GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES/ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Marriott Beachside                              Key West, Florida

June 25, 2014

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The Sustainable Fisheries/Ecosystem Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at the Marriott Beachside, Key West, Florida, Wednesday afternoon, June 25, 2014, and was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Chairman Johnny Greene.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

CHAIRMAN JOHNNY GREENE: I would like to call the Sustainable Fisheries/Ecosystem Management Committee together. Mr. Robinson is here and Ms. Bosarge and Jason Brand and Mr. Diaz and Harlon and Patrick and John Sanchez and Roy Williams are all present.
Moving adoption of the agenda, are there any changes, additions, or deletions? It’s been moved to adopt and do I hear a second? All right. Approval of the Minutes, any changes or additions there? Is there a move to adopt? Do I hear a second? We have a second. All right.

Action Guide and Next Steps is Tab E, Number 3. It’s pretty straightforward and extremely useful to me and so I appreciate that. With that, we will go into Item Number IV, which is Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Assessment Status Report Presentation, which will be Tab E, Number 4. Mr. Schirripa, if you’re ready.

GOM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT STATUS REPORT
REPORT PRESENTATION

DR. MIKE SCHIRRIPA: Thank you, Chair. What I want to talk to you about this afternoon is the progress and the vision so far for the Gulf of Mexico Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Program and specifically, what I would like to talk with you about is how the IEA program has made efforts to address and work with the council agenda in trying to provide some tools and guidance relative to the council’s management objectives.

I am going to start with a very brief introduction. NOAA’s IEA program is not specific to the Gulf of Mexico and in fact, every large marine ecosystem in the United States has an IEA program, all the way from Hawaii and Alaska and the Pacific Northwest and the Northeast and so on.

The Southeast is concerned mostly with the Gulf of Mexico and we also would be in charge of the South Atlantic as well as the Caribbean, but given the funding for the IEA and the lack of maturity, we are focusing on the Gulf of Mexico for right now and, in fact, for the next three years, you will see that we’re going to be focusing on the west shelf of Florida.

This is a NOAA-wide program and as a NOAA-wide program, one of the directives was that we work together across NOAA line offices. This was made very clear right from the beginning and large, ambitious goals usually require that people work together.

We are working not only across NOAA line offices, but we are also working with universities, the University of South Florida University of Miami, University of Florida Northern Gulf Institute, Sea Grant, and so on. This is a very large effort drawing upon motivated people from each of these different groups to try to come together with their various expertise in a
multidisciplinary fashion to try to create this IEA program.

On March 28, 2013, at the Standing and Ecosystem SSC meeting, two recommendations were passed. The first recommendation was passed by a vote of eighteen to zero that the Standing and Ecosystem SSCs recommend that the Gulf of Mexico IEA program work with state academic partners and continue to work with the Gulf Standing and Ecosystem SSCs to expand the integration of ecosystem components into the assessment and management of the fishery resources in the Gulf of Mexico. This is exactly what we’ve been trying to do for the past year.

The second recommendation, also passed by eighteen to zero, was that the IEA program develop products that integrate ecosystem analysis into the SEDAR stock assessments and so one of the things I would like to include in this talk for you today is some of the products that the Gulf IEA program has developed in addressing these issues.

The Gulf Council is not a stranger to the ecosystem management issues. I am sure that some of the members that are here right now remember ten or fifteen years ago when this was taken on before. The difference this time is I think we have a little more momentum and I think we have a little more impetus. We have more cooperation across groups.

We also have the potential for changes in the Magnuson Act that are going on right now that may require that the councils take a little bit more of a careful look at ecosystem considerations. They may be asked to develop fishery ecosystem plans that describe ecosystem conservation goals and objectives for multiple fisheries, include ecosystem-level optimum yield that takes into consideration the ecosystem, and identify indicators to measure the achievement of ecosystem conservation goals.

These are really what’s going to be the focus of this talk. You are going to hear me say over and over again management goals and objectives. Before the IEA can do anything for the council, the council has to help us identify what the management goals would be of a fisheries ecosystem plan in the Gulf of Mexico and we are willing to help the council do that and work with you on that.

Now, many regions already have defined ecosystem objectives, many in the United States and some internationally. The Pacific Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan from the Pacific Northwest is one example and the North Atlantic, the North Sea in the Atlantic, also is an example and the Hawaiian Islands, Antarctica, and,
finally, the Aleutian Islands. This is not a new idea and this
is not necessarily groundbreaking from a nationwide view, nor is
it groundbreaking from an international point of view.

This is a movement, if you will, that is gaining momentum and
the utilities and the benefits of this type of approach are
being appreciated around the world.

The first example I want to -- What I want to do is I want to
introduce to you some possible management objectives that the
council may want to consider as some ideas. It’s difficult. We
know it’s difficult to come up with ecosystem management
objectives.

We have them for single species assessments and it’s really
pretty easy. It’s not to be overfishing and not to be
overfished and we have benchmarks for those and we have
indicators that tell us where we are relative to those
benchmarks. What we need is some guiding principles, from an
ecosystem point of view, to give us something along those same
lines.

What I would like to show you here is an example from a couple
of these that might be a good first step to defining management
goals and objectives. For instance, the Western Pacific
Regional Fishery Management Council, their FEP is for the
Hawaiian Archipelago and one of their objectives is very simple.
It’s to provide flexible and adaptive management systems that
can rapidly address new scientific information and changes in
environmental conditions.

Now, how might we in the Gulf of Mexico use that or how might
the IEA program be able to help formulate a Gulf of Mexico
version of this?

Just a few weeks ago at the Standing and Ecosystem SSC meeting
in Miami, the SSC recommended that the Gulf of Mexico IEA
program work with the Gulf Standing and Ecosystem SSCs to
evaluate the current red grouper harvest control rule to
determine if it is robust to possible future changes in
intensity and frequency of episodic events and non-fishing
mortality.

To the best of my knowledge, the P* harvest control rule has
never been simulation tested yet and so, consequently, it has
never been simulation tested to ask will it bring us the
management goals and objectives that we seek in the event of
things like more frequent red tides and possible spillage of
petroleum products and things of that nature? Is it robust enough to those?

That was one of the things we recommended and also recommended was that the Gulf of Mexico IEA work with the Standing and Ecosystem SSCs to investigate the human dimension of long-term ecological implications to the current shallow-water grouper harvest control rule and various catch limits.

What we’re trying to do here is we’re trying to couple our direction in the Gulf with an example of an objective, as shown before, and so what we’re proposing to do and what we are actually underway of doing is doing a management strategy evaluation for red grouper and asking should red tides occur more frequently and more intensely than they have or should spikes in natural mortality, for whatever reason, is the P* harvest control rule doing its job in that regard?

One of our number one goals in our three-year plan is to test the P* harvest control rule with a single species model of red grouper and test for the efficacy of this rule to make sure that it is robust to these changes.

The second management objective example that I would like to discuss then is that of the North Sea and their fisheries ecosystem plan. Their objective is to sustain robust marine food webs to ensure long-term abundance of all species.

I refer you to the ecosystem status report that we recently published, which has a collection of ecosystem indicators. With the objective of to sustain robust and marine food webs, the ecosystem status report gives us examples of what we might use for indicators.

In this case, it is the trophic level of the catch. Trophic level is an indicator of how robust the marine food webs are and so we have these indicators and you can think of these indicators much like you might a graph of spawning potential ratio, of SPR. You are concerned about the direction and you are concerned about the magnitude of it.

If we did adopt this objective of sustained robust marine food webs, we could use things like the ecosystem status report to give us a position of where we are now relative to where we might want to be or simply the direction of these indicators. If we don’t know exactly where we want to be, simply knowing that an indicator is declining might be objective enough to stop the decline in certain indicators or stop the increase in the
indicator, depending on what it’s indicating.

The third example is from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, from the Aleutian Islands FEP. Their objective is to account for uncertainty in ecosystem factors when setting harvest levels.

We actually have already conducted things of this nature with the gag grouper assessment and we intend on doing the same thing with the red. The objective then would be to account for ecosystem in setting harvest levels and we did this by -- Rather than maintaining a constant natural mortality like we always have in most of our assessments, for the gag we actually changed the natural mortality for gag. We let it change year-by-year according to a red tide index.

It improved the model fit very much and we all saw a big decrease in CPUE in 2004 that was unaccountable for by any other means, but when we put the red tide index in there, we could address -- We actually got a much better model fit. The model now had a means to account for this big decline rather than fishing mortality.

We all know that natural mortality affects a lot of the shallow-water grouper complex, but by allowing natural mortality to vary year to year with an index, such as red tide, we are accounting for the ecosystem in setting our harvest levels.

The next example I want to introduce is the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources and their ecosystem monitoring plan. An example of an objective the Gulf Council might consider adopting would be to preserve sufficient prey population to sustain healthy predator populations, including cetaceans and finfish.

Most of the fish that we manage in the Gulf of Mexico are predators, but rarely do we consider managing the prey items as well and so one example might be menhaden. The objective could be to preserve a sufficient prey population and with the tools that we have at hand, such as Ecopath with Ecosim, we could then discover and investigate how the menhaden fishery is impacting some of the larger predator species that use the menhaden as a forage base and so another example objective could be to preserve sufficient prey populations.

Mind you, these are very broad objectives, as they should be at this point. The idea would be to start broad and then eventually work our way down into more and more precise
technical guidance on what exactly these objectives are.

The next objective example would be from the Pacific Fishery Management Council and their objective is to improve assessments on how fisheries affect and are affected by the present and potential and future states of the marine ecosystems.

An example of this is what we tried to do for red snapper. What I am showing you up here is assessing the impact of future impact ecosystem status and the map on the left is a map of the projected larval dispersal of red snapper, based on oceanography.

By knowing the state of the ocean and by knowing the current rate and speed near real time, which we can do now, we can address issues of what might this year or last year’s recruitment of red snapper be before they enter the fishery.

Instead of trying to pick the most recent recruitments off a stock recruitment curve or average survivorship or stuff, we can actually use these ecosystem tools to drop these simulated eggs right where we know red grouper spawn and let the currents take them and we can discover things. How many end up in Mexico or how many end up going around Florida and into the South Atlantic? Could we expect a good recruitment year, if they’re being evicted onshore into good habitat, or could we expect a bad year, if they’re being evicted offshore?

We did this with red snapper and, again, we found a very nice correlation between some strong year classes and what looked to be favorable oceanographic conditions and so this is one more way that we can bring ecosystem indicators into our stock assessments to help improve our forecasting and our precision about the forecasts in the future.

What I want to try to get across to you then is the steps that we need to take to do this are very simple actually. The fisheries management body sets the ecosystem objectives and that would be the Gulf Council.

We need to start with where we want to be. For the analogy in single species assessments, we don’t want to be overfished and we don’t want to be prosecuting in an overfishing manner. Those are our objectives.

We need something similar for the ecosystem, so we can work toward those goals. If we go down the box, the appropriate tool chosen or developed and what I want to get across here is we
Tab E, No. 2

don’t come up with a bunch of tools and ask what we can do with them. The main focus of this entire talk for you today is to realize that we have to come up with our management goals and objectives first and we will build the tools.

We will build the tools necessary to address these management objectives, but it is reverse engineering to think that we can just develop a bunch of tools and throw them in the middle of the room and say now what can we do with these? That is not the approach that we’re advocating.

Management objectives and goals come first. We design and build the tools around that and we give the advice to meet those stated management objectives and goals.

Also, last week, at the Biltmore, by unanimous vote, the SSC recommended that the council ask the Ecosystem SSC, in cooperation with the Standing SSC, to develop a set of suggested goals and objectives of an ecosystem-based fisheries management plan complete with measurable targets.

Now, we know that sounds like a tall order, but this is not a document we would expect to be produced overnight, nor is it a document that would have a defined beginning and end. This obviously would be an evolution and a document that would need tweaking and rebuilding from time to time.

What I want to go through now is three slides to show you our basic three steps that we want to do for our three-year plan and how we’re trying to evolve from the way we’re doing business now to introducing ecosystem considerations into our single species assessments.

Step two is trying to gain efficiencies, and I want to emphasize this, but trying to gain efficiencies in our assessment process by doing multispecies approaches and then, finally, graduating to a true IEA, where all ecosystem services are captured in the assessment.

Number one, Tier 1 ecosystem products are designed to specifically support single species assessment efforts by bringing ecosystem considerations and this is what we’re doing right now by bringing in the red tide and by bringing in our CMS model into larval projections and sea surface temperature and things like that.

We are trying to increase the precision of our answers that we give you. We are trying to improve the assessments by realizing
that there is more than just the fishery operating on the fish. There is the environment as well.

Our goal towards this first step then would be to use a management strategy evaluation to ask if the current harvest control rule, P*, is robust to more frequent and/or more intense episodic events that could affect natural mortality, such as red tide. We are going to be trying to present that with the red grouper assessment for SEDAR-42.

Tier 2 products are going to be let’s take what we did with red grouper and let’s ask, does P*, the way it’s operating right now, is it effective for the shallow-water grouper complex as a whole? What we want to do is -- We have red grouper up here, but we also have gag and black grouper and scamp and the rest of the shallow-water grouper complex.

Right now, the P* is very much focused on only the three species, the black, the gag, and the red. The rest of the ABC is really based on historic landings and so by bringing all these species into the shallow-water grouper complex on a backdrop of the forage fish, the menhaden, the sardines, the anchovies and so on, is the P* still effective in the shallow-water grouper complex?

How can we best utilize this complex and, most importantly, can we assess these as a whole, as a complex, so we don’t have to keep doing single species assessments for each of these three or four over and over again and keep running in a cycle. Maybe we can be doing this simultaneously, at the same time, and bring in any ecosystem considerations.

We are working not only on a management strategy evaluation, but we’re also going to be working on a model-free harvest control rule that simply asks if the catch rates are going up in these species, perhaps we can adjust TAC based on the slope of the CPUEs.

If they’re flat, the TAC stays the same and if they’re increasing, we simulate and discover a formula about how much we can raise TAC based on how much the CPUEs are going up and if the CPUEs are going down, we develop a formula, based on the slope of the last three years, that suggests how much we would have to reduce catch.

We really need to think about efficiencies here. We don’t need to do ecosystem management instead of single species or instead of assessments. We can bring them together.
Finally then, for year three, if everything goes well, we are going to try to move to our Tier 3 management strategy evaluations, which takes into account not only the fisheries as a whole and not only the reefs, but also things like oysters and marine mammals and hurricane preparedness and energy exploration in the Gulf as well, as examples.

What these MSEs will tell us -- We won’t be telling the council how to manage, but we will take our models, our Atlantis-type models and our ecosystem-type models, and say that in, for instance, this blue ecosystem-based fisheries management plan, if you implement Plan A, you might benefit reefs and oysters, but you might not be doing so much for mammals or the oil industry.

On the other hand, Management Scenario B, the red one, might do great for mammals and hurricane preparedness and oil, but it might not do much for these and so the definition of a management strategy evaluation is assessing the consequences of a range of management options and making obvious the tradeoffs in performance across the range of management objectives.

Finally, I want to reiterate that the IEA is not a field of dreams. We do not envision this as we are going to build it and hope that you come. We want the Gulf Council there at the very, very beginning, the SSC and the advisory panels.

We need to know what the goals and objectives are before we can continue with this IEA. Otherwise, there’s just too many -- it’s not going to work. It’s not going to work unless we start with the goals and objectives first.

I was prepared to tell you what I think, the group thinks, about what we think would be a next practical step in defining the goals and objectives and I think a very practical step that I would like to leave you with is to form a multidisciplinary group of different people from the various advisory panels, a couple of people from the Socioeconomic Advisory Panel, a couple of people from Ecosystem, a couple of people from Standing, the different species ones, and council members and come together in a multi-advisory panel group and start either using these examples that we’ve given them, but start coming up with what everybody, all of the people involved, think are reasonable ecosystem management goals and objectives that we can start working toward and, at the same time, use these to maybe start thinking about a fisheries ecosystem plan for the Gulf of Mexico. Thank you.
CHAIRMAN GREENE: Thank you, Mr. Schirripa. Any questions?

MR. ROY WILLIAMS: Mike, that’s a nice presentation and I will tell you, I think the brain surgeons and rocket scientists and particle physicists have it easy compared to what you guys work on.

You are creating such complex models and trying to integrate those things and get answers and I don’t really understand how you get the statistics out of it to see how a red tide is affecting red grouper recruitment or gag grouper recruitment. It must -- I guess you just stick numbers in there and start trying things until you find something that works, but the models are really complex and I don’t envy you, but I’m glad you guys are doing and I’m glad you didn’t present it in a way that was so complicated that we couldn’t understand it at all.

MR. CORKY PERRET: Again, like Mr. Williams said, thank you for your presentation and it’s an indeed complex issue. About ten years ago, I attended I think it was the first NOAA whatever it was called, but workshop in Charleston, South Carolina relative to ecosystem modeling.

In two days, all the brainpower in the room couldn’t decide on what was an ecosystem, but at least you’re talking Gulf of Mexico and that’s good. My question is or my comment is, in my experience, factors beyond the geography of the Gulf of Mexico play extremely important parts in what is happening in the Gulf and that’s the Mississippi River and the dead zone is a very good example. My question is ecosystem of the Gulf of Mexico, would that also include the drainage basins from the land area?

DR. SCHIRRIPA: Absolutely. Absolutely. One of the projects that we’re eyeing right now -- Again, I don’t mean to keep beating this into the ground, but we do have limited resources, but one of the ideas that we think could make our West Florida Shelf IEA less fish centric is the oyster beds off of Apalachicola Bay and the drainage that affects those.

We are in contact with a colleague who actually has a model for oysters and if we have a model in place that has freshwater input, we are way ahead of the game. Yes, is the answer to your question.

MR. PERRET: Well, I think one of the next major battles is going to be the freshwater wars. I think there is already some lawsuit between Florida and Georgia is taking all the water for
Atlanta, or trying to, and those sorts of things. We, the experts, may develop the greatest plan in the world and we’re going to follow it, but when human growth reaches a point, like Atlanta, for example, that may change the whole drainage thing, unfortunately, and I think it will be really important that we can say, wait a minute, guys, yes, your human population growth is such and such, but, look, you’re impacting the entire system and the oysters are worth this and the fishery is worth this and so on and so forth.

I think as much as we can document not only the ecological importance of the Gulf of Mexico, but the economic importance, because, hey, let’s face it. The dollars are what drives things, in most cases, I guess.

DR. SCHIRRIPA: On that note, the three steps that I laid out, those last three slides, single species, shallow-water grouper — When we get to that full IEA, that is where that challenge really comes into play, because we’re not just dealing with the Gulf Council now and we’re not just dealing with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, but we’re dealing now with a true ecosystem-based, where the management of what we’re trying to do is out of the reach of the people in this room necessarily.

Thankfully, the governor appoints the councils and so we could still go back to the governors in that nature when we get to that point and yes, it’s going to be a challenge at that point.

DR. BOB SHIPP: Hi, Mike. Welcome back to the Gulf Council. I guess this is kind of a rhetorical question/comment, but in a paradoxical way, it seems to me that this couldn’t have come at a better time.

You mentioned limited resources, but since the spill, there are literally hundreds of millions of dollars going into ecosystem-based resource and the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative and NRDA and the RESTORE, all of those things.

I guess the reason my question is rhetorical is because I know the answer, that you guys certainly are going to coordinate with some of these groups to maximize both the goals and objectives as well as the funding sources.

DR. SCHIRRIPA: Two-part answer on that, Bob, and thank you for welcoming me back. It’s nice to see you again as well. One of the things that may not be as strong -- Are these groups cooperating? Are they taking a unified approach or are they doing single studies, one over here and one over, or are they
doing a whole unified type of study?

I think one advantage we have in the IEA is we are trying to take a holistic approach and design studies that complement other studies within the IEA and not just ask single questions unrelated to other ones and I’m not accusing anybody of doing that at all. I am just saying that I don’t know where the -- I think we might have an advantage, because we are trying this unified approach, where everything should fit into an overall picture.

The other thing is I am hoping that by the time our three-year plan is done that -- Because right now, there is a lot of money that we as NOAA and NMFS employees can’t utilize right now. I am hoping that at the end of this three-year study, this three-year initial IEA, that we will be in a position to where we will be one of the few groups that is taking this fully unified approach.

Our model is going to be built and we could show success from our three years in this and really be a standout bunch, to say if anybody deserves this extra funding, it would be this group over here, because look what they’ve produced in the past three years and look at this holistic approach that they’ve taken, I hope.

MR. GLENN CONSTANT: Along those lines, the Department of Interior, USGS, and Fish and Wildlife Service, have developed this kind of integrated ecosystem assessment before the oil spill, but certainly those resources that Dr. Shipp mentioned are going to come into play in the next three or four years or so, but climate science centers and landscape conservation and cooperatives, have you guys been engaged with those efforts, which are much more aligned with the kind of integrated approach that you’ve taken?

DR. SCHIRRIPA: More along the lines of estuaries and wetlands and things of that nature. Getting way up into the terrestrial stuff, time and resources and people have not allowed us to go that far. About as far as we’ve been able to go are the estuaries and marshes and stuff and even that -- The Northern Gulf Institute we’re working closely with and they’ve actually done work in various bays and so we’re trying to get -- We are working with them as one example, but -- We’ve also been involved a little bit with the Open Ocean people too and there’s just so much to do.

MR. CONSTANT: I appreciate that and I think what you mentioned
earlier about having the oyster model as being a great benefit. If there’s something built already, that can be a great asset and I think part of what they’re doing in those cooperatives and in the climate science centers are seeking the development of those kinds of things and so I think it could be beneficial and I understand tying things together right now is a very time-consuming endeavor, but maybe tomorrow when we hear about the RESTORE Act stuff, there might be a better connection. I think in the process of developing the science behind how to invest these resources that there probably is.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. Anybody else?

MR. DALE DIAZ: Thank you for coming and I appreciate your presentation. I am just trying to think through on a timeline. If everything went forward and you all was able to be productive, what kind of timeline do you think we would be on in the Gulf of Mexico to have an ecosystem model that could produce results that would be useful for management at this point?

DR. SCHIRRIPA: Our three-year plan is designed on the Florida west shelf. However, we are already talking about how we are going to the next plan is going to expand to the entire eastern Gulf and then around the entire Gulf. It all depends on how much money S&T and NMFS is going to give us or everybody -- How much money they get for IEA and that’s a big driving force.

The good news is that one of our colleagues, Cam Ainsworth, has a Gulf of Mexico Atlantis model, the entire Gulf of Mexico, and he started this about two years ago. I am on the committee of several of his students and that model is coming together nicely.

Because we are so spread out and have so many colleagues with us, it’s not all on us. Our colleagues are doing this as well and so we actually -- I think Cam has about three or four students working on this model and I just got an email this morning saying that people are going to start looking at management strategy evaluations very soon with that model and so progress is being made on an entire Gulf Atlantis model, which is, as you probably know, probably the most sophisticated modeling platform for ecosystems right now, because it includes human dimensions and because it includes runoff and because it includes the fishing industry and employment and things of that nature.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Anybody else? Any more questions? Thank you, sir. We’re going to move on into the next agenda item, which
MR. WILLIAMS: Before we go, he did have some recommendations that came out of the SSC and I think we ought to at least consider what those recommendations were and possibly offer some motions.

MR. STEVEN ATRAN: The next agenda item is to go over the SSC Recommendations and, Dr. Schirripa, what happened -- The SSC had a three-day meeting and the first half-day was for the Ecosystem SSC and the Standing SSC to meet and get the presentations from Dr. Schirripa and his colleagues and develop some recommendations and three of the committee recommendations, the SSC recommendations, were developed while Dr. Schirripa was there.

On the third day, Dr. Schirripa was not there, but we had asked the Ecosystem SSC folks to stay over through the presentations of the gag and greater amberjack stock assessments, so they could see how a stock assessment is done, and then, with that knowledge behind them, have all of the SSCs get together and discuss ways to try to integrate ecosystem considerations into the assessment process.

There were two other motions that were made after Dr. Schirripa left and one of them is very, very similar to a recommendation that he made right at the end of his presentation and so it might be worth it if I just very quickly go through that.

MR. WILLIAMS: We’re going to see those then in this next section?

MR. ATRAN: Yes.

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. That’s all I need.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Go ahead.

SSC RECOMMENDATIONS

MR. ATRAN: As I said, there was two parts to the ecosystem portion of the SSC meeting three weeks ago and the first portion had to do with Dr. Schirripa’s presentation and the recommendations that came out of that and there were three SSC motions that Dr. Schirripa went through and I will just read them over. He already explained the rationale behind them and this is on page 3 if you want to follow along, the bottom of page 3.
The first one is by unanimous vote, the SSC recommends that the council ask the Ecosystem SSC, in cooperation with the Standing SSC, to develop a set of suggested goals and objectives of an ecosystem-based fisheries management plan, complete with measurable targets. If you approve this, this would be making a charge to the Ecosystem SSC.

MR. WILLIAMS: Mr. Chairman, that happened to be one of the ones that I was going to make. Mike presented that one earlier and would it be appropriate now to offer a motion following up the SSC recommendation? Okay.

Then I would like to -- We can just copy it. It’s recommend that the council ask the Ecosystem SSC, in cooperation with the Standing SSC, to develop a set of suggested goals and objectives of an ecosystem-based fishery management plan, complete with measurable targets.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: We will get the motion on the board here in just a second.

MR. WILLIAMS: You can just copy it where it says “recommend that”. Okay, Mr. Chairman, that’s my motion.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Do we have a second? Second by Dr. Shipp. Any more discussion about this? I mean I think it was pretty well laid out.

MS. LEANN BOSARGE: I just had a question for Dr. Schirripa and I had this question during the presentation and I should have asked it then. I especially liked a lot of the things you had to say about incorporating things into some of our models, like the red tide and things. I saw Bonnie shake her head yes during your presentation several times.

On the measurable targets of this motion, can you give us some more information as to what you foresee these measurable targets focusing on?

DR. SCHIRRIPA: I think it’s a little premature at this meeting right now to get too finite on those, but measurable targets would generally be something along the lines of either we are at this point now and we want to be at this point or the direction of a particular indicator.

A target might be the trophic level indicator seems to have declined in the past ten years and we don’t think that’s a good
thing and it’s a bad indication and we want a management action that changes the direction of a declining indicator. I say that in lieu of knowing exactly where that indicator should be. If we know it’s going in a direction that we don’t want, we could at least look to change the direction of that and so I think the measurable targets is something that the group would come up with.

MS. BOSARGE: I will elaborate a little more. The only thing that scared me is I really like what you’re doing and I want to encourage it and I want to see it go forward. What I wanted to make sure is that we didn’t end up in a situation where we are on a lot of other things that we do on the council, where we have these specific measurable items that are given to us, whether it be in the form of a law or a plan or whatever the case may be, and they are wonderful ideals to shoot for, but because we don’t have either the funding or we don’t have the data or we don’t have the science to support it -- I didn’t want to pigeonhole ourselves into a position where we’re trying to hit targets that maybe we don’t have all the resources we need to truly make an informed decision on it, but yet, we feel like we have to make a decision and that was the only thing that scared me in the motion, was the measurable targets.

I support you fully on the rest of it. We need these goals and these objectives and I saw it more, for the moment, while we’re still developing it and getting it to that point, as something to support us in the management decisions that we’re making as we go along, so we can be more proactive in those management decisions, but maybe not proactive to the point that we’re already setting measurable targets for -- Does that make sense? Are you following me?

DR. SCHIRRIPA: I am following exactly what you’re saying and I think you have a valid point, I really do. While you were speaking, I am looking at that sentence, where it says “complete with measurable targets”. Would you be more comfortable if it were to say something along the lines of “ecosystem-based fisheries management that considers measurable targets”?

MS. BOSARGE: I love it, considers possible measurable targets. That sounds great. That way, we don’t feel like we’re forced into a situation where if we don’t feel like we have all the data we need to hit a target, we can keep working on it.

MR. WILLIAMS: I am fine with that. That’s fine. Thanks for making that suggestion.
CHAIRMAN GREENE: The seconder is not on the committee and so we have a motion on the board and it was changed and Roy is fine. Mr. Diaz seconds it. Any opposition to this motion?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOUG GREGORY: Like some of the concern raised earlier, the thing I want to be careful with is that we don’t get our SSCs caught up into a major project that’s going to take up a lot of time from the things we’re already doing with stock assessments and I’ve got a question for Mike.

This is an SSC motion and so that’s what it is, but the way forward, it seems to me, is to incorporate ecosystem-based information in our stock assessments, like we did with gag just now, and to move forward that way, so that we are considering ecosystem concepts and parameters in our management plans that we already have when we do our stock assessments and set our management goals and that’s the way I am kind of pushing things here at the staff level, instead of going off on a different direction of creating a management plan.

What scares me is that I think back to the Essential Fish Habitat Plan, when we first tackled it. It was not well defined and it took a lot of time, but this is an SSC motion and so I hope we do move in this direction and whether it’s another FMP or we do it in some other way, I think the SSCs can help us decide what direction to go and as we get into it, they may recommend some other way to move forward.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Any opposition to this motion before we go any further? Hearing none, the motion passes.

MR. ATRAN: The next motion is by a vote of twelve to five, the SSC recommends that the Gulf of Mexico Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Program work with the Gulf Standing and Ecosystem SSCs to evaluate the current red grouper harvest control rule to determine if it is robust to possible future changes in intensity and frequency of episodic events of non-fishing mortality.

If you’re going to make a motion on here, one suggestion I might have is to also include the assessment scientists on this who are working on the red grouper assessments.

MR. PEARCE: I’ve just got a question. This is a really big group that met, a bunch of people, and you’ve got the next three motions were twelve to five and twelve to six and seventeen to four and what was the opposition? Who were the people that didn’t like what these motions were? I am just kind of curious
of if it was a block of people that were happy and it seems like a smaller block that’s not happy with what’s going on and I want to know some rationale as to why. Maybe I’m wrong and maybe it’s just people moving back and forth, but it doesn’t seem that way. Am I making sense?

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I understand.

MR. ATRAN: I don’t know if Morgan can help me out here, but I think at least part of the reason why some of them may have opposed it is the term “harvest control rule” is not a term that we use and so I think there’s been some confusion as to exactly what was meant by that.

MR. PEARCE: So it was our SSC members that didn’t like what they were hearing here?

MR. ATRAN: They’re the ones who voted and I know it was confusing to me what the term meant and in talking with some other folks, I think it was confusing to some of the others as well.

MR. PEARCE: But you’ve got our Standing SSC and you’ve got the Ecosystem SSC and you’ve got the Special Reef Fish SSC and I’m just curious what problems evidently some of them had with these next three motions and what they were.

MR. ATRAN: Another thought, and I am trying to think as we go along, is that having passed the first motion to try to come up with some goals and objectives, I think there might have been a feeling that that’s a good enough start for now and let’s get those goals and objectives before we move on to the next step.

MR. PEARCE: That’s fair and I understand that and that may be exactly what we want to do, is just to figure out -- Get that start and then go from there.

MR. WILLIAMS: Does Dr. Schirripa remember what the dissention was? Do you remember, Mike? You don’t? Okay.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: We have an SSC recommendation here before us.

MR. WILLIAMS: The Executive Director weighed in on the previous motion and do you want to weigh in on this one? I’m going to make this motion on behalf of the SSC if nobody -- I am hearing a little bit of dissention over there, but the SSC has made the motion and I’m going to give them a chance to air it if --
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: No, I think it would be a good project, but one difficult to accomplish though.

MR. WILLIAMS: Well, I mean I think it is, but Mike showed us something he had done with gag grouper and red tide. You had a couple of spikes in there and you showed us something and so they’re obviously working on it now and I mean if they think they can do it, I think we ought to ask them to do it.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: In their last gag assessment update, we included the red tide event and this was simply more confirmation that indeed it had an effect on the gag population and so it was like a first step forward.

MR. WILLIAMS: Well, the red grouper live right out there where all those red tides occur and so if Dr. Schirripa opposes this, I won’t make the motion, but otherwise, I am going to make it.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: I am not talking against the motion.

MR. WILLIAMS: Then I would like to make this motion right here that the Gulf Council recommend that the Gulf of Mexico IEA Program work with the Gulf Standing and Ecosystem SSCs to evaluate the current red grouper harvest control rule to determine if it is robust to possible future changes in intensity and frequency of episodic events of non-fishing mortality.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: We have a motion on the board and do we have a second? Seeing no second for the motion --

MR. WILLIAMS: That mystifies me, I will tell you.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: The motion fails for a lack of a second then and we will move on.

MR. ATRAN: The next motion is at the top of page 4 and it’s similar, but it looks at the human dimensions. By a vote of twelve to six, the SSC recommends that the Gulf of Mexico Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Program work with the Gulf Standing and Ecosystem SSCs to investigate the human dimension and long-term ecological implications of the current shallow-water grouper harvest control and various catch limits. Again, my suggestion, if you were going to make the motion, since this is talking about the human dimension, is to perhaps include the Socioeconomic SSC in this.
CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. We have another SSC recommendation and seeing no activity, I guess you can carry on, Mr. Atran.

MR. ATRAN: The next couple of motions occurred on the third day, when Dr. Schirripa wasn’t there. This was after the stock assessments had been given and we got the Standing, the Ecosystem, and the Reef Fish SSCs altogether to talk about integrating ecosystem considerations into SEDAR assessments.

The first motion had to do with a new task force that’s just been created. There’s a task force that was created by the Lenfest Program to try to develop a blueprint of action for ecosystem-based fisheries management. I have an attachment on the back of the SSC report that has a press release from the University of Washington on this.

This is a group of thirteen scientists who have been appointed to try to work up some standard way of integrating ecosystem considerations into fisheries management. At the moment, all the councils are working in different ways and so they’re trying to come up with some guidelines for the councils to work with.

They do plan to create an advisory panel that consists of members and staff of fishery management councils plus staff with NOAA Fisheries. They are not at that stage yet and the thirteen members do include some people who have an affiliation with our council. That includes Lee Anderson from the University of Delaware, who I think was on the Socioeconomic SSC or its predecessor, and Felicia Coleman from Florida State University is a former council member and Kenneth Rose from Louisiana State University was on our Ecosystem SSC and so we do have some representation on this group of thirteen people.

My understanding is when they’re ready to start getting the councils involved that they will reach out to us, but the motion that the SSC made is by a vote of seventeen to four, the Ecosystem and Standing SSCs encourage the council to pursue participation in the newly formed taskforce to develop a blueprint of action for ecosystem-based fisheries management.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. We have an SSC recommendation on the board.

MR. WILLIAMS: I will make it on behalf of the committee. Steve, you said that Ken Rose is on this and Felicia Coleman and who else?

MR. ATRAN: Lee Anderson. He was on one of our SSCs and was he
on -- He still is? The Socioeconomic SSC.

MR. WILLIAMS: Ken Rose used to be on our Reef Fish Committee. He and Jim Cowan were on the Reef Fish Committee at one time.

MR. ATRAN: That’s right and he was also on the Ecosystem SSC until a few years ago.

MR. WILLIAMS: I am going to go ahead and hazard a motion then that the council pursue participation in the newly formed taskforce to develop a blueprint of action for ecosystems-based fisheries management.

MR. DIAZ: I will second.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: We have a motion on the floor and it’s been seconded by Mr. Diaz and any further comments or considerations? Any opposition to the motion?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: I was informed that this taskforce has just been formed by Lenfest and they are still getting organized and part of what they are talking about doing is contacting all the councils for us to participate in some fashion and so we don’t need to pursue anything, but I think to be receptive to participating or to cooperating with the Lenfest taskforce is, I think, direction to staff.

I don’t know if that would involve council members as well, like the Fisheries Forums do and some of the other things that we’re invited to participate in. Yes, we will do that, but as far as pursuing it, we will just wait and let them contact us.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. We will move on, Mr. Atran.

MR. ATRAN: I agree with what Doug Gregory said, but if we were going to do anything, given the very early stage at which this taskforce is at, about the only thing we can maybe do is send a letter to the chairman of the taskforce saying we’re aware that your taskforce has been formed and we’re very much interested in participating at the appropriate time or something to that effect.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Mr. Atran has made a recommendation for a letter and does anybody want to move on that idea?

MR. DIAZ: I don’t know that it needs a motion, but I think that would be a good way to follow up on this motion that was previously passed, to let them know that we’re interested in
participating.

MR. ATRAN: My intent was if the motion passes, that would be our response to the motion passing.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: We have a motion on the floor. Is there any opposition to passing this motion? Seeing none, the motion passes. Go ahead, Mr. Atran.

MR. ATRAN: Finally, there was one more motion that was made and you may remember at the end of Dr. Schirripa’s presentation, he suggested that we form a multidisciplinary committee composed of members from various SSCs and APs, et cetera, in order to prioritize and identify the information needs for fisheries managed by the council.

The combined SSCs went ahead and made that exact motion. By a vote of fourteen to two, the SSC recommends that the council convene a working group comprised of some members from the Ecosystem SSC, Standing SSC, Socioeconomic SSC, advisory panels, and the Sustainable Fisheries Committee of the council to develop approaches for identifying and prioritizing ecosystem and socioeconomic information needs for the fisheries managed by the council.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: We have an SSC recommendation before us.

MR. WILLIAMS: Could I make a request that Doug and/or Steve comment on this motion? Is it a useful thing to do? It looks fairly -- It’s going to have a rigorous group there. There’s going to be quite a few people on it and are you all right with it?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: I think eventually yes. Certainly it’s a working group of the three SSCs and it’s going in the direction that I’ve been wanting to go in integrating the three SSCs. We’re the only council that has more than one SSC and this discussion really brings to focus the need to have an integrated SSC structure and so this could be the beginning of that.

I don’t know if the three groups with some advisory panel members and council committee all meeting at once or working as one group is the way to go, but it’s certainly a direction to go in. I think we take it step-wise and form a working group of the SSC and then incorporate the advisory panel representation and that’s something for the council to discuss. We can pass this and then work on setting up the structure of it later.
MR. WILLIAMS: I would be glad to take out the advisory panel and Sustainable Fisheries Committee if that would make it more palatable to you. I think Steve has a comment, too.

MR. ATRAN: I think the idea was to include stakeholders as well as scientists in this. I think though that perhaps if this group is formed that it might need a little bit clearer charge, considering that, as currently proposed, it includes both scientists and non-scientists. I am not sure that simply saying “information needs” really gives us enough of a direction.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: Our hesitation is that we’ve never approached anything this way before. We have our system of the scientists providing the best recommendation they can and it being reviewed by the public, through our advisory committee, and the recommendation coming to the council.

Now, a tweaking of that, our approach, could be in order for this, but I think first -- We have anthropologists and sociologists on our SSCs and so they have socioeconomic information and so, to me, our current way of operating seems to be the best and most efficient way to go.

I was at the SSC meeting, but, unfortunately, I was in a SEDAR Steering Committee webinar when these discussions and these motions were made and so I didn’t really participate in their discussion with that, but if you read the report, it does talk about a need to try to integrate the SSCs and so we would have to identify advisory panel members or an ad hoc advisory panel to work with them, but I see it going forward in a step-wise fashion.

MR. WILLIAMS: Don’t you think it -- If I were to make this motion, isn’t it a little premature to have APs on there? This is going to be fairly technical kind of --

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: That’s what I’m trying to say. It doesn’t fit our paradigm of operating and so it feels a little awkward.

MR. WILLIAMS: Mr. Chairman, I am going to go ahead and try a motion. I am not going to include the advisory panel or the Sustainable Fisheries Committee of the council. It seems to me that if the Chairman at that time wants to send somebody, he could always send someone. He or she could always send someone.

I am going to recommend that the council convene a working group
comprised of some members from the Ecosystem SSC, Standing SSC, and Socioeconomic SSC to develop approaches for identifying and prioritizing ecosystem and socioeconomic information needs for the fisheries managed by the council.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Mr. Williams, is that your motion?

MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, it is.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. Do we have a second? Mr. Sanchez seconds it and any discussion about this motion? Any opposition to this motion?

MR. DIAZ: For discussion, Steve did mention that the charge is kind of weak and that’s the only thing that’s got me a little apprehensive. I don’t mind this group getting together and I think we need to look in this general direction and I’m just wondering if it’s specific enough.

MS. BOSARGE: I think Dr. Gregory mentioned one thing that he saw where this could definitely be used maybe more in the short term, while we’re working on some longer-term objectives and goals, and that was -- Like I said, I saw Bonnie shake her head yes a couple of times and maybe we could have these SSCs evaluate what we could possibly use to fill in some of the gaps when we look at variations in stocks and what’s happening with the stocks.

Where can we use these now as we’re getting a longer-term plan for this? That could be one thing that the SSC -- That definitely would be right up their alley, right, Bonnie?

DR. BONNIE PONWITH: I could see as a possible outcome from this an ecosystem contribution to your research needs report, which is a report that you prepare and contribute to annually that helps guide our planning process and traditionally, that report deals with data gaps and where is the biggest shortfall in data for some stock assessment, but you could also include additional information of things you would learn from this exercise, to help deal with those research needs.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Any other discussion about this motion? Any opposition? Okay. We will move on, Mr. Atran.

MR. ATRAN: That concludes the SSC report.

MR. WILLIAMS: Mr. Chairman, I was told that there was -- Along the same lines, somebody sent me a copy of something -- A person
by the name of David Chagaris of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission provided to this group. It was apparently one of their background documents.

From what I read here, they are doing something similar on this Ecopath and Ecosim and Ecospace model and they are looking at fisheries on the West Florida Shelf and apparently they have some information.

I mean reading from his summary here, they could perhaps tell us something about gag grouper and how the overfishing of gag grouper or the rebuilding of gag grouper might affect other fisheries on the West Florida Shelf.

I don’t want to step on anybody’s toes here, but I would kind of like to know -- If they are working on this as well, I would sort of like to know -- I would like to hear more about what the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute is doing on this and maybe we could even get a report from them at some point.

If they’re working on gag grouper and other shallow-water groupers on the West Florida Shelf, I would like to hear what it is they’re doing and what kind of advice they might be able to offer.

MR. ATRAN: Actually, Dave Chagaris works with Behzad Mahmoudi, who was an Ecosystem SSC member until relatively recently, and they have been working on this Ecosim with Ecopath model for several years. I know Dr. Mahmoudi is a real expert on that model.

Back several years ago, our Ecosystem SSC was pursuing a project of trying to demonstrate the feasibility of using an ecosystem approach to some real-world fishery issues and they held a series of workshops in which they looked at how this Ecosim model or a couple of other models might be applied to red tide events and might be applied to interactions between shrimp and red snapper with shrimp trawl bycatch mortality.

They looked at a few other items and this is like maybe eight or nine years ago and the results, in my mind, showed that it was feasible to use ecosystem modeling as an approach to look at some of the fishery issues, but, at the time, a lot of the data inputs were pure guesses.

There was a lot of data gaps and the models were still being developed. They have been working on this for years and they
are probably very much advanced now on where they were and so
yes, they have been working very heavily on this.

MR. WILLIAMS: Just a point of information. I hired Behzad
Mahmoudi about thirty years ago right out of the University of
Miami. Mr. Chairman, toward that end, I would like to offer one
more motion, if I might, and I provided it to Phyllis earlier
and so perhaps she could pull it up for me.

The motion is simply that the council request SSC feedback on
the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute’s West Florida
Shelf ecosystem model’s ability to evaluate gag and other
shallow-water grouper harvest strategies and evaluate whether
the model can provide information on ecological and economic
tradeoffs, in order to help determine best management outcomes,
and, if possible, for the council to receive a presentation on
the model at the next meeting or whenever is feasible. That’s
my motion.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: We have a motion on the floor and it’s been
seconded by Mr. Diaz and is there any more discussion about this
motion? Seeing none, any opposition to the motion? The motion
carries. Anything else before we move on, Mr. Atran?

MR. ATRAN: The motion you passed before about creating this
group consisting of members of the Ecosystem SSC, Standing SSC,
and Socioeconomic SSC, do you have any recommendations on how
large this should be? We could maybe try to get five members
from each of those SSCs and that would be a fifteen-member
working group. Just a little guidance.

Actually, during the SSC meeting, they were talking about
convening the entire Standing, Socioeconomic, and Ecosystem SSC
and I looked around the room and with what we had, we already
had a huge SSC meeting in Miami and this would have been
unmanageable if the entire SSCs met jointly.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: The West Florida Shelf model was
presented to the Ecosystem SSC a year or two ago, but it’s never
been presented to the Standing SSC and I know Behzad was on the
Ecosystem SSC and he just resigned a week before the meeting and
he suggested that Dave be put on to replace him and we said when
we go back to reappoint people that we will consider that and we
will certainly solicit Dave to apply to be on the SSC, but
apparently I think there’s some -- Like there are in some
institutions, some competing efforts to do modeling and we will
do our best to get the groups together, working together, but I
think there are two different models and they will operate in
two different ways and so we do need to evaluate the relative
utility of each modeling approach.

MR. WILLIAMS: When you’re talking about the other, you’re
talking about the FWRI approach versus the NMFS approach? I am
not trying to create any problems here, but I used to work for
the Florida Institute and they didn’t call them that then, but I
would like to hear what they have to say.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Mr. Atran was looking for some guidance as far
as how to put the group together on a motion that had passed
about number-wise, Mr. Williams.

MR. WILLIAMS: I would agree that fifteen would be the max, I
would think, and even smaller. I would defer to the Executive
Director and staff to do something like that, but my opinion
would be no more than fifteen.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I think that’s pretty well understood, that
you’re going to let the staff do it, but it would be no more
than fifteen and probably less, if at all possible. Any other
questions?

DR. SCHIRRIPA: I feel there’s a misunderstanding here that I
feel compelled to jump in and I’m sorry if I’m -- There is
absolutely, positively no competing efforts going on here and
that is absolutely the wrong perception. Nobody is competing
for anything.

Rather, we would look at this as a multi-model approach, in
fact. In fact, that’s our idea, is to use Ecopath with Ecosim
and OSMOSE and Atlantis and what you have to understand is that
these are simulation models and their results generally don’t
have formal error and uncertainty around them and so much like
hurricane models -- You have seen the spaghetti models and this
is the approach we plan on taking.

We are welcoming to absolutely any models whatsoever to put into
this ensemble approach of models and say with this set of
assumptions you get this and with this set of assumptions, you
get that and try to -- If all models are pointing in the same
direction, then great. Have at it, but if they’re going in
different directions with slightly different assumptions, we
need to know that as well and so by no means do I think
competing or competition is the proper word here. I would say
cooperation and all models are welcome.

MR. WILLIAMS: If I said competing, I apologize.
DR. SCHIRRIPA: I heard it a couple of times and whatever, but I am just --

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: No, that was me.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Thank you, Dr. Schirripa.

MR. PERRET: Mike, I think two or three years ago, you were chairman of our ecosystem -- No, it wasn’t you? Okay. We had a committee and they looked at these ecosystem models and so on and so forth and came back and gave us a presentation. I assume the models today are more refined than they were two or three or four or whatever years ago.

Dr. Crabtree I’m sure will correct me if I’m wrong, but it seems to me in the presentation they gave there was some concern about shrimp trawling and you mentioned the menhaden and the menhaden fishery and the prey. It seems like it came back that, hey, if you didn’t have shrimp trawling that your catfish or whatever fish may take over and all that sort of thing and the same thing with menhaden. If you weren’t on that committee, was their work made available to you and do you recall any of that?

DR. SCHIRRIPA: Yes, I do recall that and --

MR. PERRET: I’m sure it’s clearer than my memory.

DR. SCHIRRIPA: I would implore the group to move beyond the catfish/shrimp story that was told then. It was published in the Bulletin of Marine Science, but if you read it carefully and if you take that one sentence out -- Yes, it says that, but if you read the very next sentence or two, it admits that this is not a commonsense answer and that this was an example and this was a demonstration project and that these results should not be taken as a direct management action.

Things evolve and surely in ten years I would like to think that we know a little bit more and not just the models are being more refined, but it’s the data, which is just as, if not more, important than the models.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I don’t see anybody else and so I’ve got one more question and I guess it would be to Bonnie or Dr. Schirripa or somebody, but one of the things that we’ve talked about throughout the whole course of this meeting is with regard to stock assessments and timing and trying to get stuff done on time.
Moving in this direction and using the spaghetti model approach and everything, is this going to slow down or limit us in the number of stock assessments that we can have in any given time? I know we do a certain number and is this going to really slow this down and how would that part of the program work out?

**DR. SCHIRRIPA:** The motions, if you read them carefully, were designed specifically to not include the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. It said that the Gulf of Mexico IEA group would do this work and that was done with a very conscious effort that we need to run parallel for now to the single species stuff, so what you’re saying does not occur.

In the end, our ideal product would increase the efficiency of our single species assessments, but by not bothering the single species people and letting them take care of those terms of reference. We need a separate group doing this stuff alongside them and that’s the approach that we’re taking right now, using funding as we can make available, through whatever means, MARFIN or IEA money and so on, to run parallel, so that we do not run into that problem.

I realize, of course, it’s on everyone’s mind and so we’ve been in this business for a long time and I know what some of the priorities are and so yes, we’re intentionally making that point.

**CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you and I thought that’s what it was and I just wanted to make absolute certain. I think that’s everything on this and with that, we will move on to Item Number V, which will be Options Paper for Status Determination Criteria, Optimum Yield, and Red Snapper ACL Designation. That will be Tab E, Number 6, led by Mr. Atran.

**OPTIONS PAPER - STATUS DETERMINATION CRITERIA, OPTIMUM YIELD, AND RED SNAPPER ACL DESIGNATION**

**MR. ATRAN:** Thank you. I think it was some time last year that I brought a scoping document on this topic to the committee and it was a very confusing and very technical issue and the committee said that they would like to get it revised and try to make it a little bit easier to read.

I came back and met with our IPT and the IPT recommended that because this document is so technical in nature that if we went out to scoping, we weren’t going to get anybody showing up and so they suggested that we go straight to an options paper and
start considering some actual options.

Just to remind you, the reason why we’re considering this is because the status determination criteria consists of the maximum fishing mortality threshold, which is necessary to determine if overfishing is occurring, the overfishing limit, which is an alternate way to determine if overfishing is occurring, and the minimum stock size threshold, which is used to determine if the stock is overfished.

We have overfishing definitions for most of our stocks that was adopted in 1999. Most of them, we adopted F 30 percent SPR as the maximum fishing mortality threshold. However, the document where we attempted to do that also tried to set the biomass thresholds in terms of SPR and NMFS at that time said that SPR is not a biomass measurement and couldn’t be used to develop the biomass reference points and so they accepted our overfishing definitions, but not our overfished definitions.

Since then, we have started calling our overfished definitions based upon the yield corresponding to fishing at F some SPR and that’s been acceptable to the National Marine Fisheries Service, but we have a large number of stocks where we don’t have biomass reference points. We have overfishing reference points, but we may want to see if we want to revisit them. I know the council is specifically interested in red snapper in that aspect.

Then, in addition to that, there’s a couple of other items here dealing with formally adopting ACLs for red snapper, which we haven’t done and I will explain that in a second, and adopting an OFL for black grouper and trying to define the relationship between optimum yield and annual catch limits, which at least to me has been a confusing subject and I’m trying to clear that up.

With that, I will go into this document and we’ll start on page 5, which is still in the introduction section, but it has to do with ACL designation for red snapper. Now, the Magnuson Act, when it was reauthorized in 2006, and I believe that was when it was reauthorized last, required that all overfished stocks have annual catch limits by 2010 and then all other stocks by 2012, but it allowed the use of some alternative designation if it was compatible with the objectives of the Magnuson Act and the National Standards.

At the time, we were doing quota changes and management changes through framework -- Well, we called them regulatory amendments. We were advised that a full plan amendment was needed to formally adopt ACLs and so what we did was we set TACs and then
later quotas and we said that the quotas were the functional equivalent of an ACL and that was acceptable under the National Standard 1 Guidelines.

It’s acceptable, but it’s very awkward to keep having to talk about our functional equivalent of an ACL rather than an ACL itself and so we’ve been looking for some place in a plan amendment where we can say, no, we’re actually going to have ACLs for red snapper and not just the functional equivalents.

At our last IPT meeting, we were informed by our NOAA General Counsel that we didn’t actually have to have an action with multiple alternatives since this change does not have any NEPA effects. It won’t have any effect on the environment and it’s just a technical change.

It means that in the codified regulations there will be a section under the ACL section where we will say red snapper ACLs are as follows. Right now, that’s not in there, but there are quotas for red snapper and those quotas are required under the 407(d) section of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

With this technical change, we will now officially get ACLs in the codified regulations and we can start talking about setting ACLs for red snapper instead of functional equivalents of ACLs. Again, this has absolutely no change to the actual management of red snapper and it’s just a technical change so that we can get rid of this awkward wording.

Now we’ll get into the action items where we do have some alternatives, which is in Chapter 2, beginning on page 7. The first thing we have is Action 1 and that’s to adopt some reference points for maximum sustainable yield.

There is a number of different reference points. We usually adopt 30 percent SPR or, in a few cases, maximum yield per recruit. There are other alternative ways of setting a proxy for maximum sustainable yield, but those are the two most commonly used and so at least for the first couple of alternatives, we are restricting ourselves to those two methods of defining a reference point.

Alternative 1, no action, states that the reference points will remain as shown in Table 2.1, which I bypassed. It lists which species are using 30 percent SPR as the reference point and which are using 26 percent SPR. That would be red snapper. Goliath grouper is using 50 percent SPR for fishing mortality and it doesn’t have a biomass reference point and then we have
two species, gag and vermilion snapper, which are using maximum yield per recruit.

The majority of our species are basing our reference points on 30 percent SPR and so Alternative 2 would do that for all of the stocks that don’t currently have a biomass reference point. It states that fishing mortality and biomass MSY reference points will be based upon 30 percent SPR and so, in other words, the overfishing threshold would become F 30 percent SPR and the maximum sustainable yield proxy would become the biomass at F 30 percent SPR.

Option a -- These options are not exclusive and they call all be adopted or any combination of them. Option a would apply this to all the stocks that currently do not have a defined biomass reference point and there’s a list here of hogfish, queen snapper, blackfin snapper.

I won’t go through the whole list, but these are mostly data-poor species that have never had a stock assessment and so there’s never been any reason in the past to apply an overfishing or an overfished threshold, but we’re supposed to have those for all stocks and so Option a would fill in the gaps.

Option b would add gray triggerfish to all those other ones and the reason why we think gray triggerfish might need to have a change is because right now, the overfishing threshold is based upon 30 percent SPR, but the overfished threshold is based upon 20 percent SPR.

It doesn’t make a whole lot of sense and I’m not sure how we ended in that situation, but you really want your overfishing and overfished thresholds to be using the same reference point and so Option b would apply 30 percent SPR to both the overfished and the overfishing threshold for gray triggerfish.

Option c would switch gag from its Fmax, it’s maximum yield per recruit proxy, to F 30 percent SPR. Yesterday in Reef Fish Committee, we got a report on the gag stock assessment and basically, rationale was provided as to why maximum yield per recruit is a better proxy than 30 percent SPR for gag and so it might not be a good idea to adopt Option c, but for completeness, it is included in this alternative.

Then Option d, vermilion snapper is also based upon maximum yield per recruit and I believe it was for the same reasons as gag, that if we used F 30 percent SPR that we were going to end
up with an overfishing proxy that was above the model-generated estimates of FMSY, whereas maximum yield per recruit would be a little more conservative.

Alternative 3 is the counterpart to Alternative 2, except it would convert everything to using maximum yield per recruit instead of the F 30 percent SPR. If we did that, then the overfishing threshold would be Fmax and the overfished threshold would be biomass below the biomass when fishing at Fmax.

Option a would apply this change to all stocks that don’t have a defined biomass reference point and have the 30 percent fishing mortality reference point and, again, there’s a list here of hogfish, queen snapper, et cetera.

Option b would apply it to all the stocks under Option a plus add black grouper, mutton snapper, yellowtail snapper, greater amberjack, tilefish, red grouper, yellowedge grouper, and gray triggerfish and so essentially, all of the species covered in this generic amendment. By the way, this generic amendment covers all of the reef fish stocks plus red drum.

Alternative 4 deals specifically with goliath grouper, because unlike most of the other stocks, instead of using 30 percent SPR on which to base the overfishing mortality threshold, we’re using 50 percent SPR and that was adopted based upon a recommendation that came out of an ad hoc panel back in the late 1990s that suggested that goliath grouper may be more vulnerable to overfishing and therefore, a more conservative proxy than what’s used for most of the reef fish would be appropriate.

That panel had recommended a proxy somewhere between 40 percent and 60 percent and the council went with 50 percent, because that’s the midway point there, but if you want to reconsider that, we have options to set the overfishing and overfished proxies at either 60 percent SPR, 50 percent SPR, 40 percent SPR, or 30 percent, which is what we do for most of our reef fish stocks, or we could also set it at maximum yield per recruit.

At the moment, I don’t think we have much biological information to support going to an Fmax policy and the so the question is whether you want to continue with the 50 percent SPR and have a biomass threshold as well as an overfishing threshold, based on that, if you want to get more conservative and go to 60 percent SPR.

40 percent would be less conservative, but still more
conservative than most stocks, but just to put it in perspective, we were told yesterday that gag, where -- Although Fmax was the adopted overfishing threshold, that’s the equivalent of F 40 percent SPR in the case of gag and so you might think, as far as 40 percent, do you want the same level of conservation for goliath grouper that you’re applying for gag? If so, the 40 percent SPR might be appropriate and if you think it should be more conservative, than the 50 or 60 percent might be appropriate.

Then Alternative 5 deals specifically with red snapper. This was a request that came from the council. At the moment, overfishing and overfished thresholds are based upon 26 percent SPR. The council asked that a switch to Fmax be considered.

The alternatives we have here -- If you don’t adopt anything in Alternative 5, we stick with 26 percent SPR. Option a would go to 30 percent SPR and so it would put red snapper on the same proxies as most of the other reef fish and Options b and c would switch the proxy to Fmax, maximum yield per recruit, and there, you have a choice of either basing that on total removals or basing it on retained yield and there is a slight difference.

The equivalent SPR, if you based it on total removals, would be 20.4 percent SPR and if you based it on retained yield, it would be 22.4 percent SPR. Again, to put this in perspective, prior to 1996, a 20 percent SPR was the overfishing and overfished threshold for red snapper.

We went to 26 percent SPR because the available scientific information supported that as being closer to what the true MSY might be, but 20 percent is below those recommendations.

The next section deals with setting maximum fishing mortality threshold and it is on page 13 and that’s Action 2. Alternative 1 would be no action and the existing maximum fishing mortality thresholds would be retained and that would be 30 percent SPR for all stocks except gag and vermilion snapper, which use Fmax. Red snapper uses F 26 percent SPR and goliath grouper uses F 50 percent SPR.

Alternative 2 would use whatever proxy was adopted in Action 1 and set the maximum fishing mortality threshold to whatever proxy was adopted in 1. For most stocks, that would either be F 30 percent SPR or Fmax, but it wouldn’t be necessary to list the individual species here, because they’re already listed in Action 1.
Alternative 3 is similar to Alternative 2, in that it sets FMSY or its proxy based upon the proxy that was adopted in Action 1, but it adds another line. It says the maximum fishing mortality threshold is equal to F rebuild for stocks that are in a rebuilding plan.

The reason why this was added was because of an issue that arose last year when we were setting red snapper catch limits and quotas. The SSC had been basing the overfishing limit on the F rebuild level, which is more conservative than FMSY, but we were told that OFL, by definition, is the yield when fishing at the maximum fishing mortality threshold, or FMSY.

We had to go back and recalculate OFLs based upon the higher F rate. The problem is that on a rebuilding stock if you base the rebuilding, the OFL, on FMSY, you’re never actually going to get to your target level. You will approach it on an asymptotic basis, but you will never actually get to it and so this corrects what we saw as an issue for rebuilding stocks and it makes sure that overfishing occurs if fishing is occurring at a higher rate than is consistent with rebuilding the stock.

At the bottom of page 15, there is a section titled “Discussion of Overfishing Limit” and OFLs are also a status determination criteria, but we don’t need to define how they’re calculated, because, as I mentioned before, it’s already defined in the National Standard Guidelines.

OFL is the yield when you’re fishing at FMSY or your FMSY proxy. That’s pretty automatic once you’ve determined your proxy. However, when we put together our Generic ACL and AM Amendment in 2012, that’s where we assigned OFLs and ABCs and ACLs and ACTs to most of our stocks and we had several species complexes where we were assigning OFLs and ACLs and whatnot, deepwater grouper and tilefishes and amberjacks other than greater amberjack and certain snappers, which we called the mid-water snapper complex, and shallow-water grouper other than red grouper and gag.

That other category included black grouper, along with yellowmouth, yellowfin, and I don’t recall the other one. The problem is that we have a stock assessment on black grouper and so we have an OFL for black grouper, but that OFL covers both the South Atlantic and Gulf regions, because that stock moves across the jurisdictional boundaries.

The way in which we were determining OFL for our complexes was to add the individual OFL values for each stock together to get
an OFL for the entire complex. If we did that for the other shallow-water grouper complex, we would have been including some black grouper that are in the South Atlantic side that we really shouldn’t be counting.

I wasn’t quite sure how to handle that at the time and so for purposes of getting that amendment completed and implemented, we said that OFL was undefined for the shallow-water grouper complex.

Since then, we’ve determined that we can determine an OFL component for the Gulf side. There was an allocation or an apportionment formula that was developed as part of the Generic ACL and AM Amendment for dividing up the ABC between the Gulf and the Atlantic and I believe the Gulf side got 53 percent of the black grouper ABC and the South Atlantic got the remainder.

We can take that formula and apply it to the OFL as well, so we just have a Gulf portion of the OFL. Then we can add together all those other species’ OFLs and come up with an OFL for the complex. At the bottom of page 14, if we do that, we get an other shallow-water grouper OFL in the Gulf of Mexico for 2014 of 800,876 pounds gutted weight. Then for 2015 and beyond, it’s 798,828 pounds gutted weight. I don’t think we’ve come anywhere close to this, but it allows us to put an OFL on the books for the complex so we have a measurement to determine if the complex has entered an overfishing state.

I didn’t feel that this needed to be an action item with alternatives, because we’re using already established methods for setting OFL and just determining that we can use the apportionment formula to determine how much of the black grouper OFL to apply to the Gulf side and so this, like the red grouper ACL adoption, is just a statement of here’s what the OFL is for the shallow-water grouper complex.

The next section is Action 3 on page 15, which is setting minimum stock size threshold, which is the third and last status determination criteria.

Alternative 1 is no action and right now, for several of our stocks, we don’t have any biomass threshold for minimum stock size threshold and the council’s approach has been to adopt them on a case-by-case basis as needed. The problem with that -- That’s what Alternative 1 would do.

The problem with that is if we get a stock assessment for the first time on a stock, the assessment does not have any
information on what the overfished and what the overfishing limits are.

The assessment scientists have to pretty much make a guess at what they think the council is going to adopt and then use that guess in order to evaluate the status of the stocks and the council most of the time goes along with the SSC, but they may not and so it would be better to have these thresholds in place before the assessments ever get done.

What we do for most of our assessments is what Alternative 2 would so. It sets maximum stock size threshold based on the formula one minus M times BMSY and M is the natural mortality rate and so if we're talking about a stock that has a natural mortality rate of 0.2, the stock would become overfished when the biomass levels drop below 80 percent of the MSY level and this is what we've done for pretty much all of our stocks and it's a fairly conservative reference for declaring a stock overfished.

The National Standard Guidelines allow that threshold to go down to as low as 50 percent of BMSY and that's what Alternative 3 would do. If you were to adopt Alternative 3, there would be a lot more leeway to managing a stock and trying to correct declines before it actually enters an overfished state and so in that respect, it's more flexible than our current strategy.

However, if the stock does get below 50 percent of its MSY biomass, you would probably need a very restrictive rebuilding plan in order to rebuild the stock in ten years or whatever timeframe you are given and so those are the tradeoffs. Table 2.2 on page 16 -- I went to the websites for all of the other councils and looked at some of their fishery management plans to determine what thresholds they're using for MSST and it looks like six of them are using this formula, the one minus M times BMSY formula.

Three of them are using 50 percent of BMSY and two of them are using different approaches, depending upon what stocks. Both of these approaches are currently in use and, as I said, Alternative 2 represents what we're applying on a case-by-case basis now and this would just apply it to all of the stocks.

The last action item is on page 18, Action 4, optimum yield. I included this because up until the 2006 reauthorization of the Magnuson Act, we had two reference points that we were targeting for management, MSY, which we didn’t want to exceed -- We wanted to be at least at the MSY level for our stocks and then optimum
yield, which was MSY as reduced by relevant sociological, ecological, environmental factors, or due to international treaties. That is not the exact wording, but I think it’s close to what’s in the Magnuson Act.

At any rate, we had two reference points. When the Magnuson Act was reauthorized in 2006, the Act added ACLs and the National Standard Guidelines added ACTs and OFLs and we have a whole bunch of different reference points.

Basically now, we are managing to try to reach an annual catch limit, an ACL, which is calculated based upon the ABC plus management uncertainty, but we still are required, under National Standard 1, to achieve optimum yield, which is based upon MSY as reduced by these relevant factors.

When the calculations are done, because different formulas are used, we get different numbers for what our target should be if we’re going to fish at optimum yield versus what our target should be if we’re going to fish at the ACL level and I was trying to figure out how could we resolve this what to me appeared to be a conflict.

What I did was come up with a couple of alternatives. Alternative 2 states that when we have stock assessment that defines a maximum fishing mortality threshold, optimum yield is the annual yield when fishing at 75 percent of MFMT.

If we don’t have a stock assessment, a data-poor species, where perhaps all we have is an estimate of OFL based upon recent catches, then OY is 75 percent of that OFL and this is basically what we’ve been doing anyway.

What’s added to this is that for stocks in a rebuilding plan, OY is the yield corresponding to the rebuilding plan and so we wouldn’t go over that level and then what’s added to try to reconcile using both an OY and an ACL, the last line in this alternative states that in all cases the stock ACL may not exceed the equilibrium optimum yield or the ABC and so there could be situations -- Equilibrium OY is, over the long term, if everything else remains constant, what the yield would be for the stock, but everything is not constant.

We get strong year classes and weak year classes and when we get a strong year class, it may be possible that we could fish the stock temporarily at a level higher than OY and we would be fishing the stock down to its OY level, but then when we get a weak year class, we would have to put some restrictions in in
order to get the stock back up to its OY level and so this would try to stabilize the fishery by setting some maximum level that we could not go above.

Alternative 3 is very similar, only OY would be defined as at equilibrium each year rather than the annual level of OY and so we would never be able to go above the equilibrium level under Alternative 3.

It would provide a little bit more stability than Alternative 2 and it would be a little bit more conservative than Alternative 2, but other than that, it’s very much the same and it has the other factors in here, with OY as equal to either 75 percent of the maximum fishing mortality threshold or 75 percent of the OFL. For stocks in a rebuilding plan, OY is the yield corresponding to the rebuilding plan and in all cases, ACL may not exceed the OY or the ABC.

Then Alternative 4 is the simplest solution to reconciling having differences between OY and ACL. It simply says OY will be set equal to the stock ACL. That way, the two numbers are the same and we no longer have a conflict between the two numbers.

The drawback here is that that does not recognize the reasons why we have an OY versus the reasons why we have an ACL and so those are the actions that we have in here right now. It’s still a very technical document and I think we still need to go through and try to make it more readable. I have tried to simplify it, but this is where we stand right now.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. Any questions?

MR. PEARCE: Dr. Atran, are you asking us to -- Are you trying to develop this into a public hearing document? Is that what you’re trying to do?

MR. ATRAN: Yes, eventually. I don’t think this options paper is quite ready to go to that step yet and I think probably we’ll need to come back with either a pre-public hearing document or a revised options paper, but we would like to get some feedback from the council.

MR. PEARCE: So you’re still going to come back to us with another document that we’re going to try to develop into a public hearing document? I am trying to get past where we are, because I think a lot of us are in the weeds around this table right now and if you want to go to a public hearing document, I
will make a motion that you develop this into a public hearing document right now, but other than that, I’m not sure what direction we’re going to go today, unless somebody else can help me.

MR. PERRET: Steve, you’re right that it’s a very technical document. On Action 1 and Action 2, Action 1 of MSY and Action 2 of maximum fishing mortality threshold, why do we have -- Why are we developing MSYs for a species that’s been closed since I think 1988, goliath grouper, and red drum? Hopefully we’ll get red drum opened for something, but I see red drum mentioned in Action 1, but not in Action 2, but I see goliath grouper in both 1 and 2 and why are we dealing with goliath grouper? 

MR. ATRAN: Right now, there is a joint committee composed of South Atlantic and Gulf Council members and they are going to be meeting later this summer to try to work out issues with goliath grouper, to see if there is some way we could open them up. We will need some thresholds to define overfishing and overfished.

MR. PERRET: Okay and so we’re just trying to get ahead of the curve if indeed that happens with goliath and red drum?

MR. ATRAN: Correct.

DR. CRABTREE: I think this still has a long, long way to go. I guess one thing that strikes me is in Action 1. I mean we have OFLs that were defined based on average catch series and I don’t see anything in here that addresses that and it seems to me though we used average catch as the basis for some of our ACLs in the ACL Amendment and OFLs. I don’t see that the SPR proxies here work outside of assessed stocks.

MR. ATRAN: To that point, yes, our data-poor species OFL was set based upon recent history of catches and we do have -- The reason why they’re not in here is because we do have OFLs established for everything except that other shallow-water grouper complex and so it’s not really necessary to revisit them here.

DR. CRABTREE: Okay, but the OFL is directly related to MSY and then as the basis for the ACLs and everything else and not an SPR proxy. I think you overstate that NMFS has subsequently accepted the use of yield at SPR reference points as an acceptable biomass proxy. I don’t believe that’s accurate.

SPR can be a useful guide when you have stock assessments that combine it then with recruitment estimates and can give you
those yields, but for unassessed stocks, I don’t think it’s
informative and doesn’t get you at MSY at all. I think that’s
going to have to be more based on the ORCS method or average
catches and so I don’t think you can treat assessed stocks and
unassessed stocks in the same fashion here.

It seems, to me, there’s a significant amount of restructuring
of all this and the whole OY discussion that’s going to have to
be done to better address that and then it seems, to me, on the
Actions 2 and 3 that you’re going to definitely need, if we’re
going to go down this path, a much wider range of alternatives
there. I don’t think it’s going to be okay to just say MFMT
equals FMSY. Why isn’t it 90 percent of FMSY or some level
below that and the same with MSST.

There is a host of different levels we might set it at other
than one minus M times BMSY and 50 percent and so I think
there’s a lot more that’s going to go into this and it seems, to
me, this needs to be looked at with some technical subcommittees
and maybe with some input from the SSC, but I think it’s got a
long way to go to get us to where we need to be.

MR. ATRAN: To a couple of your points, yes, I realized I was
kind of limiting which proxies for MSY or FMSY would be used to
the most commonly used ones. There are others that we could put
in there and I was kind of relying on our NEPA expert on our IPT
to tell me when we’ve got a sufficient number and so we’ll go
back and I will use his guidance to indicate what we need to put
in and how much we need to put in.

As far as the SSC, we are already planning to bring this or if
it’s a subsequent document to the SSC at its next meeting for
review.

When we started working on this a couple of years ago, at that
time I didn’t have a document, but I went to the SSC and I
explained that we were trying to come up with default status
determination criteria for all the stocks that didn’t currently
have them and asked if they had some guidance, but their
response was let’s wait and see what you come up with and then
come back to us and then we’ll comment on it. It is imperfect
at this point, but I think we have something that the SSC can
comment on.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Any further discussion on this?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: I would just say that we don’t want
to overly complicate this. I think it’s already complicated,
just in jargon, and, to me, with the MSST discussion, the important thing is to get out of the literature why the more sophisticated stock assessment councils are using one-half of BMSY and why are the southern councils using one minus M and what are the ramifications of both?

I don’t favor either one as the ideal solution and so we might want to look for something in between, but that’s the kind of analysis I think we ought to bring to the council, is a better understanding of why different councils are using different definitions, but you can go anywhere from 50 percent to 90 percent on MSST as far as a fraction of MSY, but it doesn’t really -- It’s all arbitrary. I want to try to keep it simple and straightforward and related to what’s kind of existing in the literature.

DR. CRABTREE: I agree with you on that. We need to revisit MSST. The one minus M formula is a real problem and doesn’t work, because the natural mortality rates that we’re using now are so low, in many cases, that we’re setting the MSST, I think, awfully close to BMSY and that’s a real problem. I agree with you that that’s something we need to look at.

I think the most -- The part of this that creates the most heartburn, for me, is in the MSY and OY and I think it’s overly reliant on SPR, which I think we’re going to have to use more catch-based proxies in a lot of cases, because that’s the basis for more of these ACLs.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Any more comments? I am not seeing any and we’ll move on into the next agenda item, which is Number VI, the Permits for Veterans Proposal.

PERMITS FOR VETERANS PROPOSAL

MR. ATRAN: This is based upon a series of emails that were addressed to Kevin Anson and Kevin indicated that he could lead on this.

MR. ANSON: I was forwarded an email from Charlene regarding a request to look at the possibility of veterans receiving permits or having access to permits and it’s more along the lines of for-hire permits and reef fish permits, but also for potentially commercial permits too and so we threw that in there, but it was originally more along the lines of the for-hire permits.

Mr. Barton, who inquired about the possibility of the council to allow some permits to be issued, he just came up with a few
points here, just for discussion purposes, to get the ball rolling to see if there’s any interest on the council to do that or set up that program, but must have been honorably discharged in order to be eligible and permits are non-transferable, except to immediate family members.

They are not able to be transferred and then a timeline for transfer and some maximum two permits allowed per category to be held by the individual and so just I told him I would at least bring it to the council and start the discussion and see if there was any interest among the council to go ahead and do something like this.

I was thinking potentially we’re trying to look at growth in the industry and we have some folks that might be interested in getting in and certainly our veterans should receive some additional recognition, in my mind, if there’s an opportunity to issue or reissue permits, if you will, but maybe something along the lines of every year bring back some permits that don’t get renewed and we have a certain percentage of those that are available for a pool and if you meet the eligibility requirements as they’re listed here, if we develop, and then they’re randomly selected.

I don’t know if legally the agency can do that, but potentially have some permits available that way and so, again, I just brought it to the committee and the Ecosystem/Sustainable Fisheries Committee is where it landed and so I would leave it up to you, Mr. Chair.

MR. PERRET: I am not on your committee and it’s certainly an admirable goal, but the first question is legal. Mara, can we legally do something like this, permits for veterans?

MS. LEVY: I guess I feel like it would depend on exactly what it is you’re trying to do. Obviously we would have to comply with the Magnuson requirements and I would have to think about that.

I mean there’s not going to be any implication about discrimination between residents of different states and I think you could probably set up some sort of program. I think, just from an implementation standpoint, that that may create a lot of issues and I’m not sure how you would address some of those, but I think we would have to talk further about what it is exactly that you would want to do and then look at the different requirements.
MR. PERRET: Again, I think it’s a very admirable thing, but we’ve got a lot of veterans and we have no idea the number of people we’re talking about and non-transferable except to immediate family members, I’ve got a problem with that right away.

If we want to do it for the veterans, that’s one thing, but I don’t think they should be transferable to anyone and are we going to -- If we get into this, are we going to do it forever and any time a veteran is honorably discharged they can get a permit? I think it’s going to take a whole lot of thought if we want to go down this line and I think we all want to help our veterans, but we need to give this a lot of thought.

MR. CAMPO MATENS: I agree with Corky, to a large extent. I am a veteran, although I am probably too old, but I was honorably discharged, contrary to what you might think. It’s a nice idea and we are going to find ourselves in a position of trying to pick and choose between veterans and if we get 10,000 applicants, what are we going to do? Veterans from where, of what arena? I am certainly in favor of veterans, but this, I think, is something that’s just too complicated to fool with. Thank you.

MR. ANSON: I am not on your committee, but to address Corky’s comments, certainly these are just some ideas that Mr. Barton had proposed and we can set the criteria as we wish, based on the legal parameters that we have to work with within the Act or other legal requirements.

Again, just I look at it as a potential, or at least my proposal or thoughts on it, were that for those permits that don’t get renewed and so they’ve been issued and they were issued at one time and they were potentially part of the fishery, but then they go away.

Taking those permits and, again, there are few in number relative potentially to the demand, but somehow or another having some of those permits go back into the fishery to help maintain the fishery might be a possibility and certainly it would be challenging.

It’s something that I don’t think the agency has ever done or a council has ever done before, but you know like other things that we do, think outside the box and try to do some programs that address certain needs and I just think that it would be at least worthwhile to maybe investigate it, but I am not on your committee and so, again, thank you for allowing me to speak.
MS. BOSARGE: When I look at this, I try not to look at it from a veteran perspective as much as from a holistic perspective of allowing people, whoever -- Whether they are Indians or women or veterans or whoever they are, to come back and get these permits that we have these moratoriums on.

I have an issue with that simply because we put these moratoriums into place for a reason and every industry, whether it’s charterboat or whether it’s the IFQ or whether it’s shrimp moratorium permits, they may have a different reason in every circumstance, but there was a reason and they serve a purpose for being there.

I worry about opening this up, where we’re starting to let people in and we have an exception for this group or for you or for whoever and if we were to issue more permits, in the situations where it’s a permit with a moratorium, in my personal opinion, that should first and foremost go to the men and women that chose to spend their life in the fishing industry and that want to further their life in the fishing industry.

Everybody makes a choice at some point early on, usually, in their life as to what they’re going to do and what path they’re going to go down and I would like to see the people that chose fishing for their livelihood for the long term to be the first that would have access to something like this that have put their years in and their time in.

That’s not to say that -- I mean veterans, they made a very important career path choice and I mean they take care of all of us, but when we’re talking about fishing, I try to block out who it is that’s asking, what group, and focus on what we’re dealing with and that, to me, is an important thing to think about.

MS. LEVY: I just wanted to mention that this is -- Doing something like this is arguably an allocation, right, because you’re going to allocate fishing privileges to a specific, identifiable group of people.

If you were thinking about doing this, it has to be fair and equitable and it has to be in line with the objectives of the FMP and so it can’t just be we like these people and we’re going to allocate them. What does it do in terms of the objectives of the FMP and I think that was a really good point that Leann made about what’s the purpose of the moratorium and how does that fit into the objective of the FMP and how does allowing other people to come in meet with that objective? I think there are a lot of
Tab E, No. 2

things that you’re going to have to consider before you can go
down this road.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Thank you. I didn’t have anything else
listed under Other Business and is there anything else? Okay,
Mr. Chairman, I will hand it back over to you.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m., June 25, 2014.)

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