anyway.

29
30 Then the potential option is also to increase the biological data
31 collection that we're currently getting, and so we don't get a lot
32 of age and growth data from amberjack currently, because of the
33 lack of intercepts that you saw on those graphs during the current
34 season structure of the two months in the fall.

35
36 We would hope that we would be able to get better otoliths, as
37 well as the length and weight data from amberjack that we currently
38 aren't getting, that we can contribute to the assessments going
39 forward, and that doesn't happen right now, because we just don't
40 get the dockside intercepts that we should, because of the season
41 structure being truncated at only two months in the fall.

42
43 If there's any further questions, or whatever, I would be glad to
44 answer those, but that's essentially what is the meat of our
45 exempted fishing permit.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks for providing that overview. I see Ms.
48 Levy with her hand up.

1
2 **MS. LEVY:** So, I mean, I don't really think there's any issue in
3 bringing this up but we're a little bit backwards, in terms of the
4 process that we're supposed to follow, and so, in terms of the
5 EFPs, and the regulations that guide how we look, and how the
6 agency handles EFPs, there's an application that's submitted to
7 NMFS.

8
9 The agency reviews the application for completeness, and for the
10 things that are required to be in the application, and, if
11 complete, files a notice in the Federal Register soliciting public
12 comment, notifying the council, and the council can take public
13 comment.

14
15 I mean, I think it's fine to talk about what you're proposing, but
16 it's a little premature to start I think commenting on it, per se.
17 We don't have anything to look at. Nothing has been reviewed.
18 There has been no determination that there's a complete
19 application. There's nothing that's been published in the Federal
20 Register telling the public what this application is, and so I
21 guess I just caution a little bit getting too into the weeds until
22 you've actually submitted the application, and the agency reviews
23 it, and sent it to the council and solicited public comment, and
24 we've followed the process in the regs that that's contemplated.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Understood. I think the key here is just
27 trying to be transparent that the states are working on something
28 like this, rather than getting into the specific details, but,
29 yes. Mr. Schieble.

30
31 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I think exactly, and, Mara, you're right.
32 That is the next steps in the process. We haven't even gotten to
33 that point yet of submitting and going through, you know, the
34 checklist of what's needed. We're working with Andy step-by-step
35 on the way with that.

36
37 We just wanted to present this to the council as a whole, because
38 the state directors tend to talk about things amongst themselves,
39 as state directors, but others around the table may not be aware
40 of this, where we are in the process of these things, and the goal
41 was to have an open conversation here before we get to the step of
42 submitting things, right? That way, people are fully aware of
43 what's going on, and can ask questions, and offer solutions, or
44 suggestions, before we get to that point.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any questions, or comments, for Chris? We've
47 got a couple. Mr. Chair, and then Dr. Simmons.

1 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you Dr. Sweetman. Chris, thanks for sharing all
2 the information with other council members that are not state
3 directors, that don't have the inside scoop. My question is the
4 -- I don't know if it's for Chris or Andy, but what's the timeline
5 on the application, and then the next step, and then so forth?
6 What is what does that look like?

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Andy.

9
10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** A lot of factors involved, right, and so EFPs can
11 be very simplistic, and, you know, we're authorizing harvest of
12 fish for an aquarium, to more complex actions like, you know, state
13 management, right, and so, if we're talking five state EFPs for
14 greater amberjack, coordinating amongst the states, and we just
15 went through this with South Atlantic red snapper, and it was about
16 a six-month process.

17
18 What I encourage, and we've already had some good conversations
19 with Chris and some of the state directors, is planning
20 coordination early, us being able to review drafts, and we provide
21 comment back, so that we can determine if the application is
22 complete and warrants further consideration.

23
24 Once that happens, we would publish it in the Federal Register,
25 and take public comment. I think the comment period can be
26 anywhere from fifteen to forty-five days, and we try to overlap
27 that with an open council meeting, if possible.

28
29 **MR. DUGAS:** A follow-up. Chris, when does the department intend
30 to fill out the application?

31
32 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Probably the next month or two we would be
33 submitting it formally.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Simmons.

36
37 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That was my
38 very question, just making sure that we have a good understanding
39 of timing on our end, and we've got our ducks in a row for when
40 this needs to show up on the agenda, but I guess, just to be clear,
41 Mr. Schieble, you're suggesting that this would be starting in
42 summer of 2027, and so just maybe cognizant of the timelines, and
43 make sure we're communicating closely on our end, please.

44
45 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so that was the goal, is to -- If we're
46 going to move the season structure from the fall to the spring, a
47 June-July season, that we will move them to June-July of 2027,
48 foregoing the September-October 2027 season, because those two are

1 still within the same fishing year, right? The fishing year starts
2 in August, and any landings that would take place in the fall would
3 then be included with the landings in the spring, and so we are
4 not going to have a fall season, in lieu of having a spring season.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any more questions, or comments, for Chris?
7 All right. Not seeing any, it sounds just like communication and
8 coordination between everyone is just kind of the name of the game
9 here. Okay. Thank you, everyone. That concludes the main agenda,
10 but we did have one other item in Other Business here. Captain
11 Frady, I'm going to turn it over to you if you want to talk about
12 sea turtles.

13 14 **OTHER BUSINESS**

15 **DISCUSSION OF SEA TURTLE RELEASE GEAR REGULATIONS**

16
17 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. We appreciate the opportunity
18 to speak to you all today on behalf of the commercial fleet and
19 the federally-permitted charter-for-hire industry, who has seen
20 some unnecessary burdens placed upon our industries by the
21 Endangered Species Act with the requirement to keep many, many,
22 many tools at our disposal in case we were to encounter a sea
23 turtle at sea.

24
25 The whole process of having to gain all the different parts and
26 stuff, and maintain it in their own places on our vessels, which
27 some of the stuff that we have to keep onboard is rather large and
28 cumbersome, and it doesn't fit in most boats, or any boats, but
29 one of the things is the fairness of the Endangered Species Act
30 and how it put it on the commercial industry and the federally-
31 permitted charter boats, because we came up under those licenses,
32 or those permits, where the biggest danger that we saw was an
33 estimated over three million or so private recreational anglers
34 who also would have the same interaction with the sea turtles.

35
36 So, in the essence of fairness, I have prepared a motion that I
37 would like to submit, and to make up here, and, if I get a second,
38 I would like to discuss this, about removing it, and, you know, we
39 don't want to do away with it, but I think there's some things we
40 can do better, and so, if you're ready, I'll go ahead and read
41 this motion.

42
43 **To request National Marine Fisheries Service review and assess the**
44 **efficacy and the need for the current sea turtle release gear**
45 **requirements for federally-permitted charter-for-hire and**
46 **commercial reef fish vessels. As part of the assessment, National**
47 **Marine Fisheries Service should consider streamlining the current**
48 **regulatory burden on the fleets, including proposing a simplified**

1 gear kit that represents the most recent research on intentions
2 with sea turtles when fishing for reef fish species.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We have a motion on the table. Do we
5 have a second? Captain Walker. Do we have any discussion about
6 the motion on the table? Anything you want to expand upon there
7 for a rationale, Troy?

8
9 **MR. FRADY:** Yes, sir. You know there's a request. This information
10 I wanted to be presented to the Reef Fish Advisory Panel, and to
11 the council, by the end of this year. This item that we're talking
12 about on this list is to reduce regulatory burden under the
13 Executive Order 14276 on America's Seafood Competitiveness, but it
14 had not made the workplan as of yet.

15
16 Also, this regulatory burden brought up -- It was also brought up
17 during the recent Ad Hoc Red Snapper and Grouper-Tilefish IFQ AP,
18 and a motion was passed to consider modifying the regulations.

19
20 The idea behind this is not to take managing -- Or taking care of
21 or reducing the way we take care of endangered species. That is
22 not what we want to do. There's just so many things that we can
23 do just to look at, and streamline, and possibly do away with, and
24 some of the things -- We're having to have car tires on the boa',
25 and we're having to have all these different options, different
26 pieces of size of PVC pipe, different line cutters, and we have to
27 have it even based on the freeboard of your boat, based on your
28 gunnels to the water level.

29
30 There's a multiplier effect where you have to have -- I have to
31 have a six-foot handle with a sixty-inch wide net to be able to
32 scoop a 300 or 400-pound sea turtle out of the water and place it
33 on the tire, and I think that's a little bit much for anyone, I
34 mean, and I think if it's good for -- I think it would be good for
35 the nation to make sure we all have at least some bare minimum
36 tools to use in case we have an encounter with a sea turtle, but,
37 out of my twenty-four years of full-time service out there, I have
38 yet to even hook one sea turtle, and other areas may have, but,
39 for me it's not something -- That's pretty much it. I just -- Has
40 anybody else got anything to say? I would love to hear.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** We've got more in the queue. Dr. Banks.

43
44 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you. Troy, I fully support this. I do have a
45 question. You say the most recent research on interactions, and
46 do you -- Can you point me in the direction where I can find any
47 of that? Is the research looking at if that gear is as efficient
48 as we think it is, or is it looking at interactions are down

1 between the fleet?

2
3 **MR. FRADY:** No ma'am. I threw that out there because I figured
4 there would be people listening in here who just said I've been
5 working on that for six months, but this has been going on for a
6 long time, and I know somebody out there a lot smarter than me has
7 already researched this, and has probably got an EFP about it, and
8 there's probably something that can be done, and looked at, to
9 make our lives a little bit easier, and, if anybody wants to come,
10 I can show you how to use all this turtle gear on the imaginary
11 turtles we do hook, and let you handle a six-foot handle net. It
12 would be so much fun.

13
14 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you. I was just -- I'm not up-to-date on my
15 turtle research, and so I was double checking if I could go look
16 that, but, yes, I understand where you're coming from. We have
17 the same gear on our boat.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Geeslin.

20
21 **MR. GEESLIN:** Captain Frady, I feel your pain. I'm certainly not
22 an incidental take permit expert, but quickly becoming one in our
23 pursuit of incidental take permits for our gillnet sampling
24 program.

25
26 Troy, I heard you say that in your twenty-four years, and I think
27 that's valuable information. I would also want to see, as a
28 commercial fleet, just how would -- The frequency of occurrence of
29 those interactions with the threatened species, and then you've
30 got some endangered species out there as well, and how many of
31 those are mortalities, and how many of those --

32
33 They're all considered take, right, but when we, you know, go
34 through our permitting process, which has been arduous, and
35 lengthy, and overly burdensome, and we fight fire with fire with
36 that data that, you know, I think would be critical for your --
37 Not only for your motion here, which I fully support, but in
38 elevating this through the National Marine Fisheries, and I also
39 encourage you to elevate through NOAA, and go through the top of
40 the top, and advocate for the industry there as well.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Mr. Strelcheck.

43
44 **MR. STRELCHECK:** While I'm speaking, Jenny Lee is here, and she's
45 our lead Section 7 consultation biologist, and so she may be able
46 to provide some additional insight, if you would like to hear from
47 her.

1 Just a few notes I wanted to convey, and so the sea turtle protocols
2 and release requirements go back to 2005 biological opinions, and
3 so they've been in effect for a while. They've evolved over time.

4
5 We do have terms and conditions, and it somewhat relates to this,
6 that say that NMFS must update our careful release protocols, and
7 modify release gears as new information becomes available, if
8 necessary. In cooperation with the Gulf Council, we'll revise
9 associated regulatory requirements.

10
11 If we're going to change the sea turtle release gear requirements,
12 that would be a reinitiation trigger, but we're already
13 reinitiating on the reef fish biological opinion, because of newly-
14 listed species, as well as outdated information, right, and so I
15 think now would be a good time that we could take a look at this,
16 and, you know, work with the council on this particular motion. I
17 don't know if you want to hear anything more from Jenny Lee. She
18 can speak more directly to this.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'm certainly not an ESA expert, and so I'm
21 open to any opinions that we get here. Captain Walker.

22
23 **MR. WALKER:** I speak in favor of the motion. At the very least,
24 as Andy said, from time to time they update these things,
25 particularly based on new information, and I think it might be
26 hard to document, but new information might be that hook-and-line
27 vertical line guys are not catching turtles.

28
29 I suspect a lot of these -- Particularly in the commercial sector,
30 you know, these were put in place for like longline boats and
31 things like that, that are perhaps more likely to catch turtles
32 than the center console guy who dropped the hook, and I've never
33 caught a turtle in forty years as a charter boat captain, and so,
34 you know, to me, this is -- Some of this maybe we could take
35 another look at it. I'm not sure how it was done originally.

36
37 I would like to think it was done with fishermen and endangered
38 species people, and so maybe, if we were going to take another
39 look at it, we could we could get a group of, you know, both sides
40 if you will, to take a look at it. Like I said, I've never caught
41 a turtle in forty years, and some of this gear is burdensome for
42 me to carry, and excessive, and the penalties are extreme for this.
43 I mean your trip is over.

44
45 If you get boarded, and you forgot your turtle net, at best you
46 are sent to the dock. This has happened to a couple of friends of
47 mine. Your trip is hereby terminated, because you don't have a
48 turtle net that you have not used in forty years as a charter boat

1 captain, and so these are some of the, you know, concerns that we
2 have.

3
4 Maybe we could get together and go over some of these things, and,
5 you know, meet in the middle a little bit. Maybe certain types of
6 fisheries are required certain different kinds of gear, and I'm
7 not saying we don't want to carry any gear, but I think, you know,
8 we could maybe go over it, and do an update, as you mentioned,
9 and, you know, maybe ease up a little bit of the burden on certain
10 types of fishermen.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you Captain Walker, and I will say Ms.
13 Lee is over at the table, and so, if anyone has questions for her,
14 I'm sure she's more than happy to answer them. All right. Any
15 other comments, or questions? We do have a motion on the table.
16 All right. **Not seeing any more discussion here, is there any**
17 **opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.**

18
19 Just from my perspective, Andy, kind of how you were talking about
20 the timing of potentially bringing something like this back, that
21 makes a lot of sense to me along those lines, too.

22
23 Okay. That was the last item that we have. I should note I feel
24 like they're listening to us, and the Greater Amberjack Count
25 report just came out ten minutes ago, and so some nice light
26 reading for us all tonight, if you're so inclined. All right.
27 Mr. Chair, this concludes the Reef Fish Committee.

28
29 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 2, 2026.)

30 - - -
31
32