

GULF COUNCIL

DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE

Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino & Virtual Biloxi, Mississippi

August 24, 2026

VOTING MEMBERS

Ed Walker.....Florida
Michael Allen.....Florida
Kevin Anson.....Alabama
Kesley Banks.....Texas
Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
Rick Burris (designee for Joe Spraggins).....Mississippi
Troy Frady.....Alabama
Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
Johnny Marquez.....Mississippi
John Sanchez.....Florida
Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida

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Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
Lt. Jackson Morton.....USCG
Jason Osborne.....Mississippi
Anthony Overton.....Alabama

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Alyssa Clift.....Administrative Assistant
Assane Diagne.....Economist
Leonardo "Leo" Egula.....Fishery Outreach Specialist
John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
Jessica Matos.....Administrative Document Editor & IT Coordinator
Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
Anabelle Suitor.....Social Scientist
Verena Wang.....Ecosystem Analyst

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Richard Cody.....NOAA

1 Frank Helies.....NOAA
2 Judy Helmey.....SAFMC
3 Mara Levy.....NOAA GC
4 John Walter.....SEFSC
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1 The Data Collection Committee of the Gulf Council convened at The
2 Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi on Monday
3 afternoon, August 24, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Ed
4 Walker.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF JUNE 2026 MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN ED WALKER:** I call to order the Gulf Council's Data
11 Collection Committee, whose membership includes myself, Mr. Anson,
12 Dr. Allen, Dr. Banks, Mr. Broussard, Captain Frady, Mr. Marquez,
13 Dr. Sweetman, Mr. Schieble, Mr. Geeslin, Mr. Sanchez, General
14 Spraggins, and Mr. Strelcheck.

15
16 First up on the agenda is Adoption of the agenda. Is there anybody
17 that has any issue or thing they would like to add to the Data
18 agenda? Seeing none, can I get a motion to adopt?
19

20 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** So moved.
21

22 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, sir. Mr. Sanchez and Dr. Allen. Next
23 up is Approval of the June 2026 minutes. Anyone have any issues
24 with the minutes from the previous meeting? Seeing none, a motion
25 to approve the minutes? Mr. Anson, and a second by Dr. Sweetman.
26 Thank you, sir. First up, Dr. Hollensead is going to go over an
27 Action Guide and Next Steps, which will also include coming up on
28 final action for the SEFHIER, but I'll hand it over to you, Dr.
29 Hollensead.
30

31 **FINAL ACTION: GENERIC AMENDMENT: MODIFICATIONS TO GULF FOR-HIRE**
32 **DATA COLLECTION PROGRAM**
33

34 **DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As you had mentioned,
35 this document is scheduled for this meeting to go for final action,
36 or be considered for final action, and, conventionally, when we do
37 this, we review the document, you know, make sure everybody
38 understands the preferreds and purpose and needs and things like
39 that, which we'll do here.
40

41 We'll also go over any public comment received during the comment
42 period. For this document, we did two virtual public hearings,
43 and collected comments on that, and created a summary, which Mr.
44 Egula will provide for us, and so he'll go through that, and so we
45 have those items.
46

47 Then we have a codified text, and so usually the council will
48 review that, and, if they have any questions, or we just certainly

1 review it to make sure that that is accurate to what is in the
2 document, that we're reflective of that, and we go through it
3 there.

4
5 For this document, we haven't received the codified text yet. It's
6 my understanding that we could potentially get a draft of that at
7 Full Council on Thursday, but certainly, Mr. Chair, in the
8 meantime, we do have the document and the public comment summary
9 that we could go over while in committee, and so I'll just pause
10 there.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Yes, and so I was going to ask Ms. Levy if she
13 had an update on the codified text, but it sounds like -- There
14 she is. It sounds like we may have it in time to have a look at
15 it before final action on Thursday, which would be ideal. Ms.
16 Levy, do you have an update on that?

17
18 **MS. MARA LEVY:** We're working on it, and so I hope that you'll
19 have something by Thursday for that to take a look at. Thanks.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. J.D.

22
23 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question, and
24 maybe it's for Ms. Levy, and I don't know, and maybe it's for
25 Carrie. In the event the codified text is not ready on Thursday
26 for final action, how do we move forward?

27
28 **MS. LEVY:** I think that you could still take final action, giving
29 the chair the authority to deem the codified text when we have it,
30 but my expectation is that we would hopefully at least be able to
31 give you a draft, right, that has sort of outlined how we intend
32 to write it, and then the chair would still have the authority to
33 redeem, right, when we make changes, and so let's go with the plan
34 that we're going to have it by Thursday, and if we get there, and
35 we don't, we'll pivot, or we'll make some decisions about what you
36 want to do.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Andy, please.

39
40 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I'll just add to that. In the event
41 it's not ready by Thursday, certainly we've always kind of written
42 into the chair has the ability to deem the codified text, but we
43 could also bring the information back to you at a future council
44 meeting.

45
46 Keep in mind that, when you take final action, it does take some
47 time for the council staff to prepare and finalize the amendment,
48 submit it to the agency, and us begin rulemaking, and so I would

1 certainly expect that October would still kind of be within that
2 timeframe where we're processing the rule and working forward to
3 implement that draft.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** So you're saying that we could pass it in final
6 action, and the text could be reviewed and all by the next meeting
7 for -- I don't know what you call it at that point. Okay. Any
8 other input on the topic? Seeing none, I hand it over to Mr.
9 Egula, correct, Lisa?

10
11 **MR. LEO EGULA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, first, I would like to
12 start off by talking about the outreach that we did for this
13 amendment. We are aware that these hearings occurred during peak
14 charter season, and o we made an extra effort to ensure that the
15 fleet heard about the program, and they understood the changes
16 that would be included with it.

17
18 We sent a letter to all permit holders. We also sent an email to
19 all active captains, and we also sent an informal email to about
20 a third of the fleet that had participated in the original SEFHIER
21 meetings, and then we also did our standard outreach procedures,
22 including a video presentation, press release, as well as social
23 media posts.

24
25 We've held two public hearings virtually. The first one, we had
26 nineteen attendees. Five people spoke, and we heard support for
27 the reinstatement of the program. We heard support for the current
28 preferred alternatives and a desire to get the program underway as
29 soon as possible.

30
31 In the second public hearing, we had six attendees, of which three
32 people spoke, and we heard support for the reinstatement of the
33 program. We also heard concern about reporting prior to offloading
34 and a request for the consideration of the safety and logistics
35 with that requirement.

36
37 We also heard concern about the trip notification requirements, if
38 there were any last-minute changes or cancellations, and we also
39 heard a request for clarification in the document regarding
40 headboat designation and economic data reporting, to avoid another
41 lawsuit.

42
43 We had forty-one written comments submitted for this amendment.
44 In those, again, we heard support for the development of a new
45 for-hire electronic reporting program, where they stress the
46 importance of accurate real-time data for better management and
47 inclusion in stock assessments, and, again, a desire to get this
48 program reinstated quickly.

1
2 We also heard opposition to the program, where people stressed
3 that it would cause unnecessary burdens. It was overly
4 complicated, and that it would be overturned, as the previous
5 program was, and so we initially heard that people were supportive
6 of the program, but felt that it needed to be simpler, inexpensive,
7 quick, and prioritize only valuable information.
8

9 A lot of people also mentioned they were very concerned about how
10 the data were going to be utilized. They were frustrated that the
11 previous program, those data were not utilized, and they were
12 hopeful that these data could be used in assessments and for
13 accountability measures.
14

15 Lastly, we heard concern regarding reporting prior to offloading,
16 where people said it was easier to count fish after docking, and
17 that it would be distracting to captains.
18

19 Other comments we heard, and not for this amendment specifically,
20 but included in the comments were concern regarding the accuracy
21 of recreational catch estimates, concern and disapproval of state
22 or regional management of for-hire fisheries. We heard support
23 for state or regional management of for-hire fisheries. We heard
24 people say that for-hire vessels should be considered commercial,
25 since they profit off natural resources, and, lastly, we heard
26 people say that it was very important to speed up data collection,
27 and consolidate data collection methods, to provide a single,
28 simple program, and that's all.
29

30 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, sir. Any comments on the comments?
31 Okay. Seeing none, Dr. Hollensead is going to review the document.
32 I think I would encourage people to pop in, if you have a question,
33 at each stage of the way, and this is not one that we need to wait
34 until the end. I think, you know, if there's a question about a
35 particular item, let's tackle it there, anything to add or anything
36 as we go through the documents. Dr. Hollensead.
37

38 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you for that, Mr. Chair. A couple of people
39 have come up to me and said that they would like to comment on
40 certain things as we go through, and so we're going to go piece-
41 by-piece, so they'll have an opportunity to do that. Bernie, if
42 you wouldn't mind pulling up the document and going straight to
43 the purpose and need, please.
44

45 This purpose and need hasn't largely changed since it was last
46 reviewed, but, just to make sure, you know, dot all the I's and
47 cross the T's here, we'll just go ahead and read this and review.
48

1 The purpose of this amendment is to improve the accuracy,
2 precision, and timeliness of landings in the same units, discards,
3 and fishing effort data from federally-permitted for-hire vessels
4 within the recreational sector for the Gulf reef fish and CMP
5 fisheries and coastal migratory pelagics. Improvements would
6 increase stakeholder trust and buy-in associated with data
7 collection. Another purpose is to collect economic information
8 related to the operational costs and earnings of federally-
9 permitted for-hire vessels participating in the Gulf reef fish and
10 CMP fisheries.

11
12 The need for this action is to improve management and monitoring
13 of the federally-permitted for-hire component of the recreational
14 sector for Gulf reef fish and CMP fisheries to prevent overfishing
15 while, achieving on a continuing basis, the optimum yield. I'll
16 just pause there, in case there's any comments or questions.

17
18 Okay. On to Action 1, please, Bernie. Okay, and so this Action
19 1 is going to specifically establish frequency and mechanism for
20 data reporting for the charter vessels, and so, for the purpose of
21 this document, you're a charter vessel if you have a for-hire
22 permit for reef fish or CMP species and you do not currently
23 participate in the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, and so
24 that's to whom these apply.

25
26 Three alternatives are available. The no action would not
27 establish this program. The council's Preferred Alternative 2
28 would require the owner or operator of a charter vessel or, you
29 know, a headboat, in this case, would be a Coast-Guard-designated
30 headboat, but a headboat that is not participating in the headboat
31 survey. For valid Gulf for-hire reef fish and CMP species to
32 submit trip, catch, and effort information after each trip via
33 electronic reporting via NMFS-approved software.

34
35 So, again, the difference between the Preferred Alternative 2 and
36 the third alternative is for the frequency with which this
37 information would be reported.

38
39 We had heard from our ad hoc AP, and several others, that reporting
40 after each trip helps with, you know, recall. It's easier to
41 remember what you just did than what you may have done in the
42 previous day, or even earlier in the day, especially for those
43 folks that take multi-day trips, and so this would actually help
44 being able to -- With the timeliness of filling out the report,
45 and it was a lot easier to remember what just happened.

46
47 If fish are harvested during the trip, electronic reporting is
48 required prior to offloading fish. If fish did not occur within

1 the weekly period, a did-not-fish report would be required to be
2 submitted, and so that did-not-fish report sort of gets at the
3 non-reporting rate, and so the times when people potentially may
4 go out, catch, and forget to report, but, if you submit a did-not-
5 fish report, it lets you know that that's a true zero, right? You
6 did not go fishing for that week, so that the agency knows not to
7 expect a logbook for you, and it's not that you went out and just
8 forgot, or they have to contact you and double-check, that sort of
9 thing, and so it makes it a lot smoother, and it helps receive the
10 data that comes in, that it's sort of a true you did not fish for
11 that week.

12
13 That sort of reporting rate helps alleviate what was in the
14 program, the VMS, and so that was, right, the hardware attached to
15 your vessel that let you know when you are moving. In this case,
16 going ahead and put in that weekly did-not-fish report sort of
17 alleviates that, again, that reporting requirement. Mr. Chair.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I'm sure I've asked this before, but can you
20 explain again why just simply not reporting doesn't count for not
21 reporting, and you have to say I did not fish when -- It's just
22 unacceptable that you just didn't file, and that counts as a did
23 not fish?

24
25 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Because they wouldn't know for sure if you just
26 meant to, and you forgot, and, in this case, you're saying I
27 definitely did not go. You're a true zero. When you sample,
28 whether or not that was not just something you missed, and it's
29 actually just not there.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** It's scientifically necessary? Because that's
32 the number-one grumble I've been hearing from my guys.

33
34 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Right, and it's like, if you were sampling an
35 area, and let's say I went fishing, and I didn't catch any fish,
36 is it that I'm a cruddy fisherman, or that there's no fish there,
37 and so it's nice to know that there's a true zero, that there are
38 no fish there, or I'm just a cruddy fisherman. You can get right
39 at that.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** That's what I thought. Dr. Banks.

42
43 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** I sat through the public hearing, Lisa, and I
44 think I remember there was a timeframe you could file the did-not-
45 fish report in advance, and can you remind me how long in advance
46 and how many times you can file the did-not-fish report?

47
48 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, and so you can file the did-not-fish report

1 up to ninety days in advance, and so if, for example, you know
2 that your charter season ends at some point, and you move over to
3 hunting, or your boat is going to go into dry dock, you can ahead
4 of time go ahead and put that out, that weekly report, and then
5 just be done with it. You do have a little flexibility there, in
6 terms of when you're reporting that you're not fishing.

7
8 **DR. BANKS:** Have we considered, and I understand the ninety days,
9 but have we considered having maybe something where they do just
10 mark that, hey, I'm not fishing until this month?

11
12 Like, for example, when we pull ours out, we pull it out for over
13 six months. I understand that's just one more time to go in and
14 mark did not fish for ninety days, but is there some kind of form
15 maybe we could implement into this that would be, hey, my season
16 ended, and I'm not fishing until May 1st, and then, March 16, I
17 decided to go fishing, and now I'm overriding my did-not-fish
18 report, but then it's a long-term -- Since it does seem to be maybe
19 a question for some of the fleet having to come in when they've
20 moved out of that brain space?

21
22 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** On the commercial side, you can do months at a
23 time. I know that, but I'm not sure that's the same thing.

24
25 **MS. LEVY:** I'll just note that -- So it's one thing to say it here.
26 It's one thing to have what the software does, right, and so it's
27 my understanding that eTRIPS, the way it's built now, only allows
28 up to ninety days in advance, and so you have to think about what
29 you're saying here, and then what can actually be implemented given
30 the certain software that's available right now.

31
32 Andy can clarify, but we've had these discussions back at the
33 agency, and I think that's at least where the ninety days is coming
34 from here, it's an eTRIPS thing, and to be consistent, right, with
35 the South Atlantic and Gulf and like --

36
37 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Hollensead.

38
39 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay. I've gone through that action, and we could
40 pause here, if anybody has any comments or anything, or other
41 questions, and we can certainly take them here.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Ms. Levy, a question?

44
45 **MS. LEVY:** Well, I know you're going to get to this when you get
46 to the trip notification, right, and so the trip notification is
47 -- It's relevant here, which is why I'm bringing it up, right?
48 The trip notification language now is limited to trips in marine

1 and estuarine waters, right, so that we're not asking for trip
2 notifications for like freshwater trips, right, and so, to be
3 consistent, and it is in the discussion of Action 1, but I'm
4 wondering if, to be upfront about it and to be consistent, right,
5 and we're asking for the trip notification for that, the reporting
6 that is limited to that, right, and like we're asking people to
7 report trips in marine or estuarine waters, and not freshwater
8 trips.

9
10 We're not looking for that, and so it might be helpful to actually
11 add that language to Alternatives 2 and 3, and make it really
12 clear, like it is in the trip notification language, and so, for
13 both Action 1 and Action 2, I would consider doing that.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** To me, it kind of goes without saying. If you're
16 a federally-permitted reef fish boat, you're not going in
17 freshwater, right? I don't know that we need to change any
18 terminology to clarify that, and am I wrong?

19
20 **MS. LEVY:** Well, it's been an issue, right, and so, before, we had
21 anywhere you fish, like anywhere, and apparently there are people
22 that trailer their boats into freshwater lakes, and then we were
23 like the regs say anywhere, and so you've got to report it, and so
24 we're just trying to be really clear that that's not a requirement
25 here, right, and like we're not looking for that. The agency does
26 not want your freshwater lake trip reporting.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I'm fine with that, I suppose. Mr. Anson.

29
30 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** So I guess, relative to that comment, I'm trying
31 to think of any validation procedure that we would implement to
32 complement the mandatory reporting requirement, and so I'm just
33 trying to think of those instances of those vessels that are
34 leaving the dock, and they're going fishing, but they're not going
35 fishing in federal waters. I'm just trying to -- As the comment
36 is made, just a concern I have of mine is how we might be able to
37 link that with a validation process that we might also implement
38 after this is approved.

39
40 **MS. LEVY:** Just to that point, and so it's not federal waters,
41 right? It's marine or estuarine, right, and so, if you look at
42 Action 3, it says now that you only need to notify us of your trip
43 if you're going there, and so then we want the reporting to reflect
44 those trips, right? I just want it to be clear, in Action 1 and
45 2, that we're not saying for each trip, and we're saying for each
46 trip in those waters, but your validation question might be more
47 to Andy.

1 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Andy.

2
3 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Two things, and so, based on Mara's comments, my
4 suggestion is, you know, staff can get with Lisa and team, and we
5 can suggest some modified language by Full Council to address this
6 issue.

7
8 Then I just wanted to comment, because I read the public input,
9 and it talked about the safety concerns with reporting before
10 offloading the fish, and so we're not saying that you have to
11 report while the vessel is moving. You could still come to the
12 dock, right, tie up to the dock, but, once those fish are
13 offloaded, you shall have reported, right, and so I think there
14 was some misunderstanding, maybe by public comment participants,
15 about when you have to report. The key is, once they're removed
16 from the vessel, at the time of offload, they need to be reported.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I think that's a great point. You're right that
19 a lot of people are under the assumption that you have to be
20 bouncing through the inlet and logging it in, and so you can land.
21 You just can't offload. You can count them out of your cooler,
22 and you can log in as you go, and then they can go up on the dock,
23 and so that's -- I appreciate you clarifying that.

24
25 There's some stuff like that in the commercial side too, where you
26 can land at the dock, but you can't take the fish off the boat
27 until a certain time of the day, and so that's a good point, and
28 I agree with your previous point that maybe staff and you all could
29 work to iron out the necessary terminology and that without slowing
30 anything down here, and so I appreciate that. Any more comments?
31 Ms. Levy.

32
33 **MS. LEVY:** Thanks. Just trying to make sure we're clear about
34 certain things, and so one thing that was in the prior program, in
35 the discussion of the reporting requirements, and was also in the
36 codified text, was this idea that, if you have a delinquent report,
37 meaning if you haven't reported a trip, right, that that results
38 in you automatically being prohibited from harvesting or
39 possessing reef fish or CMP until you actually file your report,
40 right, and so you've got to file them.

41
42 If you don't file them, then you can't go fishing until you file
43 it, and it's just an enforcement thing, right, to put it out there
44 that you can't fish if you don't file it, and it was in the
45 discussion of the reporting requirements in the prior program. I
46 didn't see it in the discussion here, and so I think it should be
47 added, so that we're clear, right, that you have to report if you
48 want to keep fishing.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I agree with that as well, and maybe we can add
3 that to the things that you guys and staff can iron in there. I
4 mean, that's another thing that I would assume kind of goes without
5 saying, but I understand that legally it has to be in there, to
6 clarify, and so I'm okay with doing that as well. Can you write
7 that down, please, Lisa?

8
9 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** I'm taking copious notes.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Anyone else on this topic? Seeing none, that
12 might wrap up Action 1 for us, Lisa, or you still have Alternative
13 3 to go over?

14
15 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** We still have Action 2, 3, and 4 to go.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** That's what I meant, but I was going to say --

18
19 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, and I've gone through the alternatives, and
20 so, if there's nothing else on Action 1, we can move into Action
21 2. For Action 2, this action is going to only apply to vessels
22 that are issued a valid federal-for-hire permit for reef fish or
23 Gulf CMP species that do participate in the Southeast Region
24 Headboat Survey, and so these are now the headboats that report to
25 the survey, and so this action pertains to them.

26
27 Largely, this has to do with modifying the frequency and mechanism
28 of data reporting, and so, largely, their program is not going to
29 overall change with this, but the one thing that will -- So, that
30 no action alternative, you know, the headboats would continue
31 operating just as they have been, but Preferred Alternative 2 that
32 the council has put forth is that they would require the owner-
33 operator of that headboat to submit fishing records for each trip.

34
35 Right now, they do it weekly, and so this would change that
36 frequency to each trip. Again, be an electronic reporting software
37 that's approved by NMFS, and, if fish are harvested during the
38 trip, electronic reporting is required prior to offloading fish,
39 and so that's the council's current preferred.

40
41 The nice thing about it is it's consistent with the charter vessel
42 one, and so, if you're a captain that, you know, is responsible
43 for running headboat charters that are in the headboat survey, but
44 then also you bop off and do a six-pack charter, that frequency
45 all stays the same for you, no matter what vessel it is that you're
46 on and running a charter trip out of, or a federal for-hire trip.

47
48 Again, similarly to the previous Alternative 3 was a daily fishing

1 record, but, again, going back to it's easier to recall, you know,
2 what you caught just after your first trip, and rather than, you
3 know, a day or so after, and so this was to help speed up the
4 process with reporting. Mr. Chair, I'll pause there, if there's
5 any questions or comments for Action 2.
6

7 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Any comments from the committee on Action 2? I
8 think that was my interpretation. That was a pretty easy one, and
9 we heard testimony from the headboat guys that they were fine with
10 that, and we had a lot of discussion about it, and I think we're
11 good there. If there's nobody that disagrees, we can move on.
12

13 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to
14 Action 3, and so Action 3 is going to address the trip notification
15 reporting requirements, and so the no action, Alternative 1, would
16 not require any trip notification for permitted reef fish and Gulf
17 CMP species charter/headboat vessels.
18

19 Alternative 2 would require that an owner or operator of a charter
20 vessel or headboat issued a valid charter vessel/headboat federal
21 permit for reef fish or Gulf CMP species submit a trip notification
22 for trips that will be engaged in any type of for-hire fishing or
23 for-hire fishing activity.
24

25 This would -- Anything that there's a paying passenger on there,
26 but it's not necessarily a fishing trip, like sunset cruises and
27 various other things being conducted.
28

29 This is getting at the language that Ms. Levy had just talked about
30 that we can put in for the alternatives, and so you'll notice it
31 says "being conducted in marine or estuarine waters", and so that's
32 there to, again, you know, make it explicit that if, for whatever
33 reason, you know, you have a federal for-hire permit here in the
34 Gulf, and, you know, in the summertime, you trailer your vessel,
35 and you go to a reservoir in eastern Tennessee, that you do not
36 have to adhere to those trip notifications and things like that.
37 That similar language is what we would pull over, and so that's
38 what you can anticipate in the full committee, and so just to make
39 that clear.
40

41 Both of these alternatives -- The difference between Alternative
42 2 and Alternative 3 is Alternative 2 would apply for-hire fishing
43 and for-hire activity for that trip notification, whereas,
44 Preferred Alternative 3, the council's current preferred, is only
45 for for-hire fishing activity.
46

47 Those preferreds would also apply to any of the charter vessels
48 and those headboats that are currently reporting to the Southeast

1 Regional Headboat Program, and so that's the differences
2 throughout there, and I'll pause there for any questions or
3 comments.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Any questions or comments on 2.3? Seeing none.

6
7 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Okay. Bernie, Action 4, please. This Action 4
8 is establishing economic data for charter vessels, and so, again,
9 this applies to just those charter vessels, and so, for the sake
10 of our document, those are Gulf charter vessels or headboats who
11 are permitted for reef fish or CMP species that are not
12 participating in the headboat survey currently.

13
14 The headboat survey currently, they already have their own economic
15 survey that they are doing, and they will continue to do so. These
16 are the charter vessels that are now being folded into the SEFHIER
17 program.

18
19 Okay, and so the no action would be to not require any economic
20 reporting for that group. Alternative 2 would require that the
21 owner or operator of that vessel have to submit economic data as
22 part of the logbook when a vessel has engaged in any type of
23 charter fishing or charter activity, and so that would be after
24 every trip that you do that, and so that was similar to what was
25 done in the previous program.

26
27 The council's Preferred Alternative 3 would require economic
28 reporting, but it would be done as a sampling event, and so,
29 annually, a stratified random sampling design of permitted vessels
30 would be used for selecting vessels that are required for reporting
31 economic data.

32
33 The Southeast Fisheries Science Center would determine the strata
34 based on the previous year's data and minimum sample size, just by
35 strata, and so no more than an anticipated 20 percent of vessels,
36 sufficient for providing scientific and management advice, and so
37 I'll pause there for any questions or comments.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman, and then Mr. Sanchez.

40
41 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and maybe this is directed towards Dr.
42 Walter, but, when you're determining the strata, can you define
43 strata for how this would be structured there in the stratification
44 process? Is it state?

45
46 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** That I can't answer right away. I'll have to
47 get back to you on what the strata would be for the selection
48 process, unless one of our SERO partners have that handy.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Sanchez.

3
4 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I would like to make a request, and, if I
5 need to, I can turn it into a motion. With regard to economic
6 data, I would like to make a request that the Southeast Fisheries
7 Science Center use a sampling without replacement design for the
8 economic survey while sampling 20 percent annually to get a
9 comprehensive sample of the entire fleet every five years.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** What I think you mean is that, once you're drawn,
12 you're out of the pool of random selected, and that's what that
13 means? So then you don't keep getting drawn continually, because
14 that's what you're looking at here, and that's what that's called.

15
16 **MR. SANCHEZ:** That's what I mean. That way, if you're selected in
17 that first 20 percent, then you won't be picked until they cycle
18 through the balance of the fleet. That way, we're getting a wide,
19 comprehensive thing, and it also addresses, you know, undue burden
20 to people who repeatedly get picked, you know, randomly. That
21 avoids that, and so I think it accomplishes both things.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Diagne, did you have a comment on that
24 suggestion?

25
26 **DR. ASSANE DIAGNE:** Yes, and perhaps just a few elements towards
27 Dr. Sweetman's question. In terms of the stratification, yes, I
28 mean, states would be included potentially, but other features may
29 be considered. Vessel size may be, for example, the area fished
30 may be, and the species predominantly caught may be. All of that
31 will depend really on the information that would be collected.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Back to Mr. Burris.

34
35 **MR. RICK BURRIS:** Yes, and, not recalling previous discussions on
36 this, but has this been vetted for, you know, fisheries disaster
37 assistance? Has this level of economic input -- Has that been
38 cleared by those fisheries disaster folks?

39
40 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I would have to defer to Andy. I know we've
41 spent a heck of a lot of time working around this to come to this,
42 and so I would think so, but I can't say for sure. Andy.

43
44 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'm not aware of any vetting. I guess my comment
45 would be having vessel-specific information is going to be better
46 for states providing disaster relief based on allocations to give
47 direct impacts back to those vessels. When you have a 20 percent
48 sampling of the fleet, you're going to have to expand that out,

1 obviously, to get total fleet estimates. You would not then have
2 specific vessel-based estimates, per se, for disaster relief
3 funding at that stage.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman.

6
7 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and, to that point, I mean, just because I'm
8 actively going through a fishery disaster request right now, and,
9 I mean, it's a nightmare trying to get charter-for-hire economic
10 information, in order to get -- Like people aren't holding that
11 information just relatively close, right, and so having even
12 something like this would be better than the current process.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay, and so I personally like your suggestion.
15 I know there's some folks that feel they're getting selected for
16 things like commercial reef observer trips. That's supposed to be
17 somewhat random, and economic reporting for commercial fishing,
18 and I don't know that I've ever not been drawn for that, and
19 sometimes I do feel like maybe it's not exactly random, and so I
20 think that's what you're getting at.

21
22 If we could -- Once you get pulled, you get out of the pool until
23 it comes back around, and then you're in the pool again, and so I
24 support that. Is there any more discussion? Can this be added
25 now, or does that need a motion, or is there more discussion?
26 Andy.

27
28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** One thing I'll bring up, and I think it would be
29 beneficial if John Walter or I could talk to some of the Science
30 Center, would be, if we're going to sample without replacement,
31 there's the potential, depending on that sampling, that you may
32 get better or worse coverage in certain states or smaller
33 geographic areas at certain times, right, and so that could impact
34 things like disaster relief calculations that aren't, obviously,
35 going to happen on a schedule. They're going to be episodic.

36
37 I just want to understand, if we put this in here, what would be
38 the impacts and implications of this, and I hear your concerns
39 about not being selected over and over again, but maybe there's
40 other ways to tackle this if there's problems with saying, well,
41 you're only going to get selected once every five years.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Sanchez.

44
45 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Part of that, besides the burden of being repeatedly
46 randomly selected, was I think that, if we did it with that
47 approach, and correct me if I'm wrong, you would get, over a period
48 of five years, a comprehensive sampling of the entire fleet in the

1 Gulf, rather than maybe just, you know, people that are randomly
2 picked repeatedly.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Ms. Levy.

5
6 **MS. LEVY:** Well, just a little bit of caution, or thought, into
7 how much detail and in the weeds about sampling design, and what's
8 going to be collected, and all that goes into this document,
9 because, once we write it in here, and we go through the whole
10 process, if we're like, oh my gosh, this isn't working, then
11 there's not a lot of flexibility to change it unless we go back
12 through the whole process.

13
14 There's a lot of times where you all want to change something, and
15 do it differently, and it's not easy to do, and so, the finer the
16 details you write down here, and how prescriptive you are as to
17 how the science is going to work, the harder it's going to be to
18 be flexible when things change and you suddenly decide that it's
19 not working the way you thought it was going to work.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** What do you think about this, Captain Frady?

22
23 **MR. TROY FRADY:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. I appreciate your thought
24 about that. You know, having come from, and still part of, and
25 being a charter boat captain, we're all members of a drug
26 consortium, where we're randomly tested. Up to 50 percent of the
27 fleet has to be tested each quarter to do this.

28
29 It would be very simple, because everybody is used to being drug
30 tested on a random sampling, and I think this 20 percent I'm not
31 afraid of, but, just because you get drug tested, randomly drug
32 tested, it doesn't mean they're not going to call you in three
33 months and make you do it again, and so that leaves people from
34 feeling the opportunity that they've beat the system, and they're
35 not going to call me next time, and so I'm okay with the 20 percent
36 of the selection of vessels.

37
38 I just think a random sampling doesn't -- Because you get pulled
39 for a 20 percent sample, and it doesn't make them feel like that
40 they're not going to get called the next time. It should be --
41 They even have tumblers. They have that can tumble people to
42 decide if they have to do it again, and they fuss about it, but
43 that's part of random. If you -- I mean, if you want to sit there
44 and do 20 percent, and just go right down the alphabetical list,
45 you could do that, but the whole purpose of random is to make it
46 fair.

47
48 Even though it doesn't seem fair if you get called for the second

1 time, it's still a better system than sitting there and just, you
2 know, telling everybody that you're going to have to do this every
3 quarter of the year, but a quarterly would be fine, or annually
4 would be fine, because it's only a 20 percent sample.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Sanchez.

7
8 **MR. SANCHEZ:** If there's another way to kind of accomplish the
9 same thing, not being overly burdensome and repeatedly picking the
10 same person, I'm all ears. I mean, it's just a different road to
11 the same destination.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman.

14
15 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I agree. I think we need to think about this a
16 little more. I mean, I can completely understand where you're
17 coming from, John, and, at the same time, I also understand where
18 Andy is coming from relative to that.

19
20 I mean, just as an example, let's say Billy over here, you know,
21 is our expert charter captain for deepwater grouper, and then, all
22 of a sudden, you know, he's like 80 percent of the Gulf, and I'm
23 fictitious, obviously, and Billy would never land that much, but,
24 I mean, let's say it's like 80 percent of the Gulf, right, and
25 then, all of a sudden, now we're excluding him for another four
26 years on top of that. It's like you might be missing out on some
27 key stuff there.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Right, and we all used to get pulled every time,
30 and so, either way, it's a great improvement. I'm onboard with
31 John, but not at the expense of slowing us down. I can live with
32 20 percent over 100 percent. That's an improvement, and, you know,
33 maybe we can tweak it later, if there's issues. Andy.

34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Let us circle back with some additional
36 information between now and Full Council. The other thing is,
37 although there's not a lot of turnover in the fleet, there is going
38 to be some permits that are going to be bought and sold, and some
39 vessels that are going to move around, and so it's not going to be
40 the same 20 percent, right? There's going to be an evolution, and
41 a changing, over that time period, but, with that said, let us get
42 back with regard to kind of the scientific merits of your proposal,
43 John, and we can talk about it further at Full Council.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Very good. I think that's good. Mr. Sanchez.

46
47 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Again, that's not a hill for me to die on, and so
48 I'll wait for your response.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Lisa, the floor is yours.
3

4 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay, Mr. Chair. That concludes going through
5 the document, and so, if there's no other associated with the
6 document, we can move into the next agenda item, but I'll just
7 pause, in case there is.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I see Dr. Banks has her hand up over there.
10

11 **DR. BANKS:** I have a hypothetical question, and I'm getting this
12 looking at Table 1.2.1.3, and so there looks like there's -- In
13 2024, there are sixteen permits that are not currently in the Gulf,
14 and I know that like Andy just pointed out that the fleet is
15 starting to change in my area, who is running and who is not.
16

17 With the did-not-fish reports and the compliance during SEFHIER
18 1.0, it's tied to renewing your permit as part of the enforcement,
19 right? You have to report to get your permit renewed, and what
20 happens to the permits that they're not renewing them because
21 they're not reporting, and they're just done? Does the agency
22 pull those back, and they can go back out for sale? Is it going
23 to artificially shrink the fleet? Like what is the what-if
24 scenario there?
25

26 **MS. LEVY:** Just to clarify, so they're limited access, right, and
27 so you have to renew them within a year of when they expire or
28 they terminate, and so, at some point, somebody has to renew them,
29 and they have to report to do it, or they're lost, but I'm not
30 sure if that answers your question.
31

32 **DR. BANKS:** I think it does, and it's something for us to consider,
33 because a lot of those non-Gulf permits may not be paying
34 attention. Yes, I know we will send a flyer or whatever, but we
35 may shrink this fleet unintentionally, just because they're not
36 going to do a did-not-fish report or whatever, and I'm not
37 suggesting -- I personally think they should sell them and put
38 them back in, but that's just something for us to think about. We
39 might be changing the structure of that fleet unintentionally.
40

41 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I think it's possible that those could be brokers
42 and speculators that are just camping on them, and I would think
43 they would keep up with the did-not-fish report if they're sitting
44 on a \$35,000 investment. I don't know for sure that's what those
45 are, but that would be my assumption. J.D.
46

47 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a question maybe for Andy.
48 Is there any update on funding for this program?

1
2 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks for teeing me up there. I actually was
3 going to comment on that, because it looks like, in the document
4 -- We had worked on some new cost estimates. I don't think they're
5 reflected in the document at this point, but certainly there's
6 considerable costs that come along with implementing the new
7 revised program.

8
9 Right now, the House Appropriations Committee, and I might be
10 getting that wrong, but it's the committee, and not the House
11 itself, has proposed I think up to \$7 million for the program
12 across the Southeast. At this point, that's as far as it's gotten
13 in terms of congressional funding.

14
15 We are allocated, the Fisheries Service, \$3 million annually, of
16 which half of that goes for law enforcement, and the other half
17 goes to support SEFHIER operations, which we're, obviously, using
18 for the South Atlantic as well as amendment development at this
19 time, but, in order to fully implement this program, it's,
20 obviously, going to be upwards of that amount by a good amount,
21 and we are, obviously, optimistic and hopeful about the
22 congressional funding, but that certainly could limit our ability
23 to fully implement the program, depending on what funding comes
24 through.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** All right, and so that's it, Lisa, for that,
27 your part of it? Okay, and so we'll skip the codified text, since
28 we don't have it, and so I think next up is a presentation by Dr.
29 Richard Cody on the MRIP-FES pilot study results. Are you there,
30 Dr. Cody?

31
32 **DR. RICHARD CODY:** Yes, and I'm here.

33
34 **PRESENTATION: MRIP-FES PILOT STUDY RESULTS**

35
36 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Richard, I'll tee you up here a little bit. We
37 had been hoping to get the actual study results by the time the
38 council meeting was happening, but that didn't happen, and so we,
39 I guess, just missed it.

40
41 What Dr. Cody is going to give is sort of a larger overview of
42 some of the timetables and things for the rollout of this. The
43 plan for here in the Gulf is to have him present the pilot study
44 results, once they're completed, to the SSC during their September
45 meeting, so they'll have a chance to review those and report back
46 to the council on that, but any directives, thinking of that
47 upcoming SSC meeting that you would like, you know, either
48 communicate to the SSC or to Dr. Cody in his office, and we wanted

1 to provide the committee an opportunity to do that, and actually
2 speak with him, and so he's here to provide that presentation.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thanks. We'll take what we can get on this one.
5 Dr. Cody, you have the floor, sir.

6
7 **DR. CODY:** All right. Thank you. As Lisa mentioned, we have been
8 coordinating now for several weeks on this, and we knew, at the
9 onset, there was a chance that the rollout plan, or the approval
10 process for release of the final revised estimates, could happen
11 before the council meeting, but it was, you know, most likely to
12 happen the week of the council meeting, and that seems to be the
13 case, where it's on schedule for that.

14
15 I had presentations ready to go that contained information related
16 to several species in the Gulf, and the trends with the effort and
17 the catch data, but, for the purposes of this presentation, I'll
18 just, as Lisa mentioned, try to tee-up some expectations for what
19 to expect, and the timing, and what the review process that, you
20 know, has taken a little while to complete, what it has entailed.

21
22 The review process itself, or I should say the approval process
23 for the release of the final estimates, got a lot of scrutiny
24 within the agency, up to the level of NOAA, and so we started with
25 our first set of briefings with our OST director, and then went to
26 the director of scientific programs.

27
28 We then, on their recommendations, and from NOAA leadership
29 recommendations, and also included some regional partner reviews,
30 on really short notice I have to add, and so, you know, I would
31 like to thank the states, the commissions, and the council for
32 being so receptive on such short notice, and also for providing
33 valuable feedback on those briefings that we gave.

34
35 In those briefings, we gave basically a summary of embargoed trend
36 analysis for the revised time series and some catch details for
37 some of the more high-priority species, and so, right now, we just
38 completed the rest of those reviews and briefings, and so those
39 are completed, and, as it stands, the rollout plan is with DOC,
40 the Department of Commerce, for final approval, and so we're
41 expecting that this week.

42
43 Just to give you a sense of what to expect over the next few days,
44 I think we're -- Let's see, and we're one ahead, Lisa, if you can
45 go back one. There we go, and so the short, I should say, summary
46 of this is that we're expecting the revised time series to be ready
47 as early as the 26th, but no later than the 31st, and my hope is
48 that it will occur this week, on the 26th, which is Wednesday.

1 We've heard that DOC will take about two days to complete their
2 approvals, and so that would give us Wednesday.

3
4 The approval process, as I said, has been pretty thorough. and I
5 would point, again, to the inclusion of our state partners,
6 commission, and council staff in the review. I think this is a
7 new precedent for us. Normally, that kind of information is
8 embargoed until after, and they are notified at the same time we
9 do the final rollout, and so, you know, again, I can't thank people
10 enough for being so receptive to it and then providing input on
11 such short notice.

12
13 Once we complete the release of the revised estimate time series,
14 our attention will turn to the 2026 estimates, and we've gotten
15 quite a few questions from state partners regarding, you know, the
16 status of those, and so, right now, the revised time series itself
17 would run through 2025.

18
19 The 2026 estimates have been put on hold while we completed that
20 process, and so the goal is to go to that as soon as the rollout
21 is completed, and we would expect the first few waves to be
22 released in batch, and so Waves 1 through 3 to be released as a
23 batch, and then later waves to return to their regular schedule
24 for review and publishing, and so that would be on a forty-five-
25 day cycle.

26
27 Then estimates will be revised and back-calibrated to the old FES.
28 That was one of the determinations made by our leadership, is that
29 it would be beneficial to provide back-calibrated estimates,
30 rather than provide them on request, that would make it easier on
31 the council process and for stock assessment purposes.

32
33 Then, following the release of the official estimates, we will try
34 to make ourselves available to the council for more detailed
35 information, presentations on more detailed information related to
36 revised estimates, and also to try to anticipate -- Or try to
37 tackle some of the anticipated questions from about the calibration
38 model that we expect from the SSCs. We'll be working with Lisa,
39 and others at the council, to tailor the list of species that we
40 would present the council and the SSCs to meet their needs.

41
42 As I said, we are rolling out the 2026 estimates also at the same
43 time, and we expect -- As I said, we expect to bundle the first
44 few waves, and what that will do is probably increase the review
45 burden on our partners, and my staff as well, and we're a small
46 shop, and so, you know, there will be -- Probably expected to be
47 a learning process as we go through that review, since it's
48 modified from what we're usually expecting, and we'll be dealing

1 with probably three-times the volume of data, and so we're going
2 to monitor that situation. The goal is, right now, to prioritize
3 based on management needs.

4
5 We're using the SEDAR schedule as basically the first run of
6 identifying the different high-priority species, and so, as we go
7 through the review process for 2026 estimates, we'll be
8 prioritizing first based on the SEDAR schedule, and then also based
9 on state partner requests and others for other species.

10
11 What that means is that, as queries are addressed in the data, you
12 know, that leads to a changing of the weights, sample weights,
13 that go into the final estimates, and so, at this stage, the
14 estimates are considered preliminary, and, as we add more species
15 later on the year, there is a chance that those will change. I
16 doubt seriously they will change too much, because we're
17 identifying most of the high-priority species early on.

18
19 How is this going to impact how we do business over the next few
20 years? One thing to keep in mind is that this calibration model
21 won't really be a simple reflection of the results of the 2024
22 study, and so I have been before the council before where I
23 presented some of the differences between the old FES and the new
24 FES, in terms of how much of a decrease there was in the 2024
25 estimates in the side-by-side study.

26
27 Well, the calibration model itself takes into consideration that
28 we have a ten-year time series of FES available to us, and we also
29 have a thirty-four-plus-year timeline for the CHTS available, and
30 so it's very hard to generalize about what we can expect in terms
31 of trends, but what we've seen so far is that the estimates are
32 more precise.

33
34 They are lower in general, and some of the major spikes that we
35 saw in the trend information have been tamped down a bit, but,
36 again, that depends on a number of different factors, and one I
37 presented on earlier in this year to the council, where I showed
38 that the difference between the old FES estimates and the new FES
39 estimate was more pronounced for private boat mode for the less-
40 active waves, and so Waves 5, 6, 1, and 2, than it was for the
41 busier waves.

42
43 Depending on when most of the catch occurs for certain species,
44 that can impact what the trend information would look like, but,
45 in general, we saw a very consistent reduction in the amount of
46 catch that was attributed to certain species, to all species
47 actually, and so that's basically it.

1 We learned a few lessons from the 2018 calibration, in that, you
2 know, we found that, the more we tried to generalize about the
3 behavior of the calibration model, the more exceptions we ran into,
4 and so we're trying to limit, you know, making any kind of
5 predictions, knowing that there are a lot of other inputs that go
6 into stock assessments, and into management decisions, beyond just
7 the recreational data.

8
9 We will be evaluating that as we go along, and looking for feedback
10 from the councils and the SSCs regarding some of their observations
11 on the trend information that we provide.

12
13 The last bullet on this slide actually is out-of-date since Friday.
14 As I mentioned earlier, we won't be just providing back-calibrated
15 estimates for the old FES on request. We will provide those
16 alongside the new FES for the foreseeable future, as they're used
17 in management.

18
19 Next slide, and I think that's the last one. Yes, and so there's
20 a link here to their website that basically has some additional
21 information, and it will be updated as we get additional
22 information on the rollout, and, again, I apologize for the timing
23 of this. You know, Lisa and I were kind of hedging that we would
24 have the clearance in place to go ahead and present, but that's
25 not the case, but, having said that, you know, we will make
26 ourselves available to provide more detailed information to the
27 council, and the SSCs, and we'll work with them to try and address,
28 you know, specific needs, as they identify them, and so that's all
29 I have.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. I have kind of a general
32 question. It kind of seems like we're not really talking about it
33 yet, but is there a number, an average? Did you find -- Maybe
34 it's oversimplified, but did you find that catch was overstated 15
35 percent, or 20 percent, on average across all the species, or is
36 that information that --

37
38 **DR. CODY:** Yes, and I don't want to come up with a specific number,
39 but I would say that number you just mentioned is within the range
40 for some species, and, even for others, it may be greater than
41 that, and, also, for some parts of the time series, we saw greater
42 differences as well, and we think that that has to do with, you
43 know, improvements that we've made to the calibration model, and
44 it looks more realistic overall.

45
46 If you recall with the original FES, we had sort of a large dome,
47 where the CHTS had, you know, reached its peak, in terms of its
48 ability to get viable effort information, and then was on a

1 decline, and so, in compensating for that decline, I think the
2 previous model -- I don't think it did as good a job as this one
3 in producing a more realistic series, but I think, overall, your
4 numbers are in the ballpark.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Dr. Allen has a question.

7
8 **DR. CODY:** Sure.

9
10 **DR. MIKE ALLEN:** Hi, Rich, and thanks for this information today,
11 and so did I understand this correctly, that the revised, the
12 latest estimates, are going to be used in the assessments that are
13 ongoing now, the 2026 red snapper, king mackerel, et cetera, and
14 so those revised -- The numbers that you come out with will be run
15 through those assessments, and is that right?

16
17 **DR. CODY:** Well, yes, and I'm not sure now that they will be --
18 You know, if assessments are ongoing, and I'm not sure what the
19 status is, but they will be available for use, you know, as soon
20 as, you know, the end of this week, and so, you know, I'll leave
21 it to the assessment folks to make determinations on what their
22 plans are. I know for instance, with red snapper, there were two
23 listed on the SEDAR, one for 2026 and one for 2028, and so, you
24 know, there may be a difference there, but I don't want to, you
25 know, overstep my role here. We'll be there to support whatever
26 the assessment needs are.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Walter has a question.

29
30 **DR. WALTER:** Yes, and I can speak to that specifically, and so,
31 for the ongoing SEDAR 98 red snapper assessment, it has a review
32 workshop in September, and so we are going to complete the modeling
33 without the new MRIP-FES because we have to get that report, and
34 those models, completed for the review.

35
36 Then, after the review, we will use the new numbers, input them,
37 replace the old with the new, include any state adjustments that
38 might need to be done, and rerun the assessment under the
39 expectation that the CIE can review the recipe for the assessment
40 model, but doesn't need all of the ingredients, because they're
41 not right now available.

42
43 Then the SSC will get that assessment with the new MRIP-FES for
44 ABC advice, and so that is the only way we can get things before
45 the CIE to review in time, since we have to get that report out,
46 and we're following the same process for the South Atlantic, if
47 people are paying attention to that. Thanks.

1 **DR. ALLEN:** Just to follow up to that, that makes sense to me,
2 John. I mean, ideally, we would have them ahead of time, of
3 course, but, if the estimates are say 15 percent lower than what
4 they've been historically, that's going to rescale the model, and
5 I don't think that prevents the assessment from going through
6 review, and all of that process, but, if the revised ones are in
7 there for the SSC review, I think that's good. Thank you.

8
9 **DR. WALTER:** A follow-up, and we do have two sensitivity runs in
10 that model of a 22 percent and 40 percent reduction, which sort of
11 bookend the expected result of that, so that the CIE reviewers
12 will see something that has the flavor of probably what will
13 eventually come when we input the actual numbers. Thanks.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Any more questions for Dr. Cody on the FES pilot
16 study? Seeing none -- Carrie.

17
18 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I
19 was just giving my council an opportunity first, and so, Dr. Cody,
20 can you -- We certainly can work with you on this, but what are
21 you really envisioning the SSCs to help with? Are you envisioning
22 you're going to get the final results, and we're going to go
23 through --

24
25 Like say for example gray triggerfish. We just did the review,
26 where they've calibrated all the recreational landings, even the
27 western Gulf's recreational landings, all the way back in time to
28 MRIP-FES. When we get those new estimates, we're going to put
29 those in, after the SSC reviews them, and rerun the model, or what
30 are we asking the SSC to do with this information?

31
32 **DR. CODY:** Well, you know, this is what we're going to be using
33 going forward for the FES, and so, I mean, our goal is really just
34 to put out the revised time series, to get as much data in the
35 hands, and answer any questions that any of the data users would
36 have regarding formats of variables and so on, which should be in
37 line with what they're used to.

38
39 You know, we're just looking for feedback, any kind of input you
40 have, observations that you -- That the SSC might have regarding
41 their evaluations of trend information that they want us to look
42 into, and so we're just trying to really just reach out, to make
43 sure that, you know, people have what they need for their analysis,
44 and so I don't have a specific request from the SSC, other than to
45 let us know if you see something that you think is a concern.

46
47 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you for that, and so are you
48 anticipating that, each year, kind of like what we did the first

1 time, like 2018, for example, there will be the old MRIP-FES, of
2 what we currently are monitoring under, and the new estimates, but
3 that could be different, a different percentage, applied here, and
4 then that would be up for discussion. Is that what you're saying,
5 or are you saying it's going to be across-the-board back in time?
6

7 **DR. CODY:** No, and I think the trend information aligns very well
8 for most of the time series. There's an earlier part, from about
9 2000 to 2010, where the alignment is a little bit off, but I think,
10 overall, it matches pretty well, and I think it's more realistic,
11 in terms of what you would expect the trend to look like for
12 effort.
13

14 As far as the catch is concerned, I mean, all we're trying to do
15 is make sure that the data are there, the estimates are there, so
16 that, if back-calibrated information is needed, it's there,
17 whether it's the CHTS, the old FES, or the current FES, and so
18 that's basically it.
19

20 It's just basically to tell people what to expect, and, if they
21 have any feedback, we would be happy to take it, and so, you know,
22 I'm not trying to influence anything that's currently ongoing with,
23 you know, any of the assessment processes, but we will be available
24 for the data workshops and to answer questions regarding the new
25 data.
26

27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay, Dr. Cody, and I guess a final
28 request for you and the Science Center and the Regional Office. I
29 think that, as soon as this comes out, we need to have a call and
30 really understand what's going to be available for the SSC, how
31 much time is going to be needed, and if we want to, for example,
32 take gray triggerfish first, and, you know, what are we asking the
33 SSC to do? How many different iterations are we asking them to
34 look at, because I don't -- Without seeing the report, I think
35 it's very difficult to understand what we're asking folks to do
36 here.
37

38 **DR. CODY:** Yes, and I mean -- Thanks, Carrie. I mean, I think
39 we're probably -- It's probably best that we have that discussion,
40 because I'm not sure we're on the same page here. I mean, my
41 concern is really to get the estimates out, and make sure that
42 they're in the hands that need them.
43

44 You know, other than that, I don't have any expectations from the
45 SSCs. Basically, it's, whatever support they need from us, we're
46 hoping we're able to give it, and that's all, and, you know, I'll
47 defer to John and others at the Science Center regarding, you know,
48 stock assessments and, you know, related work.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** So they're handing you this, and you can do with
3 it as you please, is what it sounds like. Dr. Walter.

4
5 **DR. WALTER:** This is one of those great relay races, where, as soon
6 as S&T finishes, then the rest of the relay starts, and, as Carrie
7 well noted, that is when the rest of us pick up the baton and say,
8 okay, what do we do with this, and so, yes, I think we'll need to
9 be -- We've been anticipating this for a long time.

10
11 We've outlined a plan in the SEDAR Steering Committee for the
12 updated assessments to replace the old MRIP-FES with new MRIP-FES,
13 and we'll have to see how that plays out, I think, in terms of
14 whether that smoothly integrates into the assessments, and it
15 provides advice that's what we expected, or whether that
16 substantively changes the assessment results, meaning that we have
17 to do more triage, and so I think that's probably what we'll see
18 as we move along integrating these.

19
20 I did outline the plan for red snapper, and so that we will then
21 get the new MRIP-FES incorporated, but, for the other stocks, we'll
22 have to play it as it comes out, and see what those impacts are.

23
24 I do want to thank the S&T staff for giving a lot of the partners
25 the early look at things, and being transparent with the process.
26 I know it's been a bit delayed. We haven't seen all the results.
27 We hope to anticipate them, but I think it has at least allowed us
28 to start thinking about this process as we move forward. Thanks.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I have Dr. Allen, and then Dr. Sweetman.

31
32 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and just one follow-up, Dr. Walter. I think I
33 would make a request that, when it goes to the CIE reviewers for
34 the red snapper assessment, that that sensitivity run that's a 22
35 percent reduction that you mentioned, that that's at least
36 identified to them as being more closely approximate to the revised
37 recreational landings estimate, so that they know what they're
38 looking at, rather than just another sensitivity run, and, you
39 know, that it's in the ballpark of what they can expect. I think
40 that would be good.

41
42 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I'm afraid to ask this question, but is this going
43 to force us to revisit every single allocation scenario with these
44 fisheries here with this new data?

45
46 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Walter.

47
48 **DR. WALTER:** Allocations are a council decision, and whether it is

1 -- That is in your hands. In theory, it could, because of the way
2 -- My understanding of the allocation review process, but I would
3 reflect on people who might have better experience with that.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** It looks like Andy has a comment, and then John,
6 if necessary.
7

8 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and we've been kind of holding off on
9 addressing some species that have long been in need of revisiting
10 the ACL, and so we have a whole combination of monitoring right
11 now that involves different units of MRIP, and even going back to
12 MRFSS in some cases, right, and so, in addition to allocation, at
13 some point, we need to kind of dust off and update the catch limits
14 for a variety of species, but then, in line with that, we also
15 have the potential to look at species in need a conservation and
16 management and whether or not we're going to be making any
17 modifications to the list of species that need conservation.
18

19 My suggestion to that kind of all-encompassing is we'll need an
20 amendment at some point in time, but let the process for some of
21 these key stocks and species that we're managing get updated first
22 and foremost. We'll continue to monitor based on back-calculated
23 estimates, but, at some point, we do need to update those, and
24 look at those allocations.
25

26 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Is that what you were going to say, John?
27

28 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** So you probably know, but there is a
29 presentation scheduled for tomorrow on the specification decision,
30 and just we're going to go through that and try to lay it out,
31 where we see the challenges.
32

33 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Great. Any more comments here about the
34 FES pilot study? Okay. Dr. Cody. Thank you very much for your
35 input. I always appreciate it.
36

37 **DR. CODY:** Thank you, Ed.
38

39 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Unless anybody else has any Other Business, I
40 think that's about it for Data Collection Committee. Seeing none,
41 back to you, Mr. Chair.
42

43 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on August 24, 2026.)
44

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