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PAGE 171: Motion to recommend approval of the EFP application.  
The motion carried on page 177.

- - -

1                                   **CARIBBEAN FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
2                                   **161<sup>ST</sup> REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**  
3                                   **Marriott Stellaris**  
4                                   **Condado, Puerto Rico**

5  
6                                   DECEMBER 12-13, 2017  
7

8   The Caribbean Fishery Management Council convened at the  
9   Marriott Stellaris, Condado, Puerto Rico, Tuesday morning,  
10   December 12, 2017, and was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m.  
11   by Chairman Carlos Farchette.

12  
13                                   **CALL TO ORDER**  
14

15   **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Good morning. We're going to settle down, so  
16   we can get started. I want to welcome everyone to the 161<sup>st</sup>  
17   Regular Council Meeting for the Caribbean Fishery Management  
18   Council being held at the Marriott Stellaris Hotel in Condado,  
19   Puerto Rico, December 12, 2017. I am going to do a roll call,  
20   and I'm going to start with Graciela.

21  
22   **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Graciela Garcia-Moliner, council  
23   staff.

24  
25   **BILL ARNOLD:** Bill Arnold, NOAA Fisheries.

26  
27   **JEREMY MONTES:** Jeremy Montes, U.S. Coast Guard.

28  
29   **BONNIE PONWITH:** Bonnie Ponwith, NOAA Fisheries.

30  
31   **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Jocelyn D'Ambrosio, NOAA Office of General  
32   Counsel.

33  
34   **ROY CRABTREE:** Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries.

35  
36   **DIANA MARTINO:** Diana Martino, council staff.

37  
38   **MIGUEL ROLON:** Miguel Rolon, council staff.

39  
40   **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Carlos Farchette, Council Chair.

41  
42   **MARCOS HANKE:** Marcos Hanke, Puerto Rico.

43  
44   **DAWN HENRY:** Dawn Henry, Commissioner, DPNR.

45  
46   **TONY BLANCHARD:** Tony Blanchard, St. Thomas/St. John, council.

47  
48   **CARLOS VELAZQUEZ:** Carlos Velazquez, council member, Puerto

1 Rico.  
2  
3 **MARIA DE LOS A. IRIZARRY:** María de los A. Irizarry, council  
4 staff.  
5  
6 **VIVIAN RUIZ:** Vivian Ruiz, council staff.  
7  
8 **EDWARD SCHUSTER:** Edward Schuster, DAP Chair, St. Croix.  
9  
10 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras, DAP Chair, St. Thomas/St. John.  
11  
12 **NELSON CRESPO:** Nelson Crespo, DAP Chair, Puerto Rico.  
13  
14 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Rich Appeldoorn, SSC Chair.  
15  
16 **CLAY PORCH:** Clay Porch, Southeast Fisheries Science Center.  
17  
18 **JEFF RADONSKI:** Jeff Radonski, NOAA OLE.  
19  
20 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Jack McGovern, NOAA Fisheries.  
21  
22 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Alida Ortiz, Outreach and Education Advisory Panel  
23 Chairperson.  
24  
25 **ALEXIS SABINE:** Alexis Sabine, Division of Fish and Wildlife,  
26 Virgin Islands.  
27  
28 **CINDI MEYER:** Cindi Meyer, NOAA Fisheries.  
29  
30 **YASMIN VELEZ-SANCHEZ:** Yasmin Velez-Sanchez, the Pew Charitable  
31 Trusts.  
32  
33 **DANIEL MATOS-CARABALLO:** Daniel Matos-Caraballo, Puerto Rico  
34 Department of Natural and Environmental Resources.  
35  
36 **HELENA ANTOUN:** Helena Antoun, contractor.  
37  
38 **TONY IAROCCI:** Tony Iarocci, commercial fisherman.  
39  
40 **VIVIAN RUIZ:** The Go to Meeting attendees are Maria Lopez, Sarah  
41 Stephenson, and Skyler Sagarese.  
42  
43 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Vivian. Before we move forward  
44 with the Adoption of the Agenda, I want to hold a moment of  
45 silence for a commercial fisherman from St. Thomas, David Berry,  
46 who passed away just a little bit after Hurricane Maria.  
47  
48 (Whereupon, a moment of silence was held in memory of David

1 Berry.)

2

3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you.

4

5 **MIGUEL ROLON:** David Berry, he always came to the council  
6 meetings and public hearings, and he was always worried about  
7 the impacts of our actions, and, for that, we are grateful to  
8 know him for all these years, and, although he was a little bit  
9 of a controversial fellow, I believe that he had his heart in  
10 the right place whenever he came to our meetings to provide  
11 input on the things that the council was interested in receiving  
12 information from the public, and so, David Berry, rest in peace.

13

14

#### **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

15

16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Miguel. For all of the survivors  
17 of Hurricane Maria and Irma, keep pushing forward and onward.  
18 Adoption of the Agenda. Are there any corrections or additions?  
19 Miguel.

20

21 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Before the meeting, Bill and I were talking about  
22 the possibility of, since we are going to discuss issues related  
23 to Maria and Irma, and that will take some time, and also  
24 because we have a very important report by the Scientific and  
25 Statistical Committee, perhaps we could make final decisions on  
26 the development of the plans tomorrow, but it will be up to the  
27 council to decide, and so I wanted to offer that as an  
28 alternative for discussion, and it will be up to you to decide  
29 when we get to that part of the agenda.

30

31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any further additions or corrections to the  
32 agenda? All in favor of adopting the agenda as is, say aye; any  
33 nays; any abstentions. Hearing none, the motion carries.  
34 Miguel.

35

#### **CONSIDERATION OF 160<sup>TH</sup> COUNCIL MEETING VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTIONS**

36

37  
38 **MIGUEL ROLON:** With the verbatim transcription and the problems  
39 we had with the hurricane, we were able to finally send the  
40 recordings to the contractor, and she was able to work Saturday  
41 and Sunday, and she finally did it, and so it's in --

42

43 The transcription is in your jump drive, and, once you have the  
44 opportunity, you can send us your comments, so we can put it in  
45 the record, and then we will adopt it finally at the next  
46 council meeting, because it would be kind of unfair to push  
47 everybody to read something that you just received it.

48

1 **SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS**

2  
3 Now we are going to stop for a second, and we want to recognize  
4 two people, actually. I didn't know that Jeff Radonski was  
5 leaving in January, but he has been instrumental in helping us  
6 with enforcement activities throughout all these years, and we  
7 are grateful that you did all of that, and we wish you the best  
8 after January. I think that you are going to go fishing or do  
9 something else besides enforcement.

10  
11 **JEFF RADONSKI:** I do want to thank the council for always a warm  
12 welcome down here in the Caribbean, and I realize, with the past  
13 two hurricanes, there are major impacts on the communities and  
14 families and the islands. It impacted us as well, with Lynn  
15 Rios. He is still without power, and it's difficult to work  
16 without those type of things, but it has been a very good ride,  
17 thirty-two-years-plus, by the time I retire, and it was always  
18 an adventure and always something new.

19  
20 It was always a joy to come down here and work in the Caribbean  
21 when I could, as an agent and as a supervisor, and so thank you,  
22 council, and good luck, and I hope, once everything settles  
23 down, we start moving forward on protecting the resources, like  
24 we're mandated. Thank you. (Applause)

25  
26 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The other person that we want to recognize today  
27 is Dr. Bonnie Ponwith, and we need you to come over to the  
28 front, for a picture. Dr. Bonnie Ponwith has worked with the  
29 council through all these years, and I remember, when I met her,  
30 it was through a telephone call, because Eugenio Piñeiro and  
31 Clay Porch were conspiring to get somebody down here.

32  
33 Like I said, we were trying to get a person assigned to work  
34 with the Caribbean, and that person was just hired by Bonnie,  
35 and she was a little bit alarmed, and she talked to Victor  
36 Crespo. Victor said that Miguel is not a crazy guy, and so talk  
37 to him and see what you can -- She told me, Miguel, I cannot  
38 give you that person now, but I promise you that I will do my  
39 best to work with the Caribbean Council as much as possible and  
40 to coordinate with the Regional Office and, for anything that is  
41 my hands, I can assign people, but, at this time, we cannot do  
42 that, and she did it.

43  
44 She promised to do that, personally and through her staff, the  
45 excellent scientists that have been working with us, and we have  
46 been able to achieve a lot of things that were almost impossible  
47 twenty years ago or fifteen years ago. We have people attending  
48 the SSC and contributing effectively to the discussions of the

1 nature of what we call scientific, and, for that, we are really,  
2 really grateful for your camaraderie and your friendship, and I  
3 would like you to come forward for the picture, please.

4  
5 This is something that was built by a marine scientist who  
6 happens to be an artist, and it's a token of our appreciation,  
7 Bonnie, of everything that you have done through all these  
8 years, and we wish you the best in bird watching and resting and  
9 then deciding what you're going to do for the next two or three  
10 decades. Thank you for that.

11  
12 **BONNIE PONWITH:** Thank you very much. It's beautiful. I am not  
13 Italian, but I'm pretty close, because I can't talk without my  
14 hands. I just want to thank the council. This has been a  
15 wonderful career, and it's been a wonderful decade interacting  
16 with each of you.

17  
18 The fact that this meeting is being held is a tribute to the  
19 resilience and the determination of the people from Puerto Rico  
20 and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and that's one of the things that I  
21 have enjoyed the most about working here and being able to  
22 tackle problems collegially and really try and make things  
23 better.

24  
25 I am also really excited to see how science plays into the  
26 important decisions that you're making on a day-to-day basis,  
27 and I will say that I am the person that you see when we get  
28 together as a council, but what it takes for me to be able to  
29 come and talk to you about science taps into the phenomenal  
30 talent and wonderful determination of the people at the  
31 Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and I just want to  
32 acknowledge them and all they do to help in this important work  
33 and make these decisions that affect your livelihoods and your  
34 lives, and so thank you for a wonderful decade. It's really  
35 been great. (Applause)

36  
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. For the record, Damaris just  
38 arrived, and so, for the record, can you --

39  
40 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Good morning. Damaris, and it's nice to see  
41 you all again, from Puerto Rico DNER.

42  
43 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**  
44 **STATUS OF THE CARIBBEAN FISHERIES AFTER HURRICANES IRMA AND**  
45 **MARIA**

46  
47 **MIGUEL ROLON:** At this time, Mr. Chairman, is my report, but  
48 Bonnie actually gave us this idea of allocating some time to get



1 testimony by the two local governments of the impacts of Irma  
2 and Maria on the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, especially  
3 how it affected the fishers personally and the businesses they  
4 have and their families and also the status of the statistics  
5 programs.

6  
7 The idea is to receive this report, but also to talk about what  
8 can the local and the federal governments do to keep a system of  
9 the fishers and the fishing communities in the area, and, also,  
10 we wanted to hear an update on the declaration of the fisheries  
11 disaster area petition, and there's not much, but we will ask  
12 Roy about the status of this activity.

13  
14 As you know, after Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, the  
15 federal government has a provision for declaring disasters  
16 specifically addressing fisheries, and so that's something that  
17 we would like to hear, and I believe that Carlos Velazquez and  
18 the DAP Chairs will also want to add specifically what they have  
19 gone through, and we want to start with Puerto Rico and,  
20 Damaris, do you have a presentation? Are you ready, Daniel?

21  
22 **PUERTO RICO**  
23

24 **DANIEL MATOS-CARABALLO:** Good morning, everyone. Let's see  
25 little examples of how Hurricane Maria affected Puerto Rico  
26 fisheries. First of all, I want to say that the hurricane  
27 affected the Fisheries Research Laboratory area. The building  
28 is okay.

29  
30 However, we do not have electricity yet, but the personnel are  
31 working with electric generators and are working with some fans  
32 to refresh the area, and I also want to say thanks a lot to the  
33 personnel of NOAA Fisheries. They sent hurricane relief stuff  
34 to us, and we received some electric generators and a water  
35 filter system and also a lot of first aid equipment, and thanks  
36 a lot to our friends from NOAA Fisheries in Miami and St.  
37 Petersburg. Thanks a lot.

38  
39 A few weeks after the hurricane, personnel from the Commercial  
40 Fisheries Statistics Program and the Fisheries Research  
41 Laboratory started to travel around the commercial fishing  
42 centers, and we visited and took pictures to see what happened  
43 after the hurricane.

44  
45 We interviewed the fish houses, administrators, and some  
46 fishers, and we will show you a general report of what happened  
47 after the hurricane. However, NOAA helped us with some funds,  
48 and the DNER and MER Consultants are working with a more

1 detailed evaluation, assessment, of what happened. Right now,  
2 they are able to interview approximately 600 commercial fishers,  
3 and so, probably for the next meeting, we will have a good  
4 report about that. Later today, Todd Gedamke, who is the  
5 project leader, he will show you a nice video.

6  
7 Let's see some examples of how the fishing centers were after  
8 the hurricane. Villa Pesquera Ponce, a fishing center of Ponce,  
9 they have relatively little damage, but just part of the ceiling  
10 was affected, and they lost two motors of the commercial fishing  
11 vessels and a few gallons of diesel. They don't have fishing  
12 activity for the next three or four weeks, because they do not  
13 have electricity. This is a picture of Villa Pesquera Ponce,  
14 and it's very nice. The hurricane was friendly with these  
15 friends, and that's good.

16  
17 However, the neighbors, at Villa Pesquera La Guancha in Ponce,  
18 it's a different story. They lost part of the building, and  
19 many boats were destroyed. The dock was destroyed, and seven  
20 vessels were destroyed. They had a lot of damage. Here, you  
21 can see the Villa Pesquera Ponce, and many boats are in the  
22 yard. This is the La Guancha boardwalk, and you see a lot of  
23 damage in this area.

24  
25 In the south of Puerto Rico, there is another fishing center  
26 that we call Villa Pesquera El Boquete de Peñuelas. Part of the  
27 ceiling was lost, and 954 pounds were given free to the  
28 neighbors, because they did not have electricity after the  
29 hurricane, and so they shared approximately \$6,000 in fish and  
30 shellfish to the community, and they also lost some fish traps.  
31 After the hurricane, two or three commercial fishers were able  
32 to be active to catch some fish to the restaurants around, and  
33 so a good and great spirit.

34  
35 This is Villa Pesquera --, and there was some damage there.  
36 They lost the ceiling and a small building, too. In Villa  
37 Pesquera Jarealito, they had the eye of the hurricane. However,  
38 twelve boats were flooded, but they were able to immediately  
39 save all of them, and they lost twelve freezers, and there was  
40 no fishing activity for the next ten weeks, because they did not  
41 have electricity.

42  
43 In the northwest part of Puerto Rico, there is Villa Pesquera  
44 Aguadilla, and a place we call Crash Boat Beach. It's a  
45 beautiful area, and this is probably one of the worst villa  
46 pesqueras affected. It was very sad, and I was working with  
47 these fishers for the last twenty-nine years, and they are  
48 probably the most organized fishing association in the last

1 thirty years in Puerto Rico, but the building was destroyed, and  
2 they said \$2 million in damage, and there has been no fishing  
3 activity.

4  
5 This was a very wide beach, and thousands of people have visited  
6 this beach during the whole year, and the hurricane eroded the  
7 beach, and we lost probably one mile of the beach. I will show  
8 you pictures right now.

9  
10 This is the fish house and the restaurants. If you see, it  
11 looks more like an earthquake than a hurricane. The commercial  
12 fishers told me, after the first part of the hurricane, the  
13 building was intact.

14  
15 Then came the hurricane eye, and it was blue sky and beautiful,  
16 and then the second part of the hurricane was horrible, and the  
17 strong winds and the ocean surge was incredible, and it eroded  
18 everything. You see this building, and, from this tree to the  
19 ocean, it's probably 250 feet, and now it's gone. All this  
20 beach is gone. This was the walk-in freezer and the offices,  
21 and it also looks like an earthquake.

22  
23 Here, you can see it better. This street was 250 feet from the  
24 ocean, and all the sand was eroded by the hurricane surge. This  
25 is the building that that fishermen call the lockers, and every  
26 single door belongs to a different commercial fisher in this  
27 area, and they keep their motors and their fishing gear, and  
28 this building was probably 300 feet from the ocean, and now it's  
29 in the intertidal zone. It's very great, the damage there.  
30 Three weeks after the hurricane, five commercial fishers started  
31 to fish again, and so a great spirit.

32  
33 Let's talk about the east coast. With Hurricane Maria, it came  
34 up as a Category 5, entering from Yabucoa, and Maria loved  
35 Puerto Rico, and so it took the whole island, through Arecibo  
36 and Guayanilla, and so the whole island was under the hurricane  
37 for almost twenty-four hours, but the east coast was the first  
38 one to receive most of the impact.

39  
40 This is the fishing center at --. There is two sailing boats in  
41 the parking lot and the backyard of this area. There was heavy  
42 damage there. This is Los Croabas, and you also have some boats  
43 in the backyard and in the parking lots, and the docks have  
44 disappeared. There are no more docks. Here is another boat at  
45 Villa Pesquera Los Croabas at Fajardo.

46  
47 This is Ceiba, Villa Pesquera Los Machos. There is a lot of  
48 destruction, and this is the building where the commercial

1 fishers keep their fishing gear. There is no doors, and they  
2 told me that the water flooded four or five feet inside the  
3 building, and so there was big damage.

4  
5 This is from Naguabo. Look at this. Carlos has more pictures  
6 of this damage, but it was terrible. Carlos told me they  
7 cleaned hundreds and hundreds of pounds of marine seagrasses,  
8 and they found two manatees that died and dogs and chickens  
9 inside the Villa Pesquera Naguabo. Inside, they have dogs and  
10 chickens that dies, and it was terrible.

11  
12 This is Punta Santiago, Humacao, and there was big damage. The  
13 hurricane surge action flooded the villa pesquera, the fishing  
14 center, and probably 600 inland. There was a lot of houses and  
15 people that had to go outside swimming or using boats, because  
16 everything was flooded. There was very, very big damage in this  
17 area.

18  
19 What has happened until today? What happened in the recovery of  
20 this damage? Well, the commercial fishing activity has  
21 limitations. For example, electricity. 50 percent of the  
22 fishing centers lack electricity today, and so it's difficult to  
23 continue to -- It's difficult to continue the fishing activity  
24 with no electricity.

25  
26 Fishing facilities and equipment has been destroyed, and, the  
27 marketing, we estimate that 33 percent of the seafood  
28 restaurants are still closed after the hurricane because of  
29 damage and electricity problems and low tourist activity, and,  
30 right now, the traditional food of Puerto Ricans for the  
31 Christmas period is mostly pork and turkey, and so another  
32 limitation for the seafood, and also migration. We identified  
33 probably twenty to twenty-five commercial fishers who have also  
34 left the island, at least for a year.

35  
36 On the other hand, in southwest Puerto Rico, Cabo Rojo, we  
37 estimate that 90 percent of commercial fishers in this area are  
38 active, but they also have the limitations of the marketing.  
39 For example, at Puerto Real fishing village, they have a quota.  
40 You just fish twenty pounds of lobster daily, and no more. The  
41 fish house does not accept more than twenty pounds of lobster  
42 every day, and so there is some limitations.

43  
44 My final slide is we estimate that the fishing activity is  
45 probably 33 percent today compared to the commercial fishing  
46 activity previous to the Hurricane Maria, but we see the spirit  
47 of the commercial fishers continuing to fight and to keep  
48 fishing, and so hopefully everything will be normal in a year,

1 hopefully. Thank you. Any questions?  
2

3 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Later, Tony Iarocci is going to talk about one  
4 idea about the marketing of lobster. If the fishers of Puerto  
5 Rico are willing to participate, it could be an avenue for them  
6 to be able to fish more and start to recuperate faster than  
7 probably will happen if we just leave them the way they are now.  
8

9 Mr. Chairman, we also have with us two fishers from Catano, and  
10 we also have a video that Todd Gedamke put together, and I  
11 believe that Carlos Velazquez wanted to address the group  
12 regarding Puerto Rico. Once we finish Puerto Rico, we will move  
13 to the Virgin Islands. At this time, we will allow five minutes  
14 each to the fishers of Cataño to tell us about the status of  
15 their fishing village and how they see things coming toward  
16 Catano regarding fisheries.  
17

18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Miguel. First, we have Ramon  
19 Santiago, president of the fishing village of Cataño.  
20

21 **RAMON SANTIAGO:** Good morning, everybody. My name is Ramon  
22 Santiago, and I am the President of the Villa Pesquera of  
23 Cataño. I want to thank you for allowing us to come here and  
24 speak a little bit about what happened with both hurricanes that  
25 hit us.  
26

27 First came Irma, and I told just about every vessel that we had  
28 in the villa, in the facility, to take their vessel and take  
29 them out and put them in a secure place, and thank god they did,  
30 and nothing happened to any of the vessels, but we did have  
31 substantial damage to all of our facilities. We had a couple of  
32 people that lose their freezers, and we had all of our docks,  
33 and they all were damaged.  
34

35 We had a place where we used to put the boats. They would park  
36 their boats with their -- Not the boats, but the trailers, the  
37 cars, and that all got in the water, and, right now, we have a  
38 real big problem in putting the boats in the water, because of  
39 all the sediment. We walk, and it's about to our knees. You  
40 can walk all the way out there, and we have to wait until the  
41 tide gets real high, because it's so low, and we need to take  
42 out the sediment, so that we can keep on fishing.  
43

44 We had water that came, but we didn't have electricity, and we  
45 have cameras in the villa, and, right now, we spent, in  
46 material, \$430, and this is just for material, to get the  
47 cameras back up, because the people that we had -- The damage of  
48 the cameras is -- There wasn't a guarantee, and so all of our

1 fishermen would put in a little bit of money, and we have a  
2 little bit of money stashed away to repair these cameras, and  
3 thank god. We have done a lot to put -- Every fisherman in our  
4 villa have done a little bit.

5  
6 All the wood that we find, and we tried to get wood anywhere,  
7 and we have fixed the dock up a little bit, but we have to  
8 invest around -- I would say, to get the dock back up and put  
9 everything back up where it's supposed to be, it would cost a  
10 lot of money, and, right now, not even the government is helping  
11 us, nobody, and we're doing it all by ourselves.

12  
13 We try to do our best, so we can continue fishing, and, as  
14 Daniel says, right now, I went fishing on the first day of  
15 December. I went fishing, and I caught around sixty pounds, and  
16 I still have fish in the freezer, because people don't want to  
17 buy it. Now it's the Christmas season, and the people are  
18 buying anything but fish. Plus, as they say, we don't have  
19 electricity. The people don't have freezers, and they don't  
20 have anywhere to keep that fish.

21  
22 What is another thing is the contamination. People say the  
23 water is contaminated, because they are throwing black water out  
24 of the hotels or something like that, and that came out in the  
25 news the other day, and so people are very reluctant not to buy  
26 fish. They are going back the other things, but we're working  
27 on this, and we're trying to put our fishery back together.  
28 Thank you for allowing me to come here and express my feelings,  
29 and if you have any questions that I can answer about the villa.

30  
31 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I believe that Juan Cortina wanted to say  
32 something.

33  
34 **RAMON SANTIAGO:** Yes, Juan Cortina wants to say something.

35  
36 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thank you. Then, when he finishes, I have one  
37 question for you.

38  
39 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Juan Cortina is the vice president of the  
40 same village in Cataño.

41  
42 **MIGUEL ROLON:** All of you who want to hear the translation, we  
43 have the little radios in the back.

44  
45 **JUAN CORTINA:** (Mr. Cortina's presentation was in Spanish and  
46 was not transcribed.)

47  
48 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Any questions for Juan?

1  
2 **MIGUEL ROLON:** (Mr. Rolon's comment was in Spanish and was not  
3 transcribed.)  
4

5 **JUAN CORTINA:** (Mr. Cortina's comment was in Spanish and was not  
6 transcribed.)  
7

8 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** (Dr. Garcia-Moliner's comment was in  
9 Spanish and was not transcribed.)  
10

11 **JUAN CORTINA:** (Mr. Cortina's comment was in Spanish and was not  
12 transcribed.)  
13

14 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I suggest that, not to  
15 lose the momentum, to allow the Virgin Islands to address the  
16 council at this time. Then we will go back to Carlos Velazquez,  
17 and Todd Gedamke has this eight-minute video, which is  
18 interesting, and, also, Nelson Crespo would like to report about  
19 some activity that they have made, but we would like to hear  
20 from the Commissioner and Julian and Tony about the situation in  
21 the U.S. Virgin Islands.  
22

#### 23 **U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS**

24  
25 **DAWN HENRY:** Good morning again to the council. In the Virgin  
26 Islands, as everyone by now is aware, we were hit by two  
27 hurricanes, two Category 5 hurricanes, and I think it was maybe  
28 about ten days apart, something like that, and what is  
29 unprecedented for us with what is occurring in the Virgin  
30 Islands is that we have all -- We say now four, but all four  
31 islands are down.  
32

33 Before, when we had Hurricane Marilyn and Hurricane Hugo, only  
34 one district was devastated, and so, the challenges for the  
35 Virgin Islands, they have been unreal, with all four islands  
36 being separated by water, and the coordination in trying to get  
37 things up and running have been challenging and very difficult.  
38

39 When Irma first hit St. Thomas and St. John and Water Island, we  
40 immediately made St. Croix the hub of the recovery, and so the  
41 federal government had already started mobilizing in St. Croix,  
42 and resources were already sent to St. Croix, and we were  
43 deploying everything from St. Croix to the other three islands,  
44 and, as you can imagine, ten days later, St. Croix went down,  
45 and we had to start all over again.  
46

47 We had to come up with new plans, and it really, really has been  
48 difficult, like here in Puerto Rico. Actually, I'm not quite

1 sure what the power percentages are right now here in Puerto  
2 Rico, in terms of how many persons have electricity, but I  
3 believe, in the Virgin Islands, we're still maybe around 50  
4 percent. We are hoping that by Christmas that we will be in the  
5 90 percent. That's the goal, and that's the objective, and so  
6 we're hoping for that.

7  
8 When it comes to the fisheries, a lot of what we heard in the  
9 Puerto Rico presentation we also experienced those same  
10 incidences in the Virgin Islands, but I won't steal Alexis's  
11 thunder, because she has a presentation that she will be doing  
12 for the council, and I am sure that both Julian and Tony would  
13 be able to speak, as well as Ed, regarding the fishermen's  
14 perspective and how things are coming along with their  
15 businesses and how we're progressing, and so, not to take up any  
16 more time of the council, I would like to acknowledge, Mr.  
17 Chairman, Alexis Sabine. She is a DFW Fishery Biologist, and  
18 she will make the presentation on behalf of the Virgin Islands.  
19 Thank you.

20

21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Commissioner. Alexis.

22

23 **DAWN HENRY:** Mr. Chairman, one second. I just wanted to also --  
24 I have to say this, but I have to say thank you to the  
25 government of Puerto Rico, and the reason for that is,  
26 initially, when Irma hit, we had an extensive show of support  
27 with Puerto Ricans that came over to the Virgin Islands to  
28 assist, and a lot of them -- They were actually caught in the  
29 Virgin Islands when Maria hit, in terms of trying to get home.

30

31 The federal government had to get them back over on the military  
32 flights, and so I want to publicly thank the government of  
33 Puerto Rico for assisting us initially, when you guys were up  
34 and running as well, and you really did come to our aid, and you  
35 provided us with support, and so thank you.

36

37 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Well, we are sort of brothers and sisters in the  
38 Caribbean, and so, whenever we can help each other, we will be  
39 there. Thanks.

40

41 **ALEXIS SABINE:** Thank you for the introduction, Commissioner  
42 Henry. I am Alexis Sabine, Fisheries Biologist with Fish and  
43 Wildlife, and I am based in the St. Thomas office, but, today,  
44 I'm going to be talking about the assessments that we did in the  
45 entire territory.

46

47 As I'm sure everyone is familiar with by now, we had Hurricane  
48 Irma come through on September 6, and it hit St. Thomas and St.



1 John. Then, exactly two weeks later, Hurricane Maria came  
2 through and hit everything else, including St. Croix. We had  
3 significant damage to all industries, but that includes the  
4 fishing industry as well.

5  
6 The Division of Fish and Wildlife partnered with NOAA Fisheries  
7 to organize an assessment of the damage done to the fishing  
8 industry. We worked specifically with Matt McPherson from the  
9 Social Sciences Research Group as well as Rita Curtis, and so I  
10 would like to acknowledge them for their work.

11  
12 We surveyed commercial and charter fishers and collected  
13 information about their damages that they sustained to their  
14 fishing gear, vessels, and other equipment. One of the reasons  
15 that we wanted to collect this information was to support the  
16 declaration of the fishery as a disaster following the storms.

17  
18 We also understood that a request for federal disaster aid money  
19 was going to be made to Congress, which would hopefully be made  
20 available to the fishers, and so we wanted to quantify the  
21 damages to get an accurate number for the level of funding that  
22 would be needed.

23  
24 The survey forms that we used, as I said, they were provided by  
25 NOAA Fisheries and Matt McPherson, and I believe that they are  
26 the same forms that were used in Florida following Hurricane  
27 Irma as well as in Texas following Hurricane Harvey, and so we  
28 tried to keep our methods consistent with those that were being  
29 used in other regions after similar disasters.

30  
31 We conducted our surveys for about a month on all three islands,  
32 and we had our staff stationed at different locations around the  
33 territory, and so we invited the fishers to come to our  
34 locations to fill out the survey at a location that was most  
35 convenient for them.

36  
37 We made up a flyer like the one you can see here to advertise  
38 what we were doing and to get the word out, and we also used a  
39 number of other strategies, such as radio announcements, social  
40 media announcements, but one of the main drawbacks was that we  
41 didn't have phone service, and we still don't have phone service  
42 in a lot of areas.

43  
44 Normally, what we would do when we're trying to reach all the  
45 fishers is go down the list and call everybody, but we didn't  
46 have office phones, and nobody had house phones working, and so  
47 we did the best we could in getting the word out, but, with the  
48 limited communications, I'm sure that we weren't able to reach

1 everybody.

2  
3 This is the form that we used for the fishing vessels, which  
4 includes charter as well as commercial harvesters. There is a  
5 lot going on here, but, basically, we asked about the cost of  
6 damages to vessels, fishing gear and other equipment, facilities  
7 that were owned by the fishers, and other damages.

8  
9 The other damages category was actually something that we added  
10 to the form. It wasn't previously there, but we knew that a lot  
11 of people had damages to things used in their fishing businesses  
12 that didn't necessarily fit into one of the other categories.

13  
14 For all of these categories, we asked for either a dollar amount  
15 for the estimated cost of damages or a percentage, and so people  
16 who didn't necessarily know what their boat repairs would cost  
17 them could report that their boat was say 50 percent damaged or  
18 100 percent damaged.

19  
20 We also asked some questions about fishing activity, such as  
21 what fishery do you participate in, how long do you think it  
22 will be until you're able to resume fishing, and we asked  
23 everybody to estimate their lost revenue from the time of the  
24 storms to the time that they were filling out the survey.

25  
26 This table shows the number of fishers that we surveyed across  
27 all three islands. We surveyed exactly 100 people, which  
28 includes sixty-six on St. Thomas, thirty-one on St. Croix, and  
29 three on St. John. Most of them were commercial fishers, which  
30 was 83 percent, and we also had seventeen charter fishers.

31  
32 A note about St. John. You can see the numbers are pretty low  
33 here. St. John was evacuated after the storms, and so most  
34 people left, and so there are quite a few charter fishing  
35 companies based on St. John, and nobody was really there to take  
36 our survey.

37  
38 We even sent staff over to St. John for a couple of days, so  
39 that those fishers wouldn't have to come to St. Thomas to find  
40 us, but there was a very low turnout, and so we're actually  
41 working right now to get an online version of the survey set up,  
42 so that people who had to leave the islands after the storms can  
43 still take the survey remotely, and we can still get their data.

44  
45 I just want to point out the numbers here for the commercial  
46 fishers, and we had about fifty-three on St. Thomas and twenty-  
47 eight on St. Croix, and those numbers correspond to  
48 approximately 80 percent of commercial fishers in St. Thomas and

1 40 percent on St. John, and so it's not completely clear to us  
2 at this time if the rest of the commercial fishers either didn't  
3 know about the survey or they didn't have any damage and thought  
4 they didn't need to take the survey or if they just didn't want  
5 to take the survey. We're still working on collecting more  
6 information, and hopefully those numbers can go up.

7  
8 I am going to go through some of these results, and, on every  
9 table, there are two sets of numbers presented. The numbers in  
10 black, the first set of numbers, are either the percentages or  
11 the dollar amounts that were reported directly from our surveys.

12  
13 We entered all the data, and it went to NOAA Fisheries, and we  
14 also gave them the number of known commercial fishers and the  
15 numbers of known charter fishing businesses, and they used those  
16 numbers to scale up the values to serve as an estimation for the  
17 entire fishery.

18  
19 We can see here that we have about 60 to 92 percent of fishers  
20 had vessel damage. The range of the dollar amount was zero, for  
21 those that didn't have any damage to their vessels, and it went  
22 up to a maximum of \$335,000 per fisher. As far as the cost of  
23 damages, this table shows what was reported, in the black  
24 numbers, again, and then the estimations, which were the values  
25 scaled up to represent the whole fishery.

26  
27 We're looking at about \$2 million in vessel damages alone, and  
28 what was reported to us was \$1.3 million, but, again, the  
29 estimation for the whole fishery is closer to \$2 million, and we  
30 do anticipate that this number is actually higher than what's  
31 here, because, as people initiate their boat repairs, they will  
32 probably find out that more things need to be replaced and that  
33 more repairs are needed, and so this is likely an  
34 underestimation.

35  
36 Here is some pictures of some damaged vessels. This is from St.  
37 Thomas as well as St. Croix. This picture, it might be hard to  
38 see, but what you're looking at is a boat that's been completely  
39 flipped upside down with its trailer on top of the vessel, and  
40 so this happened, unfortunately, quite a bit that we saw.

41  
42 Moving on to gear damages, it's very similar percentages of  
43 people had damages or lost gear. The number for St. Croix  
44 charter fishers there, zero, is to be taken with a grain of  
45 salt, because, again there were only three charter fishers that  
46 were surveyed in St. Croix, and so we know that there probably  
47 were damages to charter gear, but it just wasn't reflected in  
48 the surveys that we've done so far.

1  
2 This is the estimated cost of damages to the cost or damaged  
3 gear, and so, looking at the commercial fishery specifically, we  
4 had about \$900,000 in reported gear damages for St. Thomas and  
5 St. John, compared to about a quarter-of-a-million for St.  
6 Croix, but then, when that was scaled up to the whole fishery,  
7 the numbers were actually pretty similar across both districts,  
8 totally about \$1.8 million. Again, we do expect that this  
9 number will rise as people continue to find more of their gear  
10 damaged. The range for the damages per fisher was zero dollars,  
11 for those who had no damage, to \$158,000 that one fisher had.

12  
13 This chart shows the types of gears that were reported as  
14 damaged. We have number one here is traps, which is fish traps  
15 and lobster traps combined. Traps were reported as damaged a  
16 total of fifty-two times. Other gear types, they represent  
17 pretty much every fishery that we have. We have line fishing  
18 gear, which included rod-and-reel as well as handlines and  
19 associated gear, like lures and weights and lines.

20  
21 We also have nets, which included cast nets and seine nets, and  
22 spearfishing gear. Then we also had a few other things, like  
23 electronics, which a lot of people reported as damaged, and that  
24 included things like GPS, compasses, and depth finders. We have  
25 a category for coolers, freezers, and ice machines, which was  
26 also commonly damaged.

27  
28 We have safety gear, which included life jackets, flares, and  
29 anything else required by the Coast Guard, and we have a  
30 category for boat gear, which included miscellaneous things like  
31 anchors, chain, and rope. Those last four categories that I  
32 mentioned, the boat gear, safety gear, coolers, and electronics,  
33 these things were actually reported as damaged a lot more, but  
34 it's just that sometimes it was reported as gear types and then  
35 other times it was reported as other damage, because the form  
36 only had spots for four types of gear to be reported, and so  
37 anything else got reported as other damage.

38  
39 Because traps were reported as damaged so frequently, I just  
40 wanted to present some numbers about the quantity of damaged and  
41 lost traps. We had twenty-five fishers in St. Thomas and St.  
42 John that reported missing traps, compared to twelve on St.  
43 Croix. We also asked the fishers for the approximate cost to  
44 build their traps, which included materials as well as labor,  
45 and so that number was \$254 per trap for St. Thomas and St. John  
46 and an average of \$381 on St. Croix.

47  
48 The average number of traps missing was 130 on St. Thomas and

1 St. John and thirty-three on St. Croix, and so, the total number  
2 of missing traps, we have 3,256 on St. Thomas and about 400 on  
3 St. Croix. Again, this is only for the people that we surveyed,  
4 and so there is probably a lot more missing traps.

5  
6 I mentioned other damage, and fifty-six people reported having  
7 other damage in addition to their vessels and gear types.  
8 Things that were reported under other included coolers,  
9 freezers, ice machines, small tools, lost bait and fish, trucks  
10 that are used in the fishing businesses, safety equipment, and  
11 electronics. The total cost of reported other damages was about  
12 \$278,000.

13  
14 For facility damage, this included things like piers or docks  
15 that were owned or leased by the fishers as well as storage  
16 units or sheds that are used in the fishing businesses, and  
17 twenty-two people reported damage to facilities, totally about  
18 \$115,000.

19  
20 We also asked all the fishers, charter and commercial, about how  
21 much revenue do you think you have lost since the time of the  
22 storms to the time that they were taking this assessment, and  
23 so, right off the bat, we had some variations, because we  
24 conducted the surveys for about a month, and so people who came  
25 to take the survey on the first day had numbers that were for a  
26 different length of time than those who showed up on the last  
27 day, about a month later.

28  
29 Again, it's all estimation, and so we accepted this information  
30 in profits per fishing trip or profits per week or per month,  
31 and then we scaled it up to represent the entire length of time,  
32 and so these numbers are quite high. Again, we have the numbers  
33 in black for the people that we surveyed, which is a total of  
34 about \$1 million lost, and, when scaled up to the whole fishery,  
35 it's closer to \$2 million. Most of that is from the commercial  
36 fishery.

37  
38 One thing to note here is that, because the survey forms  
39 specified lost income to date, we know that these numbers are  
40 going to be actually a lot higher, because there is going to  
41 continue to be revenue lost. A lot of people still aren't back  
42 to fishing yet, and a lot of people sell to hotels and  
43 restaurants and tourists, and, until the tourism industry picks  
44 back up, there is a lot fewer customers, and so we expect that  
45 these numbers are actually a lot higher.

46  
47 To recap, we had reported \$3.8 million in total economic loss,  
48 and that's, again, from the 100 people that we surveyed, but,

1 estimated for the whole fishery, the number is actually over \$6  
2 million. Again, we expect that it's going to be much higher as  
3 time goes on.

4  
5 This is the form that we used for fishing-related businesses.  
6 For this, we surveyed things like marinas, bait and tackle  
7 shops, or fishing supply stores, and it's a pretty similar form.  
8 We asked for damages to the facility or the structure itself,  
9 lost seafood and bait, lost equipment and merchandise, and any  
10 damage to piers and docks. We also asked for the length of time  
11 that the business was closed, if they were closed during or  
12 after the storms, and their estimated lost revenue because of  
13 the storms.

14  
15 We actually didn't have any businesses voluntarily respond to  
16 our survey, and so we had to go chase them down, which, again,  
17 as I mentioned, no phones were working, especially for the  
18 businesses, and so we had to go visit them in-person.

19  
20 We were able to visit ten businesses on St. Thomas, and we  
21 received responses from seven of them, and so three marinas  
22 declined to participate in the survey. One had to contact their  
23 corporate office for permission to participate in the survey,  
24 and the other two did not have managers or owners available that  
25 day, and the staff that were there were not at liberty to  
26 divulge the information.

27  
28 We also surveyed two businesses on St. Croix, which were the two  
29 main fishing supply stores. However, they didn't get a chance  
30 to enter that data before I put this presentation together, and  
31 so that information is not represented here, but we do have  
32 some.

33  
34 Of the seven businesses on St. Thomas, we had two bait and  
35 tackle shops, three marine supply stores, one marina, and one  
36 boat and engine sales and service shop. Because we only had one  
37 marina, for confidentiality reasons, we couldn't present that  
38 data here.

39  
40 This is the total cost of estimated damages from those now six  
41 businesses on St. Thomas. They reported about \$336,000 in  
42 damages for all four categories, which was bait, facility  
43 damage, merchandise, and piers and docks, with a total estimated  
44 lost revenue of \$1 million, and so we know this number is way  
45 higher for all three islands, or all four islands, and the  
46 entire territory, but, because of the limited response we got,  
47 this is what we're working with right now, but we know it's  
48 going to go up, and we're going to continue working on

1 collecting responses from these businesses, so that we can get a  
2 more accurate figure.

3  
4 Just some final notes. As I said, all of these numbers are  
5 probably a lot higher, but this is a good start, and we are  
6 working on getting the online survey posted, so that we can  
7 continue to collect responses from fishers, especially those who  
8 had to leave the islands during and after the storm.

9  
10 I wanted to acknowledge Matt McPherson and Rita Curtis from NOAA  
11 Fisheries. They worked with us to develop these forms and  
12 modify them to our region, as well as Rita provided all of these  
13 scaled-up numbers to represent the entire fishery.

14  
15 I would also like to thank all the Fish and Wildlife staff,  
16 listed there, who conducted the assessments, and I especially  
17 would like to thank the commercial and charter fishers of the  
18 Virgin Islands, in particular the commercial fishers, for  
19 participating in yet another survey and being so willing to  
20 volunteer their time and information for us. Thank you.  
21 (Applause)

22  
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Alexis. I am going to open for  
24 questions, but I would like to say that this is an excellent  
25 report.

26  
27 **ALEXIS SABINE:** Thank you.

28  
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** It's a real in-depth report.

30  
31 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Before we finish, I came to the office thinking  
32 that I was going to see a big hole in the glass there, and I was  
33 lucky to find that my office was working, no air conditioning or  
34 anything, but I would like to thank a couple of people,  
35 especially the staff, Angie and Diana and Vivian. They worked  
36 under harsh conditions, trying to keep the council working,  
37 especially the fiscal part.

38  
39 Also, I would like to mention that, Friday after the hurricane,  
40 I was lucky enough to be there when Roy called me, and he was  
41 with Kim Amendola, and they were thinking about ideas of how to  
42 help, and I remember that he was thinking about sending some  
43 equipment, and I told him that I didn't need anything. When I  
44 asked him, well, does this come from FEMA, Roy, said, the hell  
45 with FEMA, this is from our pockets, and so they were trying to  
46 help us with that.

47  
48 Also, Roy told me that there was an opportunity to have a

1 petition from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to declare the  
2 U.S. Caribbean a fishery disaster area. He said that it's a  
3 long shot, because you know Congress and the situation it is  
4 now, but, since you mentioned that, and I join the group that  
5 this is the best report that I've ever seen in thirty years of  
6 working here or more about something like this happening, and so  
7 thank you for that.

8  
9 At this time, before we go into questions, I know that there is  
10 not much to add, but I would like to ask Roy if you have  
11 anything regarding the petitions.

12  
13 **ROY CRABTREE:** Well, I think both of these presentations and  
14 everything has been really helpful, and I know it's been very  
15 difficult for everyone down here and for a lot of folks in  
16 Florida as well. I was very fortunate in St. Petersburg, in  
17 that it looked for a while like we were really going to get it,  
18 and, at the end, all I had was we were without power for a  
19 while, but I did talk to Miguel, and I talked to Ruth several  
20 times.

21  
22 I spoke to FEMA folks, to try and get -- At least get the  
23 fisheries parts on their radar screens, in terms of  
24 prioritizing, and I don't know how much, in the end, we really  
25 changed anything, but we were thinking about all of you.

26  
27 We do now have fishery disaster requests from Puerto Rico and  
28 the U.S. Virgin Islands, and we have a letter from Florida. I'm  
29 not sure we have one from Texas yet. They actually had the  
30 first, Hurricane Harvey, and we are working with the Department  
31 of Commerce to have discussions with what their options are and  
32 trying to determine what action the Secretary is going to take.

33  
34 I am hopeful that there will be some response fairly soon, but I  
35 don't have a specific data as to when the Secretary is going to  
36 make a determination. We normally go through a process of a lot  
37 of data analysis and try to determine lost revenues, or at least  
38 30 percent, and all of these kinds of things that can take some  
39 time, but the Secretary could wave all of that and just go ahead  
40 and unilaterally declare a disaster, and, personally, that's my  
41 belief and what I hope happens.

42  
43 Then, of course, it will be up to Congress to provide some  
44 funding to go with all of that, and so I am hopeful that things  
45 are going to happen pretty quickly, but I can't guarantee you  
46 that, but that's my hope, and I can answer any questions, if you  
47 have any.

48



1 These presentations, particularly those that put some dollar  
2 values on the damages, like you have, and I know our folks are  
3 working with both of the territories on all of this, but those  
4 are really helpful to us, because they show the extent of the  
5 damage and how much people have been hurt from this.

6  
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Blanchard.

8  
9 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I am sitting down here, and I don't know where  
10 to start, but I will start with thanking Roy for his efforts,  
11 regardless of if we get money or we don't get money. He didn't  
12 have to do it.

13  
14 For the council, for their support after the first hurricane  
15 that they offered help, and for FEMA and the other agencies that  
16 stepped in, because, as bad as it is, it could have been a whole  
17 lot worse, and so I would like to start by mentioning that we've  
18 got a lot of the same issues that the Puerto Rican fishers have  
19 gone, and the Puerto Rican people have got. It's just more of a  
20 compact situation, because we're living on a rock. Let's face  
21 facts.

22  
23 Some of us, like they said, still ain't got power. I don't have  
24 power, and I don't know when I will get power. I guess they  
25 will reach when they reach, but some of the big issues after the  
26 storm was the ice and the power. You've got no ice, even if you  
27 want to make the effort of going out and that your boat ain't  
28 damaged, but you need ice to -- If you find anything, any gear,  
29 you need to ice that fish, maybe for an extended period of time,  
30 and people ain't got no money. Everybody wants cash. If you go  
31 to the gas station, they want cash. If you go buy food, they  
32 want cash. Nobody wants to hear about no check and no card.  
33 It's cash you need.

34  
35 How you will get cash? The bank has been destroyed, and so you  
36 tell me. I don't know, and so you had better had a stash at  
37 home someplace, or a stash someplace else, to come up with cash,  
38 or you ain't getting nothing.

39  
40 Like I said, the efforts of the federal government, as well as  
41 the local government and everybody else, who I didn't touch base  
42 and thank, that stepped in -- Like I said, it could have been a  
43 whole lot worse, and I would like to thank them, not only for  
44 me, but I'm sure a lot of the guys in this room and on the  
45 islands feel the same way.

46  
47 Losses here, I probably will take, just in gear, a third of my  
48 losses, but the balancing act is having to weigh one over the

1 other. You don't go out there and put in the time if you can't  
2 find your gear. The longer you leave the gear untended, the  
3 higher risk you've got of losing it.

4  
5 I was fortunate to have minimum damage to my boat, but some of  
6 the guys took a lot more punishment, let's say, whether it be  
7 with boats or a house or you name it, but I got away, compared  
8 to them -- I wouldn't even say that I've got anything to talk  
9 about.

10  
11 Right now, we're fighting with each other to be able to find  
12 somebody to work. I am working with another guy out of his  
13 boat, although my boat -- I had to bring it for repair, but I  
14 ain't running it, because, when you find the traps, you're  
15 pulling three or four or five traps coming up at one time, and  
16 you need space to work them traps in a boat, and you need power  
17 behind the engine to get each trap to the boat.

18  
19 A lot of times, we just have to chop them off as they come and  
20 put them in the boat and untangle the rope, and so my boat can't  
21 handle that. This guy has a much bigger boat than I've got, and  
22 so I'm working with him, as well as he has got a diesel  
23 generator, which I think we all figured out that a generator is  
24 good, but you better have money to keep feeding that animal,  
25 because you will go broke real fast.

26  
27 Mr. Magras is going to tell you the same thing. He's working  
28 with another guy that used to fish too that his boat went down,  
29 and it's a combination of my gear and his gear that we're trying  
30 to stay afloat and keep our head out of water, to make enough  
31 money so that everybody can make something at the end of the  
32 day. It's let's say, for lack of a better description, not an  
33 easy situation to be dealing with.

34  
35 Then, with a lot of the businesses that have been destroyed, a  
36 lot of the bigger hotels, to move the product on the market is  
37 another problem. We've got, like Mr. Magras said, 15,000  
38 children that have left the Virgin Islands. You think the  
39 children alone left, or do you think some of the parents went  
40 with them?

41  
42 The mass exodus, which is local people, for the most part, the  
43 lack of business from destruction, or they just can't compete  
44 with the situation that we're sitting in right now, but we're  
45 bleeding, and we're bleeding fast. I am going to let Mr. Magras  
46 touch on whatever else he could touch on, but that's the  
47 situation we're sitting in right now.

48

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We're going to take a quick break, but,  
2 before that, Alexis, I have a request to the Commissioner and  
3 your Director. If you can either provide us a copy or come to  
4 St. Croix and present this to the St. Croix Fisheries Advisory  
5 Committee, and I think that they would be very interested in  
6 seeing this, and, also, they can do outreach after you're done,  
7 for those fishers that haven't reported, because I think we have  
8 a lot of divers that may not have gear loss, because they're  
9 divers, but they just didn't report. We will take a quick, ten-  
10 minute break.

11  
12 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

13  
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Continuing with our reporting for Irma and  
15 Maria, I have Todd Gedamke.

16  
17 **TODD GEDAMKE:** Thank you, Carlos, and thanks, all, for having me  
18 again. I'm just going to give you a thirty-second introduction  
19 here and then show you a video that we're putting together.  
20 It's good to be back, and I'm not here because -- I'm on my own,  
21 and I'm independent, and I'm not here because I love NOAA, and  
22 I'm not here because I love the council, and I'm not here  
23 because I love sitting in these meetings for weeks. They drive  
24 me a little insane at times, but I'm here because I've spent a  
25 lot of my life in the Caribbean, and I think that the fishermen  
26 are the heartbeat of these islands.

27  
28 When I went around the world and looked at places to work,  
29 coming back here was a place that seemed that I could help make  
30 the most impact. Little did I know that these hurricanes would  
31 come through. For those of us that were here, we all have  
32 stories.

33  
34 Daniel Matos mentioned that MER Consultants and my team have  
35 been assisting in the damage assessment. That's one way we can  
36 contribute, but we have a lot of people that are very passionate  
37 about helping the fishermen, and so we put a volunteer team of  
38 people together, and we also happen to have one person that  
39 produces film, Lourdes Lasta, and she has put together an eight-  
40 minute video on the story of the fishermen, and so I think that  
41 this is our time not only to provide the numbers to the system,  
42 but it's also our time and our opportunity to tell the story of  
43 the fishermen as it went through. This is eight minutes, and  
44 this is a rough cut of what we're putting together, but I hope  
45 that you enjoy it.

46  
47 (Whereupon, a video was presented.)

48

1 **TODD GEDAMKE:** If there's one community of people in the world  
2 that I have met -- Fishermen are strong, and fishermen are  
3 resilient, and fishermen will fight through this, we hope,  
4 through the federal process and through these other efforts that  
5 we're working through, volunteers, to give a little extra  
6 assistance in the process. Thank you. (Applause)

7

8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Todd.

9

10 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I believe that we have how many people more  
11 before lunch?

12

13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Carlos and Nelson.

14

15 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I believe that Julian also wanted to address the  
16 group and Tony Iarocci.

17

18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We will go with Carlos Velazquez.

19

20 **CARLOS VELAZQUEZ:** (Mr. Velazquez's presentation was in Spanish  
21 and was not transcribed.)

22

23 **THOMAS FORTE:** (The presentation was in Spanish and was not  
24 transcribed.)

25

26 **MIGUEL ROLON:** We don't have that much time, and this is a good  
27 idea, and I would like to hear from Tony, so the other people  
28 around here can ask the questions to both of you of how this can  
29 be put together.

30

31 The other is we came here to also look for solutions and little  
32 bits that we can help here and there, and, just what you just  
33 mentioned, Alida can put together a booklet or a flyer of how a  
34 fishing community can prepare their lobster, or any other  
35 commodity, but the lobster in this case, for exports, who to go  
36 to and how to put it together, and that will be outside of this  
37 meeting, but Alida probably will contact you at some time to  
38 hear about this.

39

40 **TONY IAROCCI:** Thank you, Miguel. Tommy, that was very  
41 enlightening to see, and I just want to give you a quick  
42 comparison. I have been working in Nicaragua doing this same  
43 project, but logistics in Nicaragua is totally different than  
44 Puerto Rico.

45

46 Tommy has got everything set up, the infrastructure from San  
47 Juan to Miami, which he's done already for years. He's done  
48 lobster, and he's also done swordfish and tuna fish, and so it's

1 set up. The timing is different. In Nicaragua, we go from the  
2 Atlantic coast, a little island that's off the coast fifty  
3 miles, from a small plane to Bluefields, and from Bluefields to  
4 Managua. Then we go from Managua to Miami and from Miami to  
5 China.

6  
7 Here, it would be San Juan to Miami and Miami to China, the  
8 timing is perfect. The quality is there, and I've seen the  
9 infrastructure of this plant. The chillers need to be done, and  
10 in no way am I pushing exportation of product. The local market  
11 has to be considered first, but, at times when the local market  
12 is not there, fishermen need to sell their product, especially  
13 after a time of disaster.

14  
15 These guys need to make money right now, and the market is there  
16 to sell this lobster now at a high premium price. Seasonally,  
17 the holidays, the Chinese New Year and at certain times of the  
18 year, the price of lobster is sky high, and that's when you go  
19 to that market. The rest of the time, when you have a local,  
20 you keep the local market, and you keep it going. You have to  
21 take care of your local infrastructure, your local market.

22  
23 In no way am I saying export and not deal with the local market  
24 and the local people. That's your bread-and-butter, and that's  
25 what you have to do, but, at this time, we have talked about  
26 this for two years now. It's timing, and it's the timing right  
27 now, I think, to try this and do it right.

28  
29 I've got a Chinese buyer, the guy that I work with in Nicaragua,  
30 and he's willing to come down here and set up the whole thing  
31 and put a pilot project together. We could do it right out of  
32 his place, and you can. He's already buying from other places.  
33 Carlos Velazquez has been selling to him, I know, for years,  
34 since I first came down here. He gets stuff out of the Virgin  
35 Islands.

36  
37 If we can bring stuff by panga 150 miles to the north of Corn  
38 Island in crates and put them in the tanks, like Tommy is  
39 talking about, and chill them down and box them up and then pack  
40 them and send them, which takes way longer than going from San  
41 Juan to Miami, it can be done here 110 percent.

42  
43 It's something that we have to consider, and there is other  
44 things that I want to talk about, different types of gear, and  
45 we don't have the timing right now, to help these guys build up  
46 and get going, but it's something -- He's ready to do it, and  
47 we've got somebody else. If people want to use this as a pilot  
48 project, we can put it together, and we can get this done.

1  
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Blanchard.

3  
4 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Let me say what I've got to say here, and it  
5 might sound a little crazy. I'm speaking from the Virgin  
6 Islands' point of view, at least my point of view. The idea of  
7 exportation at this point in time sounds really great, but, in  
8 the grand scheme of things, I think this is a dog getting ready  
9 to bite us in our ass.

10  
11 Once we open the door to exportation in the Virgin Islands --  
12 The Virgin Islands have never exported before, and we're going  
13 to overrun these ACLs in the blink of an eye, and so now we're  
14 going to be suffering a massive shutdown, because everybody is  
15 going to be running out there to catch and sell, which we would  
16 have never done before.

17  
18 It's not to say that the fishery can't sustain a bump and an  
19 increase in our catches, but now you're putting another factor  
20 into this grand scheme of things, and I am not speaking for  
21 Puerto Rico. I think, if Puerto Rico wants to jump on the  
22 bandwagon, it's good for them, but, for me, I ain't that  
23 desperate. I ain't that hungry. I've got to get real hungry to  
24 go that road, because this ain't just a problem that is -- This  
25 is a quick fix, but it's not a long-term solution. I find that,  
26 in the long run, to be a problem for the Virgin Islands, at  
27 least for the Virgin Islands.

28  
29 Mr. Magras is behind there laughing, and Ed, because they know  
30 exactly what I'm saying, and I'm right on target, because, where  
31 we would have never run the ACLs over before, we're looking at a  
32 whole different problem to deal with now, and then we're going  
33 to hit that overfishing level, where we're going into a whole  
34 lot of grand scheme of things dealing with that. For me, the  
35 exportation deal is not on my agenda, and I don't know about  
36 anybody else's, but it ain't on mine.

37  
38 I think we could explore other routes to possibly get business  
39 kicking in the Virgin Islands, and I don't know what it is. I  
40 will have to put some thought into it, but, for right now, like  
41 I said, I ain't that hungry. I will do with what I've got, and  
42 you would be surprised what I could put up with.

43  
44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Commissioner.

45  
46 **DAWN HENRY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Overall, the Virgin  
47 Islands launching into exportation is a huge move, and it's bold  
48 move, and such a decision would have to come from within the

1 Virgin Islands, and it would have to come after very careful and  
2 thoughtful discussions and deliberations, because I am a little  
3 bit familiar with the repercussions a lot of jurisdictions on  
4 the mainland face with the impact to local fishers when they  
5 deal with exportation, because big industry comes in, and they  
6 take over.

7  
8 Because the Virgin Islands fishing community is so small, this  
9 will require, for us, if it is something that we decide to  
10 explore, to look at learning from what, in my view, are the  
11 mistakes from the on the mainland to ensure that the local  
12 fishers are protected if we decide to do such a thing, and so I  
13 do agree with Mr. Blanchard that, for the -- I am not, of  
14 course, speaking on behalf of Puerto Rico.

15  
16 You guys might be much more advanced in this discussion and this  
17 deliberation locally, but, when it comes to the Virgin Islands,  
18 we are not at that place, and we are not willing to entertain  
19 this discussion now at this time.

20

21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel.

22

23 **MIGUEL ROLON:** We have some experience throughout the Caribbean  
24 even with the Chinese, because, in times like this, we have to  
25 consider everything. The fishermen are calling me, and we went  
26 to a meeting, as I said before, in Guanica, and they were  
27 thinking about controlling the price, which is illegal, by the  
28 way.

29

30 Some others say that, Miguel, I cannot sell anything here, and  
31 can you get me a buyer, and that's why we've had all the  
32 discussion, but, from the council point of view, and I believe  
33 Tony Blanchard touched on the ACL, if something like this  
34 happens, we have to implement a mechanism to make sure that the  
35 statistics will capture the exports, to make sure that we don't  
36 jeopardize the situation that we have with the fishers.

37

38 In other islands, specifically Barbados and others that we have  
39 worked with through the years, the same situation came in, and  
40 not after a hurricane, but they call the Chinese a hurricane of  
41 some sort, but they came, and the reason they had problems is,  
42 when they come, they raise the price of the species that they  
43 sell, and, when they do not have enough supply, they go  
44 somewhere else, and the fishermen are stuck with the price and  
45 everything.

46

47 To both extremes, there are some happy mediums in between, and  
48 the fishers -- This has to come from the fishers, and there has

1 to be something organized by the local and federal government in  
2 terms of eth statistics, which is where we can assist.

3  
4 Number one, the idea is something -- It's something that has  
5 been discussed for the last two years, and it's not for  
6 everybody. It's not one-size-fits-all, but at least -- The  
7 other thing is this has to come from the fishers. I mean, it  
8 cannot be imposed anyplace, as you all know.

9  
10 This can be presented, and the reason why I asked that Alida  
11 will be involved is because the fishermen ask us to assist in  
12 ways that they can open the opportunities they may have to  
13 substitute what they have lost, economically speaking, from the  
14 fishing activity.

15  
16 They are talking about tourism, and they are talking about  
17 mixing fishing and taking people that have problems, mental  
18 problems or whatever, and taking them out to the sea, and not to  
19 drop them in the sea, but that they can have an opportunity to  
20 improve their capacity, and so all of this has been explored now  
21 by the Sea Grant program and the Agricultural Restoration  
22 Program, and the big part that they also asked us is to assist  
23 with the market, and that's what I wanted, because we are too  
24 close to breaking for lunch, and Julian and Nelson wanted to say  
25 something.

26  
27 Mr. Chairman, maybe we can, afterward, we can talk to Tony and  
28 Tommy and see what we can put together that can assist, and, as  
29 I said, it's something that we can offer to whomever wishes to  
30 do so, and the caveat for the local governments and the federal  
31 government is that we have to be mindful of the statistics and  
32 how these behave regarding the ACL and what we have.

33  
34 The experience that we have before is that some people were able  
35 to sell, because they don't have any avenues -- The restaurants  
36 were down and everything, but, when the restaurants came back,  
37 the restaurants didn't have enough from the fishermen, and that  
38 created another problem. It's like the people from Cataño were  
39 saying. Juan Cortina mentioned Cuaresma and we have a problem,  
40 because the timeline between here and Cuaresma is short, and we  
41 may be confronted with the issue that the fishers will not have  
42 enough offer to the demand that we have during those times.

43  
44 I don't know, Mr. Chairman, what will be the next step, but I am  
45 sure that -- Alida, if you can meet with Tommy and Tony and see  
46 if we can put together information that can be distributed to  
47 the fishers, that will be great.

48



1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. I have Marcos, but, while Marcos gets  
2 ready here, if you want to wake up that sleeping giant of  
3 export, you need the flexibility to adjust ACLs. Marcos.

4  
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** To be very precise, I think we are not in the  
6 position now to close doors, and we have the opportunity to do a  
7 few things new in our area, and what they are presenting -- The  
8 other side of the coin is the price of stability, and that there  
9 is a request from the fishing community. Market stability is a  
10 request from the fishing community and under a controlled pilot  
11 project that will have all those nitty-gritty dangers addressed,  
12 and that's the careful part that you brought to the table that I  
13 agree, but it doesn't discard the effort.

14  
15 Better and new quality of data sources, that's very important,  
16 and that's going to add up to the ACL revision in the future  
17 having a good source of data under a very controlled  
18 environment, and add to the professionalism of the fleet, or the  
19 fishing community.

20  
21 That is very important, and, again, I want to stress that we are  
22 not in the position to close doors that are going to create a  
23 socioeconomic benefit to the fishing community, not now at this  
24 point for sure, and another thing that I want to mention is  
25 remember that, if in Cuaresma -- The price of the lobster is  
26 going to be paid more here, and the local benefit for the  
27 fishing selling in Cuaresma is going to be better under this  
28 controlled exportation that I think is the way to go, and that's  
29 my point. Thank you.

30  
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Just in case, Cuaresma is Easter-time, Lent.  
32 That is what they are referring to. Tony.

33  
34 **TONY IAROCCI:** To that point, I want to address the  
35 Commissioner's and Tony's points, and, like I stated at the  
36 beginning, in no way am I looking to take away from the local,  
37 domestic market and the local infrastructure, but this has  
38 happened everywhere now. It's happened here before, and the  
39 timing is right for this, only because, after the hurricane, and  
40 I would never even bring this up, but we've talked about it, but  
41 it hasn't been the time and with the right people.

42  
43 This is being done now in Belize, and it's being done in Panama,  
44 and it's being done everywhere throughout the Caribbean, and I  
45 know the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico are totally different  
46 places, but it's being done by local people setting up a local  
47 business, and the Chinese are not coming in. The only thing the  
48 Chinese are doing are buying the product.

1  
2 If it needs to be done, and I agree, Miguel. After this, or any  
3 time after, in the next two days, people that are interested in  
4 putting, like Marcos said, a pilot project together out of his  
5 place, we can go ahead and do a sample shipment and look at  
6 logistics and pricing and timing, and I would love to be a part  
7 of it, if we can do it. If there is interest, let's do it. If  
8 not, we'll table it.

9  
10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you.

11  
12 **UNIDENTIFIED:** Most of all of our customers are hotels that we  
13 never had a problem selling them product. Right now, they're  
14 shut down, but what we're looking at is, when there is excess of  
15 product, we could ship them out, and we don't have to drop the  
16 price.

17  
18 Even with the hurricane, I've been buying fish from the  
19 fishermen, and I haven't dropped the price, and I'm not going to  
20 do it. I am not going to drop. I have frozen a lot of product,  
21 and I bought them at the same price, and I'm going to keep it at  
22 the same price, but, if I could export, and not in a big  
23 quantity, but, if I could export a few pounds of lobster other  
24 places, it wouldn't hurt the market, but, like I said, I respect  
25 what the gentlemen are saying about the Virgin Islands.

26  
27 If they don't want to do it, or they're not interested in it, I  
28 respect their opinion, and I'm with them, and they could stay  
29 right there. I am not trying to export all the product out of  
30 here. That's not what we're looking, but we're looking at other  
31 alternatives that we could have when there is an abundance of  
32 product that we have to move it and we have a door open.

33  
34 We have to be very specific that we're not going to ship all the  
35 product to them, but we're going to have some times that we're  
36 going to be exporting to them and some times that we're not, and  
37 that's another alternative that I'm looking for, but I respect  
38 the ideas of the people here, too.

39  
40 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you.

41  
42 **TONY IAROCCI:** Carlos, one last thing. To go along with the  
43 live lobster, a quality, fresh conch, and they're looking at  
44 sushi-grade conch, which would up the ante on the price of  
45 conch, but, like you said, we have to look at the data and how  
46 many pounds of conch are coming into the local market first,  
47 but, if you can do live lobster and fresh-packed conch, you have  
48 got two things going at the same time.

1  
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Thanks.

3  
4 **UNIDENTIFIED:** We could also do live conch, too.

5  
6 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Fish is defined as everything, and so, if  
7 you're going to export one, you're opening the door for just  
8 about everything. That is something that you've got to look at.  
9 Thanks. Crespo.

10  
11 **NELSON CRESPO:** Good morning, everyone. Regarding the lobster  
12 issue, it looks pretty good to me, but we have to be very  
13 careful that, at the end of the road, it's not going to end in  
14 the increase of the underreporting, and that is a serious issue  
15 that we have to take into consideration.

16  
17 The only issue that I am concerned about with the lobster  
18 exportation is that it's not going to end up in the increase of  
19 the underreporting and the fishers are going to start to bring  
20 smaller sizes than are permitted by law.

21  
22 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Let me say this, because we are getting -- We are  
23 past our lunch break, but, if we are going to establish  
24 something like this, remember that, number one, you cannot stop  
25 anybody from exporting from the U.S. to anyplace, especially  
26 with the President that we have now.

27  
28 Second, the concern that the federal government and the local  
29 government should have is to make sure that we tally up whatever  
30 is caught that is legal and that it won't affect the fishery in  
31 the area. The exporting won't be that many, at the beginning,  
32 and so, similar to what Puerto Rico is trying to do to capture  
33 the taxes at the dock, where you have only 400 companies, but  
34 thousands of people selling and buying in Puerto Rico, the  
35 situation with the statistics will be the same.

36  
37 We can develop a program, a project, whatever you want to call  
38 it, that Tommy, for example, if you have four more exporters, we  
39 have to fill out that form, and they will have the burden of  
40 making sure that what they sell out is legal and that we have  
41 complied with the 3.5 carapace length and all that and the  
42 species.

43  
44 Again, the idea to bring this to the table at this time was just  
45 to give you another tool that is out there that the fishermen  
46 may want to use it or not, but, for the government, our  
47 responsibility is to make sure that we capture those statistics  
48 and that it will not jeopardize the efforts that we have here.

1 Can we move to Julian and Nelson?

2

3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I don't know if Crespo is finished.

4

5 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I just want to make one quick statement, and I  
6 really don't want to speak for Puerto Rico in this back-and-  
7 forth here, but remember that Puerto Rico is suffering a closed  
8 season on the lobsters right now, and so, when you open that  
9 door, what do you think is going to happen to that ACL? You  
10 think that you're going to overrun it again? Probably.

11

12 **NELSON CRESPO:** Going back to Maria, I just want to read part of  
13 the report that I submitted to Mike Travis from NOAA. I would  
14 bring to the table another issue that we have to take into  
15 consideration.

16

17 After Hurricane Maria, I spent some weeks helping and talking  
18 with fishermen, restaurants, and hotel owners. The direct  
19 impact to the west coast fishers was devastating, and I can tell  
20 you that 100 percent, from one way to another, suffered losses  
21 of fishing equipment, facilities, fishing villages, like Crash  
22 Boat in Rincon.

23

24 We are totally destroyed, and that's not to mention the personal  
25 losses, where some fishers lost all their belongings and their  
26 homes. The lack of electricity, drinking water, ice, and fuel  
27 caused that the market collapsed. Hundreds of pounds of fish,  
28 seafood, and bait, had to be discarded, and that means thousands  
29 of dollars. To aggravate the situation, a considerable number  
30 of restaurants were partially or totally destroyed, which means  
31 we will be more limited in being able to market our product in  
32 the near future.

33

34 Right now, around ninety days after Hurricane Maria, the future  
35 is not very encouraging. Only a few restaurants have partially  
36 opened and have to close early, because they operate with  
37 generators, causing that the few fishermen who can go fishing  
38 are forced to sell their products on the street for a small  
39 fraction of the price. An example of that is in one moment the  
40 lobster goes to \$2.50 a pound, and the snapper is going to  
41 \$5.00. and dorado and wahoo are around \$3.50 per pound.

42

43 We have fishermen that have left the island and are not going to  
44 come back. Most of the deepwater snapper fishermen do not want  
45 to go out for fishing for the fear of not finding a market and  
46 not being able to cover the high cost of the trip. The  
47 projections are very sad, and the economic is -- There is no  
48 fishing effort. This is going to be a long and painful recovery

1 process.

2  
3 Right now, there is currently a massive exodus of the island to  
4 the United States, and the projections are that, for the first  
5 time since the 1970s, Puerto Rico is going to have less than  
6 three-million people in population. Adding to that is the big  
7 amount of flight cancellations to the Aguadilla airport and the  
8 thousands of hotel reservation cancellations are going to sum up  
9 a significant reduction of tourists for the west of Puerto Rico.  
10 Therefore, there will be a lower demand of fish in restaurants.

11  
12 Another concern of the fishermen is about the catch and reports,  
13 because definitely there is not fishing effort, and that can  
14 cause the impression that the fisheries are in danger.

15  
16 To end, the little attention and assistance from the government,  
17 local government, to the commercial fishing sector that has only  
18 been in the offer of bank loans and some incentives in the  
19 Agricultural Department of Puerto Rico, that the majority will  
20 not be able to reach, for the economic limitations, will be a  
21 huge obstacle for this industry to rise up quickly. Thank you.

22  
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Nelson. Julian. Then we've got  
24 Schuster, and then we've got to go.

25  
26 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** First off, I would like to start off by saying a  
27 special thank you to Dr. Roy Crabtree and his team and efforts  
28 for trying to help us to get the paperwork up to Congress to get  
29 the fishers of the entire Caribbean and the east coast, who all  
30 suffered damages through all the hurricanes here over these past  
31 few months, and so thank you very much for all the efforts and  
32 concerns that you and your staff have had and calling to see --  
33 Individual calls and calling to see how we're doing and if we  
34 need anything.

35  
36 Also, a special thank you to the Caribbean Fishery Management  
37 Council, with them at least contacting us and also finding out,  
38 before they were struck with Maria, if we were in need of  
39 anything, council members and a lot of the staff, and I  
40 personally communicated with a lot of the staff that works with  
41 the council office until we lost signal, to ensure that -- They  
42 were checking to see if we were okay, and we were checking to  
43 see if they were okay, and so that was a great plus.

44  
45 Bill Arnold and his team also, which falls under Dr. Crabtree,  
46 but Bill was always checking to make sure that we were okay, and  
47 we greatly appreciate that, and a special thank you now to our  
48 Department of Fish and Wildlife, which falls under Commissioner

1 Henry and her staff, who really, really paid special attention  
2 and came out and did assessments very soon after the storm and  
3 heard our concerns and tried in every way -- We had a big  
4 problem with getting our fish house power and everything, and we  
5 all worked with senators and the whole group until, finally, the  
6 pressure was turned on and we were able to get power back to one  
7 of the areas, so we can get some type of fishing activity going  
8 again.

9  
10 It's been a great struggle. It's been a very, very great  
11 struggle, and I lost 90 percent of my business, and the guy I'm  
12 fishing with right now, he lost his entire boat, but he found 50  
13 percent of his traps, and so I'm fishing with a seventy-year-old  
14 fisherman, and the both of has joined -- I found twenty-five  
15 traps out of 165 traps, and that's an example.

16  
17 We are working together to try to make ends-meet for us to pay  
18 our bills, and that's pretty much what's been happening in our  
19 entire fishery, is commercial fishers has joined up with  
20 commercial fishers, because there is no young generation or no  
21 one that is interested in getting involved with that fishery  
22 right now, and we don't see anyone getting involved with that  
23 right now, and we have also had a lot of people who have dropped  
24 out and said they're not coming back.

25  
26 Some of them lost everything, and they said they lost everything  
27 with Hurricane Marilyn twenty years ago, and they said they  
28 can't do this anymore and they said it's too much stress on them  
29 and they're too old for it, and so, right now, it's a struggle  
30 to get the product moved, the little bit that we are catching  
31 with the little bit of gear that we have left, but we are all  
32 working together as a team, the fishermen who are out there, and  
33 we are all sharing the little bit of customers and the little  
34 bit of people that are left on the island to come together and  
35 supply them and get money to pay our bills and start a small  
36 rebuilding process.

37  
38 We are really hoping that Congress can act to get us some relief  
39 that would help us to build back to at least 50 percent by next  
40 year, by hurricane season, and so, by the time we pretty much  
41 get back up to 50 percent, we are faced again with another  
42 hurricane season upon us.

43  
44 With that said also, a lot of our local restaurants have been  
45 severely damaged. Some of them were totally lost. Every hotel  
46 is closed on the island. The only people they are housing, the  
47 little bit of rooms that they have, is the first responders, and  
48 they are housing FEMA and the EPA and the Army Corps of

1 Engineers, all the people that came in to help us, and we  
2 greatly appreciate that they are there to help us, along with  
3 all the seven-hundred-plus linemen on all islands.

4  
5 The sad part about it, after their job is done and they leave,  
6 there goes the little bit of money that we have pouring into the  
7 economy right now, and we don't know where we're going to end up  
8 and what's going to happen, but I thank God for life, because,  
9 with life, you have a chance to do anything. Without life, you  
10 can't do anything, and that's the motto that I have used to keep  
11 me moving forward.

12  
13 Every time you have to take a break and think about a situation,  
14 it's very stressful, and it's very hurtful, and do you really  
15 want to keep going forward, and, like I said, we greatly  
16 appreciate it, and we all suffered so much, but I know there are  
17 a lot more people out there that have it worse than I do.

18  
19 It's sad, but I know that we're going to recover from this, and  
20 we thank you, the council, for giving us the opportunity to  
21 present our cases, and we ask for the continued support as we  
22 move forward in the rebuilding process. Thank you.

23  
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I've got Schuster for a quick minute, and  
25 then I've got to break for lunch.

26  
27 **EDWARD SCHUSTER:** I am not going to repeat everything. Thanks  
28 for all the reports, Alexis and so forth, but I am just going to  
29 speak briefly on what was mentioned here about exportation.

30  
31 For St. Croix, I think we're not in that position right now to  
32 go forward with exportation, the reason being that our industry  
33 is market driven, and we have enough questions on our minds  
34 right now when it comes to making that decision with our  
35 products and where it goes and the numbers and where it goes and  
36 if it's underreporting and what not, and so I don't think, at  
37 this time, for St. Croix, that exportation is a point.

38  
39 Bearing in mind that there is devastation on St. Croix, and the  
40 whole bottom has changed. Where it was sandy bottom, it's now  
41 hard substrate, and, where it was hard substrate, it's sandy  
42 bottom, and flip-flopped from Hugo twenty-eight years ago, and I  
43 think that we should really think about the exportation part.  
44 Thanks.

45  
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel, and then we're breaking for lunch.

47  
48 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Just a disclaimer. By no means -- The reason I

1 put this in my Executive Director's Report is because this is  
2 beyond what the council does, but we thought it was very  
3 important, and I thank Bonnie for the idea and the opportunity,  
4 but, by no means is the council or council staff pushing one way  
5 or the other any of the things that we have presented today.

6  
7 It has to come from the fishers themselves, and it has to come  
8 from the local governments and the federal government. What we  
9 wanted to do is to offer different angles, different  
10 opportunities, for people to think about all of this.

11  
12 I just received an email from a friend of mine, and he said,  
13 Miguel, remember to tell everybody that hurricane season starts  
14 in six months, and what he really means is that we have to  
15 prepare, and it's something that will keep happening, and so,  
16 the more prepared we are, the better, and so thank you all for  
17 this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to allow the fishers and the  
18 presenters to offer their point of view. From our case,  
19 personally, anything that we can do to help, please let us know.

20  
21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. We're going to break for lunch. We'll  
22 come back at 1:45.

23  
24 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on December 12,  
25 2017.)

26  
27 - - -

28  
29 December 12, 2017

30  
31 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

32  
33 - - -

34  
35 The Caribbean Fishery Management Council reconvened at the  
36 Marriott Stellaris, Condado, Puerto Rico, Tuesday afternoon,  
37 December 12, 2017, and was called to order at 1:45 o'clock p.m.  
38 by Chairman Carlos Farchette.

39  
40 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I have finished, Mr. Chairman, the Executive  
41 Director's Report, and we are going to go to the Scientific and  
42 Statistical Committee Meeting.

43  
44 **SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT**

45  
46 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Let me preface this by saying that we had a  
47 very challenging five days last week and an equally challenging  
48 late night last night putting this together to try to summarize



1 it, and I'm going to start off by kind of just reviewing some  
2 things that we've already gone through, just to kind of get you  
3 in the mood of where we're going, which was looking at the  
4 mechanism for dealing with scalars and buffers.

5  
6 Just to confirm, we confirmed what our language was, in terms of  
7 indicator species, and we do have indicator species, and our  
8 indicator species is a species that we are going to evaluate and  
9 assume that its status is equal to that, or assume that the  
10 status of the other species in the group, in the stock complex,  
11 is equal to that species, and so we will only have to look at  
12 that one species, and our choice of indicator species was  
13 defined by six criteria and what percentage was it of the catch,  
14 was it particularly targeted, does it share habitat, life  
15 history, and vulnerability with the other species in the complex  
16 and is there data for it and is there something that is  
17 specifically in demand for the market.

18  
19 Even though it might not be a really important species, in terms  
20 of total landings, it may be one that's important in terms of  
21 market demand, perhaps, at certain times of the year.

22  
23 I am just going to go through what the indicator species are,  
24 and so I'm only going to show you the groups for which there are  
25 existing indicators. Others are either going to be single  
26 species or they're going to be treated as a stock complex  
27 without an indicator.

28  
29 In Puerto Rico, there is Snapper Unit 1, and silk snapper is the  
30 indicator species. For Snapper Unit 2, queen snapper is the  
31 indicator, and, for Snapper Unit 4, mutton snapper is the  
32 indicator. For Grouper Unit 3, coney is the indicator, and, for  
33 Grouper Unit 6, red hind is the indicator. For triggerfish,  
34 queen triggerfish is the indicator, and, for dolphinfishes, the  
35 dolphinfish is the indicator.

36  
37 For St. Thomas/St. John, the same kind of thing, and so we have  
38 blackfin for the first group and mutton for the second and red  
39 hind for the third and yellowfin grouper for the fourth one.  
40 White grunt is the indicator for that, and pluma is the  
41 indicator for the porgies. Both redbtail and stoplight  
42 parrotfishes are indicators for the Parrotfish Unit 2, and  
43 surgeonfishes is the doctorfish, and angelfishes is the gray  
44 angel.

45  
46 For St. Croix, basically it's the same types of species, again.  
47 Here, we have two indicators for Snapper Unit 1, blackfin and  
48 silk, and then lane, coney, red hind, yellowfin, and, again,

1 redtail and stoplight parrotfishes are the two indicators for  
2 Parrotfish Unit 2.

3  
4 We get into our Tier 4 control rule, and there were  
5 modifications based on this coming out of the last meeting.  
6 Remember that the Tier 4 control rule is used when there is no  
7 accepted quantitative assessment providing status determination  
8 criteria. Status determination criteria would be something like  
9 MSY or some biomass at MSY or something like that, where we can  
10 actually say where the population is relative to what it should  
11 be able to produce.

12  
13 We define "accepted" to mean that an assessment was approved by  
14 the SSC as being appropriate for management purposes, and so  
15 there may be an assessment done, but, if it's not approved, then  
16 we're still in a Tier 4 situation. There were changes in the  
17 text, and I will show you what those are, but, relative to the  
18 next point, which is the designation of 4a and 4b, within Tier  
19 4, that is to say, they are now based on vulnerability to the  
20 fishery, and they are not based on any kind of assessment of the  
21 likelihood of overfishing based on landings, which was an issue  
22 before.

23  
24 We also defined "consensus" for the Tier 4 control rule, and  
25 that is two-thirds of the participating members in a meeting  
26 must be in favor of putting something in Tier 4a. If not, it's  
27 going to go into Tier 4b.

28  
29 Please note that the scalars and buffers for Tiers 4a and 4b can  
30 be independently quantified, because there is different ways  
31 that you get to OFLs and ABCs on those pathways, and so we might  
32 use something like a 0.9 buffer for one type, let's say 4b, and  
33 we might use a 0.7 or something for 4a. Even though that 0.7 is  
34 lower, it's because the process you got to that point allows for  
35 that kind of differences in scaling between the 4a and 4b.

36  
37 The last point I want to make is that the intent of the Tier 4  
38 control rule is critical, and I have a separate slide on what  
39 that intent is. This is the control rule, and I'm not sure that  
40 I can read it from here, but the key part is that second  
41 sentence: No accepted assessment, but the stock has relatively  
42 low vulnerability to fishing pressure. Then you go into Tier  
43 4a. A stock's vulnerability to fishing pressure is a  
44 combination of its productivity and its susceptibility to the  
45 fishery. Productivity refers to the capacity of the stock to  
46 produce MSY and to recover if the population is depleted.  
47 Susceptibility is the potential for the stock to be impacted by  
48 the fishery. That language is all out of National Standard 1,

1 or the National Standard Guidelines, and so we're not departing  
2 anywhere there.

3  
4 Then Tier 4b is if you don't meet that, basically, you're going  
5 to go into Tier 4b. Under 4a, we have an OFL that's equal to a  
6 scalar times the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the reference landings  
7 period, and that scalar can be equal to or less than two, based  
8 on a number of factors, and you will see that we actually  
9 specifically talk about life history and ecological function.  
10 Then there is a buffer applied to that to get from your OFL to  
11 your ABC, and that buffer must be equal to or less than 0.9.

12  
13 For 4b, it's the scalar times the mean of the reference landing  
14 period, and not the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, and the scalar must be less  
15 than one, because you're in 4b, and you're assuming that there  
16 is high susceptibility to overexploitation for that.

17  
18 The difference between these two is simple. In the first one,  
19 first of all, our baseline is going to be the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile,  
20 and so we're already saying, if you're 4a, our baseline for  
21 doing our calculations is going to be ramped up, whereas, in 4b,  
22 the baseline is going to be the mean, which is a lower point,  
23 and we're going to ramp that down.

24  
25 The scalars could allow you to move either way from those --  
26 Well, the scalar in 4b always goes down. In 4a, you could move  
27 up or down, depending on these aspects of life history and  
28 ecological function that we've been talking about.

29  
30 Here is the intent of particularly 4a. If you're in 4a, the  
31 implication is that you're not particularly susceptible to  
32 fishing pressure. Therefore, we could allow some expansion of  
33 the fishery.

34  
35 If you have a low susceptibility, which means you have a high  
36 susceptibility score, because it's inverted, but, if you have a  
37 low susceptibility, this suggests that you could sustain a  
38 particularly higher rate of exploitation than under the current  
39 management system.

40  
41 However, if you have moderate susceptibility, and so your score  
42 would be two, you would approximately hold those species sort of  
43 near where we are now. That does not mean that they would not  
44 go up somewhat. They could, but the fact that they're moderate  
45 means that you don't have confidence in going and jacking up the  
46 exploitation on these species without additional information  
47 that would support that.

48

1 A moderate score of two suggests that they would not sustain a  
2 much higher rate of exploitation, but that they're not overly  
3 vulnerable. If they were overly vulnerable, they would be  
4 already in a 4b situation.

5  
6 This intent does two things. It links the scalar to the  
7 susceptibility scores, and I will present an example of those  
8 again, but this is something that was done in the previous  
9 meeting, and it grounds the baseline for the scalars such that a  
10 susceptibility score of two should lead to a harvest level that  
11 is similar, or marginally increased, from the present situation,  
12 but not one that would depress it, because that would be a 4b  
13 situation.

14  
15 This provides the rationale for scoring the scalars and buffers  
16 and what is our intent, what are we trying to do, with this  
17 rule. When we can increase, when we think the situation is such  
18 that we can increase the catch, we want to do that. If we think  
19 that something is not particularly in trouble, but necessarily  
20 can't take a lot of extra fishing effort, then we want to keep  
21 it more or less where it is now. This intent comes back again  
22 and again when we're trying to deal with then deal with how  
23 we're going to define our scalars and buffers.

24  
25 This is the decision tree, again, and now we're assessing  
26 vulnerability. Everything that is red with an asterisk means  
27 that we have to make a decision, and so we assess the  
28 vulnerability, and, as I said, this was something that was done  
29 not last week, but at the previous meeting, and it was reported  
30 at the previous council meeting.

31  
32 We have year sequences, and these have been determined as well,  
33 and, in fact, they're the same year sequences for both the left  
34 and the right side, and then we have to -- Where we are, what --  
35 Our major task for last week was dealing with the scalars and  
36 the buffers to get our OFLs and ABCs.

37  
38 Just as a reminder, these are the reference periods for  
39 landings. They are different for Puerto Rico and the Virgin  
40 Islands, because the Virgin Islands went to species-specific  
41 data in 2012, and there is some nuances here, like not having  
42 2005, because of a perceived overestimate of the expansion  
43 factor for the east coast of Puerto Rico that skews the data.

44  
45 At the last meeting, I think I showed this, but these are the  
46 vulnerability scores for -- This is Puerto Rico, for example,  
47 for all the species, and so we are using indicators, and we have  
48 some species groups, and so we're not applying this to all these

1 species, but this is just an example of the exercise that was  
2 done.

3  
4 All the things that ended up in 4b are down here, and you can  
5 see we have high scores here, which are reflecting both the fact  
6 that they are productive and they are not particularly  
7 susceptible to fishing pressure, and these were used, in part,  
8 in the assignment of things to either 4a or 4b, and this is  
9 actually used more as a check in that, but the check worked out  
10 really well, and so we're very confident in that.

11  
12 It's easier just to show the 4b assignments, and, again, I  
13 showed these at the last meeting. For Puerto Rico, it's  
14 everything that's basically already under management with the  
15 addition of new species of the manta, the spotted eagle ray, and  
16 the stingray, cucumbers, and urchins, and so those are the new  
17 groups that are presented with the new species list, and these  
18 are in 4b for Puerto Rico.

19  
20 There are fewer species for St. Thomas and St. John, and it's  
21 the same species, the groupers that are protected, the big  
22 parrotfishes that are already protected, and queen conch is  
23 already protected and Grouper Unit 4 in St. Thomas/St. John and,  
24 again, cucumbers and urchins.

25  
26 For St. Croix, it's the same group of species, except now it's  
27 Grouper Unit 5, I think it's called, for St. Croix, but, again,  
28 the species that are basically already under management plus  
29 cucumbers and urchins.

30  
31 Here are the susceptibility scores, and these are going to be  
32 what we're basing our scalars on. Remember that I said that  
33 scalar is going to be linked to susceptibility, and, again, this  
34 is just all the Puerto Rico species, and so this is much more  
35 than what we're talking about, in terms of management, because  
36 there will be indicator species for a number of these, and then  
37 some of them are going to be in a combined stock complex and not  
38 be treated as individual species, but you can see our scores.  
39 The way susceptibility was scored was on a scale of one to  
40 three, and so the minimum value was one, and that means you are  
41 highly susceptible, and three means you have low susceptibility,  
42 and then we have things in between, and, again, if you could  
43 read this, the 4b species are down here.

44  
45 The question is we have lots of species up here that have higher  
46 scores and how are we going to do a scalar that's going to allow  
47 a greater degree of fishing pressure to be allotted to these as  
48 compared to the current ACLs.

1  
2 The first step is to get the OFLs, and one of our concerns that  
3 we actually discovered really late, like on -- It might have  
4 been Friday, or late Thursday, but the OFLs really need to be  
5 high enough not to trip an overfishing declaration due to a  
6 random reporting event, and this particularly happens when a  
7 species shows up rarely or there is a correction factor, and the  
8 classic example of this is the recreational data for Puerto  
9 Rico, where expansion factors tend to be large, and, for  
10 something that shows up infrequently -- In the extreme example,  
11 you get one fish, and it blows up something.

12  
13 If you just happen to get another fish that year, just by random  
14 chance, you have doubled the estimated landings for that  
15 species, and that's really more of a random event than the  
16 sampling size of two fish is just large enough to dictate what  
17 the size of the population, the size of the catch, is.

18  
19 We need to make sure that we're not randomly tripping and  
20 overfishing things, and so our overfishing limit has to be high  
21 enough to avoid that problem while still catching, if you had  
22 true sustained overfishing, we would pick that up.

23  
24 You also need to have space between your OFL and your ABC,  
25 because we have to apply a buffer. If they're too tight, it  
26 gives no flexibility in where you want to be, and so that kind  
27 of says that you want to get your OFL up here, such that you can  
28 buffer down at a variety of levels, depending on the importance  
29 of the species in terms of its ecological function or in terms  
30 of its degree to support fishing, and so we would want to buffer  
31 down a susceptibility score of three species much less than a  
32 susceptibility of two species, because we think that  
33 susceptibility of three species can take more fishing pressure.

34  
35 I apologize for the phrasing, but we need to scale the scalar  
36 relative to the intent of our Tier 4 criteria. Remember that, a  
37 moderately-susceptibility species, you would be multiplying by a  
38 susceptibility score of two, for example, and this is for  
39 example, by 0.5. That brings that OFL level back down to the  
40 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, which, when we applied a buffer, would get it  
41 kind of close to where it wants to be.

42  
43 For low-susceptibility species, we would be multiplying by  
44 three. If we had that same 0.5 scalar, and I'm just using this  
45 as an example, it returns your OFL back to 1.5 times the 75<sup>th</sup>  
46 percentile, and so you're getting a substantial increase there  
47 even after you apply a buffer.

48

1 So how do we do this? Here is an example of -- I will use the  
2 same dataset for the moderate and the low susceptibility, and so  
3 the moderate susceptibility would start at your 75<sup>th</sup> percentile,  
4 which is that blue line, and you would apply your scalar,  
5 starting with susceptibility, and so the susceptibility is two,  
6 and so you're multiplying by two. You would then add that 0.5,  
7 and, again, that 0.5 is just an example, which returns that  
8 green-dashed line basically back down to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, and  
9 that would be where your OFL would be.

10  
11 In this case, it just bumps you up and then bumps you back down,  
12 because is not a species that we necessarily think will take a  
13 lot more fishing pressure. It can take a little bit more, which  
14 is why we have it at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, but there will be a  
15 buffer applied to that, and the buffer might bring it all the  
16 way back down the average value, which is where ACLs are set  
17 now, but it might not. It could allow for substantial, or at  
18 least a little bit, of increase.

19  
20 If this was a low-susceptibility species, then we're multiplying  
21 -- Our susceptibility is three, and so we're bumping that 75<sup>th</sup>  
22 percentile way up. Then, if we kept that same 0.5 scalar, it  
23 would return it back down to a value that is 1.5 times the 75<sup>th</sup>  
24 percentile, and that would be our OFL. We would apply a buffer  
25 and get some substantial increase in what would be allowed under  
26 the ABC relative to what we have now, which is set at the  
27 average value.

28  
29 For those species that are low susceptibility, we're looking to  
30 have a substantial increase. The question really is, okay, what  
31 is this value really going to be, but 0.5 is something that  
32 works in this scenario, but there is a catch.

33  
34 We have to be higher to not trigger our overfishing due to  
35 random reporting, and we have to have that space in between. We  
36 need to scale the scalar relative to variability in the data,  
37 and that's the key thing here, is because -- This is real data  
38 for a species, and you can see that, in one year, the catch is  
39 just super above everything else, and this was a recreational  
40 correction factor that did that.

41  
42 We wouldn't want this fishery to be tripped into an overfishing  
43 situation just because we had this one year of statistical  
44 artifact, and so we want to be able to account for that kind of  
45 variability when we're scaling our scalar, and we're going to  
46 use the coefficient of variation as our measure of relative  
47 variation.

48

1 The coefficient of variation is the standard deviation divided  
2 by the mean, and so it's a relative estimate of how much  
3 variability you have that's independent of whether your landings  
4 are high or low.

5  
6 Just to give you an idea of what we're dealing with, this is  
7 data that was on hand and provided by the Southeast Center, or  
8 Bill's group, I think, actually provided that, but it's not data  
9 from the reference periods.

10  
11 It's just data from Puerto Rico over a time series of catches,  
12 but it gives you an idea of what's going on, and, for purposes  
13 here, I have put green on those that are either species that are  
14 going to be managed in Puerto Rico or are the indicator species  
15 that are going to be managed, the red are the 4b species, and  
16 the black is either something that is part of a species complex,  
17 that's being covered by an indicator, or is going to be lumped  
18 with other species as a multispecies complex without an  
19 indicator.

20  
21 There is a couple of things to note here, and one is that our --  
22 This is the coefficients of variation, just running this  
23 direction, and it's not on any particular scale, but they're  
24 just in order, and you can see that when the coefficients of  
25 variation are low, and let's say they're on this side, they're  
26 also coupled with species that are particularly important to the  
27 catch in terms of the volume of landings.

28  
29 When we get over here, we're down in the thousands of pounds, or  
30 even hundreds of pounds of landings, and, again, this is Puerto  
31 Rico, and so we're dealing with species that are more marginal  
32 in the catch, and that's one of the reasons that their  
33 coefficients of variation are so high, is because they're not  
34 showing up very often and so there's a lot of variability in  
35 that. You only see the one error bar, because the other error  
36 bar goes off the scale, and so it was only drawn once, and so  
37 there is sort of a dividing line at about a value of one, where  
38 you get kind of reasonable values.

39  
40 Then, over here, where things start getting a little bit more  
41 variable, we quickly realized that we have two separate groups.  
42 We really have to treat this group, which is our main species,  
43 different than here, because, here, the variability is still at  
44 a point where the method we came up with is questionable, and I  
45 will get to what might be done with those, but we actually  
46 didn't get that far.

47  
48 Keep in mind that we are talking basically -- When I talk about



1 scalars and buffers from now on, we're talking about the 4a  
2 species in here and not so much about the ones that are down  
3 here, but these are the ones that are of less importance, at  
4 least in terms of total landings, in the fishery.

5

6 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Richard, we have a question.

7

8 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I've just got a question for everybody here,  
9 because I am kind of totally lost here, and I am wondering if I  
10 am the only one.

11

12 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** You can't be the only one, because I got  
13 lost about four times putting this presentation together, and I  
14 was at the meeting and had extensive notes.

15

16 **TONY BLANCHARD:** To be honest with you, I don't understand  
17 what's going on. For me to even have a question or make a  
18 statement, I don't know what to be asking or saying. I mean, I  
19 am looking at numbers, and I'm totally lost as to what is going  
20 on and how the scalar and buffer are going.

21

22 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Well, we'll get to --

23

24 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I just can't figure it out.

25

26 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Right now, I'm just putting together an  
27 issue that we had to deal with, and it will come back down to  
28 numbers. I'm not sure that's going to make it any better for  
29 you, and probably not, but I think it's important to have on the  
30 record what we were doing in a quantitative sense, but it is  
31 difficult, and, as I said, I got lost myself, and so I can  
32 understand.

33

34 The variability is important. If we don't deal with that, we're  
35 going to have a situation where something gets triggered as  
36 being overfished, and we're in a rebuilding plan for something  
37 that was a statistical artifact, and that's what we're trying to  
38 avoid, and so it looks very complicated, but the goal is fairly  
39 simple.

40

41 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel.

42

43 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Most of all, that looks like a Christmas  
44 decoration, but the whole idea is to put it on the record. What  
45 we need to ask Richard when he finishes is what would be the  
46 next steps and what are the recommendations, specific  
47 recommendations, of the SSC regarding the species or species  
48 group that we have, because all of this, as he said, is

1 important to clear up some of the issue that they discussed at  
2 the SSC.

3  
4 They spent two weeks discussing this, and this last week is when  
5 they came up with this recommendation, and so I would encourage  
6 you to wait until he finishes his presentation and then come  
7 back with your questions about specifics that he needs to  
8 address and convey to the council.

9  
10 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I understand what you're saying, Miguel, but,  
11 from the last council meeting, I had some kind of idea, or at  
12 least I think I had an idea, as to what was going on, but now  
13 I'm completely lost with this here, and I don't know what to say  
14 or what to do, to be honest with you. All I've seen is numbers  
15 and scalars and everything else, and I don't understand what is  
16 happening.

17  
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I think he's going to bring it back, but  
19 Commissioner.

20  
21 **DAWN HENRY:** Good afternoon to everyone. We apologize for  
22 arriving a little bit late, and we understand that the council  
23 had to start the meeting timely, but I wanted to put on the  
24 record, if you would allow me, Mr. Chairman, a statement from  
25 the Virgin Islands as we move forward with discussing this  
26 portion of the agenda.

27  
28 Again, I am Dawn Henry, and, as the Commissioner for the  
29 Department of Planning and Natural Resources, the Division of  
30 Fish and Wildlife, I am the government of the Virgin Islands  
31 representative on this council. As the government  
32 representative, I state, for the record, should the Virgin  
33 Islands not be satisfied with the determinations made with  
34 respect to this portion of the agenda, the government will  
35 challenge those decisions that it disagrees with. The Virgin  
36 Islands will exhaust all available avenues, to include filing  
37 any necessary legal action.

38  
39 Notwithstanding that statement, the Virgin Islands is here to  
40 fully participate in the discussions, in hopes of reaching a  
41 favorable decision to the fishers of the Virgin Islands and the  
42 wider economy. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for allowing me to  
43 make this statement.

44  
45 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Commissioner. Roy.

46  
47 **ROY CRABTREE:** Well, I think, in the interest of trying to work  
48 this out, what I am getting is there is a lot of confusion as to

1 how this works and what it means, and I think one thing that  
2 would be helpful is if we could get a copy of Richard's  
3 presentation, because I don't think it's in the briefing book.

4  
5 If we could get a copy of the presentation, so that people can  
6 look at it, and I don't know how much of the beginning of it you  
7 missed, but, Richard, could you kind of back up and walk us  
8 through again?

9  
10 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** All right. I think this kind of summarizes  
11 what we're trying to say in hopefully a simple graphical form.  
12 We have a series of data, and that's associated with an average.  
13 In our current ACLs, or current management regime, the ACLs are  
14 set to the average. What we are trying to do for these species  
15 is, because they're in 4a, is to allow an increase in how much  
16 can be taken and understanding that we don't have a lot of  
17 information about where that should be.

18  
19 The first thing we did was we said, okay, we don't want to deal  
20 with the average and we want to deal with the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile,  
21 because that's going to be a higher value, and we want to use  
22 that as our baseline, and this will allow us to, where it is  
23 appropriate, allow a higher catch level for particular stocks.

24  
25 Now, remember what we are doing is developing a process. We are  
26 not looking at, and have not looked at, what the actual ACLs and  
27 OFLs would be for any species. We are trying to develop a  
28 system that will work across all species that is defensible from  
29 a science point of view.

30  
31 We have a scalar, and our scalar for a low-susceptibility  
32 species is three, and so we would multiply our 75<sup>th</sup> percentile by  
33 three to get some value up here. That is part of our scalar,  
34 and the second part of the scalar is some other value, which we  
35 haven't determined yet, but a value of 0.5, approximately, works  
36 relative to what our intent was for Tier 4a, and so, in this  
37 case, we multiply by three, and then we basically cut that value  
38 in half, and we end up here, and that's our overfishing level,  
39 and you can see it's higher than anywhere in historical catch.

40  
41 Then there would be a buffer applied, and we haven't talked  
42 about buffers and what those would look like, but that buffer  
43 would bring the OFL down to some ABC, and I randomly drew a line  
44 here. It could be up here, or it could be down here, and that  
45 depends on a number of factors, and certainly not the least of  
46 which is how we calculate the buffer, but there is a buffer that  
47 goes from OFL to ABC.

48

1 The only constraint on that is that the buffer has to be greater  
2 than -- It's going to be less than or equal to 0.9. If it was  
3 0.9, it would be up here someplace, and so that's what we're  
4 trying to do.

5  
6 We're using susceptibility to say how much can we raise our  
7 catch above initially this 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, and then we need to  
8 scale that relative to our intent, which was really based on a  
9 moderate-susceptibility species where the score is two, which  
10 basically brings it back down to that 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, because  
11 we're saying this species is not particularly good and it's not  
12 particularly bad and we can allow a little bit more exploitation  
13 on it, but it's not a 4b species, where we want to cut it back,  
14 and it's not a susceptibility of three species, where we know we  
15 can put it higher.

16  
17 This figure shows what we're trying to do, and the rest is how  
18 do we come up with whatever this value is going to be, and that  
19 ends up being fairly complicated.

20

21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Richard. Roy.

22

23 **ROY CRABTREE:** What we have on the books now, if I understand  
24 this right, is most of our ACLs and ABCs are based on the  
25 average, generally speaking, now, right? That's kind of the  
26 line that is averaged, is what we have now.

27

28 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I think the initial species, which were the  
29 ones needing attention, were based on the mean, and I think that  
30 the second round, the 2011 species, were based on the median.

31

32 **ROY CRABTREE:** Okay, but it would be somewhere in that  
33 neighborhood.

34

35 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Yes.

36

37 **ROY CRABTREE:** For the stocks that we think are not likely to be  
38 in trouble or have problems, this then gets scaled up three  
39 times and then, based on these buffers and things, it comes back  
40 down somewhere between that dotted green line at the top and  
41 what is the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile?

42

43 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** You could buffer it below that, but I don't  
44 know why you would want to. In this scenario, you wouldn't want  
45 to. If you were a moderate-susceptibility species, you might  
46 want to buffer it.

47

48 **ROY CRABTREE:** In this scenario, we end up with an ABC that's

1 higher than what our current ACLs are and an overfishing level  
2 that's higher again than that.  
3  
4 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** In this particular situation, and, again,  
5 it's hypothetical and I just drew the lines, you can see our ABC  
6 is above everything except the highest recorded catch.  
7  
8 **ROY CRABTREE:** Yes, and so we what we have had happen in recent  
9 years is some closures in this recent part of the timeframe,  
10 because we went over the ACL, but, if we followed this process,  
11 we wouldn't have had any closures, it looks like. I guess what  
12 I would like to see, Richard, is you had a -- I think I heard  
13 you say that most of the species that have large landings fall  
14 into this low susceptibility.  
15  
16 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** No, I said the ones that have large  
17 landings have low coefficients of variation. It includes both  
18 moderately-susceptibility and low-susceptibility species.  
19  
20 **ROY CRABTREE:** Do we have a list somewhere, where we can look at  
21 what species is what, because you did have a graph, but it was a  
22 lot, and I couldn't read any of it.  
23  
24 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** We could blow that up and go --  
25  
26 **ROY CRABTREE:** I am assuming, for example, that spiny lobster  
27 falls into this group.  
28  
29 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Yes, it does.  
30  
31 **ROY CRABTREE:** Okay, and dolphin and things like that.  
32  
33 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Dolphin, and remember that this -- What  
34 we're trying to work right now is kind of a default value. If,  
35 for some reason, we think something really shouldn't get that  
36 default value, either because we think it can support even more,  
37 and you mentioned dolphinfish, and that is one of the examples,  
38 it can go even higher.  
39  
40 If it's something that has ecological value and we think that  
41 catch should be lowered to be able to maintain that ecological  
42 value, it can be lowered, but there has to be a justification to  
43 warrant those changes.  
44  
45 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I've got Miguel and then Bill.  
46  
47 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Can you give us an example with an animal --  
48 Let's say that the average is 1,000 pounds, and can you walk us

1 through the end of this to decide what will happen to that 1,000  
2 pounds, if averaged? It's very difficult to follow the numbers,  
3 and I believe that the fishermen are thinking of the lobsters,  
4 for example, or whatever species. Let's say I have 1,000 pounds  
5 of lobster, and that is the average at this time, and that's the  
6 level that you have now, and where would that go following the  
7 graphs that you have here?

8  
9 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I can't tell you that specifically, because  
10 of what I haven't shown you yet, and it gets complicated. What  
11 I can tell you, if you want to look forward, is that 0.5 that is  
12 in red, that is kind of a target that we're looking at, because,  
13 for those susceptibility of two species, dividing by 0.5 gets  
14 you back down to that 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, which is kind of the  
15 intent of what we wanted for a moderate species. For those that  
16 are low susceptibility, we want to bump it up higher, and  
17 lobster is going to be one that's going to go higher.

18  
19 **MIGUEL ROLON:** If I may, let's do it, and then you correct me.

20  
21 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Let me just make one thing. That 0.5 is a  
22 value that we actually -- It works well, but it ran into  
23 problems with the question of variability, but we will come back  
24 to that, and we actually come up with something that's close to  
25 that, but not exactly, and you will see that when I get to that.

26  
27 The 0.5 is actually a good guideline of what we're trying to do,  
28 and, therefore, this would be a good guideline as to what you  
29 might expect for a low-susceptibility species, except that I  
30 kind of randomly drew the buffer, but your OFL is going to be  
31 way high, and then there is going to be some buffer applied to  
32 that, but it's still going to end up with some catch that's well  
33 above, I would imagine, the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

34  
35 **MIGUEL ROLON:** What I am trying to do is to translate that into  
36 something that people can understand. A 1,000-pound average, I  
37 will multiply that by three to get 3,000. Then you multiply  
38 that by 0.5 and you have 1,500. Is that the way to follow this?

39  
40 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** No, because you -- You mentioned average.

41  
42 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I just want to make it simpler.

43  
44 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Okay, and so, if your average is 1,000,  
45 your 75<sup>th</sup> percentile might be 1,300, and I will just make up a  
46 number. It's that 1,300 that gets multiplied by three, and so  
47 you're at almost a value of 4,000. Then you're going to divide  
48 that by two, and so you're just a little bit below 2,000 at this

1 point, and so that would be your OFL, is now double what your  
2 average is, and then there would be some buffering down from  
3 that.

4  
5 **MIGUEL ROLON:** That's the point that I wanted to bring to the  
6 attention of you guys, because, when you see all of this and  
7 you're a scientist, you figure it out. When you're a fisherman,  
8 you don't care about the graphs. You care about the bottom  
9 line, if that will double my catch, the OFL, or not.

10  
11 What Richard is telling is -- Remember that Richard cannot  
12 venture more numbers here, because all of that depends upon the  
13 number-crunching that they will do, but, with this example, what  
14 the scientists are trying to tell you is that, when you have a  
15 species like the spiny lobster that has low susceptibility,  
16 meaning that the chances of that fishery to be overfished are  
17 lower than the other species, or maybe nil, then what you have  
18 historically done is you take that average of landings.

19  
20 With this methodology, you will be able to -- Remember that we  
21 have to demonstrate this in court, and so the scientists have to  
22 make it solid. Whatever they recommend to the council has to be  
23 solid, so that it will sustain water in court as to the science  
24 that backs it up.

25  
26 What they are saying is that, if you have a species group like  
27 this one and you have this average at the end of the process,  
28 you may end up doubling the OFL that you have for that  
29 particular species, and that will benefit the fishers and that  
30 will benefit the fishermen, but, whatever you do, you have to  
31 demonstrate that the data sustains it and that the methodology  
32 that the scientists are going to use is sustainable in front of  
33 scientists and in front of court.

34  
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Roy.

36  
37 **ROY CRABTREE:** If you look at that ten-year period there from  
38 2005, we were under the average for seven years and over for  
39 three years, and, if you were to take the running average over  
40 the whole time period, it would be the average, I guess, but we  
41 could end up with closures in three of those years because the  
42 catches were over the average, what would have been the ABC.

43  
44 I think what they're trying to do here is, if it fits into this  
45 Tier 4a, is to find a way to allow the catches to go up,  
46 depending on how vulnerable they think the stock is and to find  
47 a way to avoid shutting the fishery down because, every now and  
48 then, we happen to have catches that go up.

1  
2 Maybe it's market driven, like you guys have talked about, and  
3 so this is a seemingly -- It's complicated, because it's  
4 mathematical, but they're trying to find a way to ensure that,  
5 if we just have an occasional high year of catches, we then  
6 don't end up going over the ACL and having these closures. If  
7 it fits into this type of category, by and large, the allowable  
8 catch levels are higher than what we've had in the past.

9  
10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I have Bill and then the Commissioner.

11  
12 **BILL ARNOLD:** I just want to make sure that nobody draws any  
13 relationships between this process and the old ACLs and OFLs,  
14 because there is not necessarily any relationship between the  
15 two.

16  
17 You may find that the old ACLs end up being higher than some of  
18 these new ones and the old ACLs may be lower than some of the  
19 new ones, because we're using completely different -- Especially  
20 in the Virgin Islands, completely different year sequences from  
21 which to draw that average, and that has a tremendous impact on  
22 the outcomes. While this may not be enthusiastically received  
23 by everybody, I think it's really important to get that on the  
24 table out front, so that nobody is surprised down the line.

25  
26 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Commissioner and then Blanchard.

27  
28 **DAWN HENRY:** Miguel was -- He walked through the scenario that I  
29 was trying to further understand what was being explained, and  
30 my added comment is, as we move through the explanation, are we  
31 going to get a better understanding of how we chose the  
32 susceptibility and to multiply that times three and as well as,  
33 on the other side, when you are trying to determine how you're  
34 going to bring the number back down, to then apply the buffer,  
35 because, for me at least, my understanding is there has been  
36 times, maybe in the past, where limits may have been set, if you  
37 will, arbitrarily in the Virgin Islands, and I just want to make  
38 sure that the science is taking into account what is actually  
39 happening in the fishery.

40  
41 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Blanchard.

42  
43 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Let me try recounting my statement here. I  
44 agree with what Roy is saying and what Miguel is saying, and I  
45 think they are trying to simplify it, but, then again, you need  
46 to understand that most of us don't understand this.

47  
48 This ain't like -- You would say your forte, but this is not our



1 forte, and so it's a little complicated, especially when Richard  
2 is saying that he gets confused himself, and this is his report,  
3 and so I really don't think it's as simple and as clear-cut to  
4 some as to others.

5  
6 Now, I am not saying that this is not the way to go, and I'm not  
7 saying it is the way to go, but what I'm saying is, before I  
8 could make an educated judgment on something, I need to know  
9 exactly what I'm looking at, number one. Number two, when the  
10 dolphin and the wahoo was mentioned, is this going to come into  
11 play with the same determining factors? In other words, are we  
12 going to use this -- If we go with this, this strategy, are we  
13 going to use that for the dolphin and the wahoo?

14  
15 I am going to explain to you why now, because remember, about a  
16 year ago, or a year-and-a-half ago, when the dolphin and the  
17 wahoo came on the table, and I was saying that I would rather  
18 not see them being under the council's jurisdiction, for the  
19 mere fact that we don't have the information. This is a  
20 migratory species, and so they're in and out of here, and we  
21 don't have the information on the books, because we have never  
22 really collected it.

23  
24 We don't have a recreational program, and the commercial sector  
25 is mostly charters. They do that on charter boats, or the  
26 commercial guys might catch one or two while they're out  
27 fishing, and so, if we're going this route with the dolphin and  
28 the wahoo, that's going to be a major problem, because you have  
29 no numbers to work from, and so you can't expect to get any  
30 numbers to begin with.

31  
32 In other words, the numbers on the books are so low that, no  
33 matter what kind of expansion factor you want to give, at the  
34 end of the day, the numbers are going to still be low. I mean,  
35 let's face facts. We are shooting ourselves in the foot, at  
36 least for them couple of species there.

37  
38 On the year sequence, I remember, at the last meeting, and maybe  
39 Bill could refresh my memory a little bit here, because you know  
40 I'm getting up in age, but I asked whether all the species had  
41 to use the same year sequences or they could be different year  
42 sequences for different species.

43  
44 As far as I remember, it was said that you could use different  
45 timeframes, the year sequences, for different species and that  
46 there was nothing on the books saying that you had to stay with  
47 let's say year-one to year-two across the books, and so I just  
48 wanted to put that back out there, unless I am completely

1 confused with that, too.

2  
3 The thing is, like I said, some people may completely understand  
4 what's going on here, but I can't certainly sit here, in good  
5 judgment, and say that I do. I basically am grasping for straws  
6 and trying to figure out what Roy is saying and what you're  
7 saying and what Richard is saying, and I'm trying to put it  
8 together.

9  
10 Like I said, it ain't simple for me, and I'm pretty sure that it  
11 ain't simple for Mr. Magras. Richard himself said that he got  
12 confused, and this is his presentation, and so, if he's getting  
13 confused, what do you think I'm getting? I mean, if I've got to  
14 question something, I will question it. I ain't going to sit  
15 down here in the chair like a moo-moo going along with the  
16 program. That ain't me.

17  
18 I need to make sure where I'm stepping before I step. Do you  
19 understand what I am saying? It might be the way to go, and it  
20 might not be the way to go, but the thing is, at the end of the  
21 day, I've got to know what we're talking about.

22  
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Roy.

24  
25 **ROY CRABTREE:** I agree with Tony. You need to understand this,  
26 and it is complicated, and so we're not making any final  
27 decision on any of this today, but it is important, because, if  
28 we don't know what we're voting on and we make a decision, we've  
29 got to answer to people about it.

30  
31 Now, I think, for species like dolphin, it would have a very low  
32 susceptibility to overfishing, because they grow really fast and  
33 all of that, and so my guess is, if you did this with dolphin,  
34 you would end up with a catch level that's a lot higher than  
35 your average catches and something you're not likely to get to,  
36 but I'm trying to think of -- Maybe what we need to do is come  
37 in -- One thing that I think we need to see is a list of the  
38 species, which ones are low susceptibility, and so would be in  
39 this kind of group, and which ones -- I mean, you showed us some  
40 of them, I think like Nassau grouper and manta rays, that are  
41 going to have high susceptibility, but what's in that middle  
42 ground.

43  
44 Then maybe what we need to do is work through some specific  
45 examples, so we can see here's what we have now, and, if we went  
46 through this, here's what it would give us, and maybe a couple  
47 of examples kind of in low susceptibility, somewhere in the  
48 middle, and high susceptibility and really lay out how it works,

1 so you can see how the numbers change and where it goes, and  
2 that might be a way to better understand where it's going to  
3 take you. Does that seem --

4  
5 Sometime, maybe when we meet again in the spring, or even in the  
6 summer, we're going to want to choose preferred alternatives on  
7 some of this, but that's months away, and so maybe we could  
8 think about how to work through some of these things, and maybe  
9 a webinar or something, where we could work through some  
10 examples or something, but we didn't have to meet, but we could  
11 do that between now and the next meeting, something like that,  
12 so that people could get more comfortable.

13  
14 I hate to think of us -- You know how these meetings go, and we  
15 tend to worry a lot about it now, and then the meeting is over  
16 and we go worry about a lot of other things, especially with all  
17 the things you guys have got to deal with, and so we make sure  
18 that we don't come in at the spring meeting in April and  
19 everybody is rusty and has forgotten and then we're right back  
20 where we started, but that's just some thoughts.

21  
22 **MIGUEL ROLON:** One of the things that I read is that I am  
23 responsible for the record, and I believe that, at this time,  
24 that we should allow the SSC Chair to finish, even if we don't  
25 understand what the hell he is talking about, because we need to  
26 put that in the record.

27  
28 Then, in between -- Adopting the idea that Roy has, probably, in  
29 between, we can have a workshop, where the people don't have to  
30 make decisions, but it can be a one-day workshop, and we can  
31 invite the people around the table and the public and have a  
32 meeting where the only thing that we are going to discuss at  
33 that meeting is specific examples, and these are just examples,  
34 of how these behave in the real world of fisheries, but, at this  
35 time, I beg your indulgence that we allow Richard to finish, and  
36 so that will be in the record.

37  
38 Remember that, when we talk and we have all these things on the  
39 board, we are talking about the federal zone. Then the local  
40 government will follow suit if they adopt whatever the federal  
41 strategy is. They can adopt it in the area of jurisdiction, and  
42 the other thing is that people are watching us all the time. If  
43 we don't do this right, meaning that we don't have the best  
44 science available, we can be challenged by everybody and his  
45 brother, and there are people that the only thing that they do  
46 is listen and take notes and sue the hell out of the Secretary  
47 of Commerce.

48

1 That is not bad, but it's just that they want to make sure that  
2 we follow the dots of the MSA, and so, if we can allow Richard  
3 to finish, then we can come back to specific questions, and  
4 please write it down, but specific questions to Richard,  
5 because, some of the questions that we have, they already have  
6 discussed it, and they have the presentation, but it's just  
7 that, the way they present things, it may not make sense to you  
8 at this time, but, once we have this orientation meeting,  
9 probably we will be better prepared for the decisions on the  
10 documents that we are going to take to public hearing in 2018.

11  
12 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I want to reiterate a point that Bill made,  
13 and is that we're using new year sequences, and so, when you're  
14 comparing an absolute value of an ACL from what exists now and  
15 what will come out of this process, they may not be comparable  
16 in the sense that you normally think about it, and that is the  
17 sense of absolute pounds was here and now absolute pounds is  
18 someplace else. I have a final slide to introduce that concept,  
19 and it's a really important concept, and so we'll spend time on  
20 that.

21  
22 We had to account for the variability, and so we defined  
23 something which I am calling the variability adjustment factor,  
24 VAF, for lack of a better term, and it's the maximum scalar --  
25 It's going to be the maximum scale of the indicator minus the CV  
26 divided by that, and what this does is it standardizes the  
27 magnitude of the scalar relative to the extent of variation  
28 across species, regardless of where that variation is, so we can  
29 treat everybody the same.

30  
31 As you will see, we are only applying this with species where  
32 the coefficient of variation was less than or equal to one,  
33 those things where we have good data at the moment, and then we  
34 were stuck.

35  
36 Fortunately, we had Shannon, who was able to put together a  
37 simulation to show how things are varying, and this is a really  
38 complicated spreadsheet, and I hesitated to show it, but I  
39 decided that I would. What you're looking at here is potential  
40 buffers. What you're looking at down here are those  
41 susceptibility scores, from a low susceptibility, or a high  
42 score, to a moderate susceptibility, or a moderate score.

43  
44 What is being reported here is the percent change in what the  
45 ABC would be above what the mean value was, and remember I was  
46 saying that that value of 0.5 seemed to work in terms of scaling  
47 the scalar, and that's why we're looking at this scalar here,  
48 because this is the value of 0.5, but now it's incorporated into

1 the buffer.

2  
3 What it says is that, if you have a high-scoring species, that  
4 is to say low susceptibility, and you use a buffer of 0.5, and  
5 you use that variability correction factor that I mentioned, you  
6 are going to end up with an ABC that is about 60 percent above  
7 the current mean.

8  
9 Now, I say about because these numbers change, but they change  
10 very slightly. This value here might vary between 55 and 60  
11 percent, depending on what your coefficient of variation is.  
12 Down here at the moderate level, where we want to get kind of  
13 back to where we are toward the mean, you would get, in this  
14 particular case, a 6 percent increase above the mean for your  
15 ABC. This number might vary between 5 and 12 percent, but it's  
16 always getting you close to back to where you were in terms of  
17 the mean, and these numbers are always a lot higher.

18  
19 As your buffer increases, you increase how much above the mean  
20 your ABC is going to be. We chose the 0.5 as our default value  
21 for this process because it fit exactly with what the intent was  
22 for the control rule, and remember I said it allows us to go up  
23 or down, and so there are species that we go up on, and so, if  
24 we go this direction, we're getting to the point, say at 0.65,  
25 if we got that far, and this should be 0.55, by the way, where  
26 you would actually be doubling the mean value for your ABC.

27  
28 This is pure simulation, and it's just based on a random 10,00-  
29 pound mean, I believe, and then it's applying things, but, by  
30 doing this simulation, we could see what the behaviors of the  
31 buffers are relative to our intent after the application of the  
32 scalar, and the scalar, remember, is the susceptibility scores  
33 times that variability adjustment factor.

34  
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Richard, we have a question from the  
36 Commissioner.

37  
38 **DAWN HENRY:** Just one quick question. Do you anticipate, for  
39 some species, for example, that you would be able to choose  
40 let's say a lower number under the susceptibility, and so maybe  
41 the two, and then would you be able to increase the buffer? Do  
42 you have that flexibility?

43  
44 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Flexibility exists under the system. We  
45 did not recommend that, but, if you were down at two, you're not  
46 increasing -- Even if you increase the buffer, you're not  
47 increasing things very much, because it's a moderately-  
48 susceptible species. It's only when you get the low-

1 susceptibility species, up here, that you really start getting  
2 substantial increases if you were to increase the buffer value.

3

4 **DAWN HENRY:** One final question. If you look, for example, at  
5 the 0.85 buffer with the two, and you have 80 percent, what does  
6 that 80 percent represent?

7

8 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** If you applied a buffer of 0.85 to a  
9 species of moderate susceptibility, that value of two, your ABC  
10 would be 80 percent higher than the mean, the average.

11

12 As I said, these absolute numbers depend on what the coefficient  
13 of variation is, but they don't change more than a few percent,  
14 regardless of what that variation is, as long as it's staying  
15 below one, and so it's a fairly stable system to work with, but  
16 this is why you can't predict exactly what's going to happen,  
17 because you actually need to have what that coefficient of  
18 variation is for that stock, for that island, and we did not  
19 have that information, nor did we particularly want to look at  
20 that, because we're trying to develop a defensible system and  
21 not look at numbers and say we really wanted that catch level to  
22 be here, because that's presupposing that we know where the  
23 catch level should be, which we don't.

24

25 That's why they're in Tier 4. If we had some of what is called  
26 status determination criteria, we would be using a Tier 3 value  
27 and be able to predict more precisely where we should be.

28

29 Trying to summarize this, we have this default scalar, which is  
30 the susceptibility score times our variability adjustment  
31 factor, and so, under a low susceptibility situation, where the  
32 susceptibility is three times that factor, our scalar ends up  
33 being approximately 1.5. It can be a few percent up and down,  
34 depending on what that variability is.

35

36 The moderate susceptibility gets you back to a scalar of about  
37 one, which is what we wanted. That gets you back down to the  
38 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. Well, according to the table that I just  
39 showed, it's going to get you closer to the mean, but slightly  
40 above the mean, from the data that's available.

41

42 We also determined that, if we're using multispecies stock  
43 complexes, we're going to use the mean value of susceptibility  
44 scores. We had only one case where that showed up, where not  
45 every species in that complex had the same susceptibility, and  
46 so we just took the average, and that seemed to work fine.

47

48 The default value can be modified up or down, given additional

1 information, and so, for 4a stocks, the OFL is the 75<sup>th</sup>  
2 percentile times the scalar, and that 75<sup>th</sup> percentile will be  
3 interpolated if it falls between two values, and that's just  
4 there for the record.

5  
6 Note that, for moderately-susceptible species, application of  
7 this buffer would return a value closer to the mean, and so  
8 application of the scalar and the buffer gets you a value closer  
9 to the mean, which is consistent with the intent of the 4a  
10 control rule. For 4b stocks, the OFL is the mean times the  
11 scalar, and so that's going to bring it down, just as before,  
12 but note that this is only applied to one group, and that's  
13 Grouper Unit 4 or 5. It's the same species, but the number  
14 changes depending on which island you are, and so that's the  
15 yellowfin grouper and red and tiger grouper and I forget what  
16 else, and so there is only one group where this 4b formula is  
17 actually applied.

18  
19 There are exceptions, and so you can go up and down from the  
20 default, and there are exceptions. The first ones we're going  
21 to talk about are species of high ecological value. These are  
22 species that have important ecological function in addition to  
23 their function as fishery production.

24  
25 We're using the same species that are currently considered, in  
26 terms of high ecological value, and we're using the same current  
27 reduction that is being used now, and so surgeonfishes and  
28 parrotfishes, which have important herbivore roles,  
29 surgeonfishes are reduced by 25 percent, and so we have a new  
30 scalar that brings in this 0.75 to bring it down.

31  
32 For parrotfishes, recognizing particularly their importance in  
33 the catch of St. Croix, we don't scale it down as much, because  
34 we have to -- We have to be realistic about the impacts here,  
35 again, and so these are the same reductions that are currently  
36 in place that are now embedded in the scalar definition.

37  
38 For most of the 4b species, we just chose to define ABCs equal  
39 to zero, because this is where they are now, and so Nassau  
40 grouper, goliath grouper, and three big parrotfishes are all set  
41 right now at ABC equal to zero, and we wanted to do that in  
42 Puerto Rico for the manta ray, spotted eagle ray, and stingray,  
43 because they are new species in the Puerto Rico list.

44  
45 Also, for queen conch for Puerto Rico, St. Thomas and St. John,  
46 and, again, this is the federal area of those areas, of those  
47 jurisdictions, and, again, for sea cucumbers, urchins, and  
48 corals, which we haven't mentioned, but they also currently have

1 an ABC of zero, and we wanted to continue that, and so,  
2 effectively, that's not any change, except for those new  
3 species.

4  
5 Now, you didn't see St. Croix conch on there, and St. Croix  
6 conch are, as always, a special case. On the one hand, conch do  
7 have a high vulnerability to fishing. There is issues of  
8 habitat loss, especially near-shore areas, that would make them  
9 also susceptible, and these would indicate that maybe they  
10 should be in a 4b designation.

11  
12 However, we have additional information, and that comes in the  
13 form of the SEAMAP surveys that are done every five years for  
14 conch, and they look at the density and the age structure of  
15 conch along a fixed set of transects.

16  
17 In St. Croix, there has been a consistent trend, over the last  
18 three surveys, of higher density, and so density is increasing,  
19 and that means it's responding to either some weird natural  
20 phenomenon or the management measures that are in place.  
21 Density is not only increasing, but they're actually pretty  
22 high, and so we did not think that it should be in a 4b  
23 situation, unlike the other jurisdictions.

24  
25 Obviously, it is important to the economy, and we found no basis  
26 for trying to be estimating a new OFL for this species, and,  
27 therefore, we basically fell back on retaining the existing OFL,  
28 which is a very large 512,000 pounds.

29  
30 We chose to keep the ABC at the present level, but, when I say  
31 present level, this accounts for changes in reporting behavior.  
32 The peak value in the reference period was 36,900 pounds, and we  
33 set the ABC to be essentially equal to that, but, easier to  
34 read, is 37,000 pounds, and I will get back to that point at the  
35 last slide. The guidance we have for ABC control rules says  
36 that we can step outside those if there is a rationale for doing  
37 that, and that's exactly what we're doing for queen conch in St.  
38 Croix.

39  
40 For the buffers, as I said with the spreadsheet, our default  
41 buffer is equal to 0.5. This returns moderately-susceptible  
42 stocks to an ABC approximately, a little bit higher, than the  
43 mean, and it returns low-susceptibility stocks to an ABC that is  
44 going to be most likely above that -- It should be above that  
45 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

46  
47 I say "should be" because, again, we don't have the actual  
48 numbers to run something, but they were substantially above the



1 mean, to a degree that we would think it would take it above  
2 that 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, and there is some exceptions to that.

3  
4 Here are the exceptions, and this is for species where there is  
5 additional information that lowers our uncertainty and suggests  
6 that the susceptibility is even lower, and there are three  
7 examples. Two of them apply only to St. Thomas/St. John, and  
8 those are red hind and lobster.

9  
10 For red hind, remember our default value was 0.5. For red hind,  
11 we chose to go to a buffer of 0.55, and so that's allowing an  
12 even larger increase above the mean of where that ABC would  
13 finally be set, and this was based on documented recovery in  
14 that population in terms of the abundance of fish, the size  
15 structure of that fish, the age structure of that fish, and the  
16 sex ratio of that fish, and this is new information that has not  
17 been published yet.

18  
19 It comes out of a collaborative study between Rick Nemeth and  
20 Michelle Scharer comparing the MCD, St. Croix, and the Buoy 4  
21 aggregation in Puerto Rico, which is not under the seasonal  
22 closures, and so it's going from extreme management, if you  
23 will, to moderate management, to less management.

24  
25 There is a very distinct increase in the health of the stock as  
26 you go to the MCD situation, and so there is very good, solid  
27 evidence now coming out that that population has recovered  
28 substantially relative to the areas that don't have that kind of  
29 protection, and so we feel that it can take a higher degree of  
30 harvest.

31  
32 For spiny lobster, the buffer is even higher now, at 0.6. The  
33 real -- While we recognize that the carapace length issue for  
34 spiny lobster is a good safety measure, that was accounted for  
35 in giving it a high susceptibility score. What sets St.  
36 Thomas/St. John apart from the other areas is that it has, as a  
37 percentage, much more of its shelf area protected by closed  
38 areas, like it or not.

39  
40 I mean, you have the MCD, and you have the coral monument, and  
41 you have the park, and you have the East End park or reserve,  
42 and I can't remember which one is on St. Thomas, and a couple of  
43 other areas that provide substantial protection for this species  
44 beyond the protections that are already there, and so the buffer  
45 goes to 0.6.

46  
47 Dolphinfish, for all islands, and its high productivity, as Tony  
48 mentioned, and only a small portion of its stock is -- Only a

1 small portion of the stock is going through the U.S. Caribbean  
2 to begin with, and, with it being migratory, the bulk of it is  
3 there for only a partial period of time, and so we think that  
4 can, obviously, withstand a lot more fishing pressure.

5  
6 All of these three species, we would expect, in especially red  
7 hind and lobster, because we think that's much more of a local  
8 stock, if the species-specific reportings are coming in as they  
9 are now, in short order, we will be able to apply some more  
10 rigorous assessment models and get these things out of Tier 4  
11 and get them into Tier 3, where we will have a much better  
12 probability of estimating just how much can be taken out of  
13 these populations, and so the potential to go even higher  
14 exists, but we would like to do that once we have those longer  
15 time series of data.

16  
17 Right now, we have just about five years, which is really  
18 marginal to make a call on that, when all we have is landings,  
19 but, as this dataset improves, and the Virgin Islands has gone  
20 through a lot of effort to do that, we expect to be able to make  
21 that shift.

22  
23 Dolphinfish is what it is. It may be able to take a lot more  
24 harvesting or maybe not. Yes, we're not hitting it that hard,  
25 but every other jurisdiction between here and the states and  
26 around is, and so we're not the only ones harvesting these  
27 things.

28  
29 The reason they're on the list is because it is one of our most  
30 important species, and we should be taking account for it.  
31 Right now, no one is harvesting at the levels we're  
32 recommending, and so this is going to take us to higher  
33 potential yields for this species, and then we'll be able to see  
34 what happens and how it behaves in the future.

35  
36 If, at those higher levels, we see no changes in mean sizes and  
37 catch rates and things like that, there is grounds for taking it  
38 even higher in the future, but we were uncomfortable saying just  
39 do whatever you want, because that didn't seem to be  
40 scientifically defensible.

41  
42 For 4a, the buffer is 0.5, and it meets our intent in how it  
43 treats the moderately versus low-susceptibility stocks. For 4a  
44 stocks where the coefficient of variation is less than one, our  
45 buffer has not yet been defined.

46  
47 We got to this point at about four o'clock on Friday, and we  
48 were able to explore or set several ways that we could deal with

1 that, but we had absolutely no data or simulation capacity at  
2 this time to actually run those scenarios to see what might be a  
3 best alternative in that, and so this is kind of where we are.

4  
5 We think we are, perhaps, just a day away from doing that if we  
6 can get the information needed to set up a simulation to check  
7 the behaviors of these things, and what this requires, probably  
8 more than anything else, is an idea of what the actual  
9 coefficients of variation are for those species that are in the  
10 situation for the time sequence of our reference period, and we  
11 did not have that data.

12  
13 If we know those magnitudes, we can incorporate those magnitudes  
14 in the simulation and see what works, again to make sure that we  
15 don't arbitrarily trip an overfishing designation when that  
16 really hasn't happened.

17  
18 The 4b stocks, the buffer we chose is a 0.9, and that's a  
19 totally different buffer system than we did for 4a, and so don't  
20 compare the two, but that only applies to the Grouper Unit 4 or  
21 5, depending on the island you're looking at. All the other 4b  
22 species were set at zero.

23  
24 Reported levels and absolute OFL/ABC values, there is a  
25 difference. Our intent, in going through this, is to retain the  
26 current levels for 4a moderately-susceptible species. "Retain"  
27 means approximately and not the exact levels, and I put  
28 "current" there in parentheses because there is but. That is,  
29 if there has been changes in reporting, up or down, these have  
30 been rescaled into the current level of reported landings.

31  
32 That is to say, and let me make up a hypothetical situation.  
33 Let's say we have a spiny grunt. If we had set an ACL  
34 previously at 10,000 pounds, and reporting behavior since that  
35 time has changed, and let me use the ominous situation of maybe  
36 fishermen are reporting half of their catch now, and they still  
37 may be getting that 10,000 pounds, but now, to avoid anything,  
38 they are reporting 5,000 pounds. The new ACL is set based on  
39 that 5,000, because that's what they're reporting, even though  
40 they might actually be catching the actual higher number.

41  
42 The point is we don't know. We know there has been changes in  
43 reporting, but we don't know the levels, and we don't know other  
44 factors involved. There is a lot of uncertainty there, and so  
45 the important point is that, while we certainly encourage  
46 fishermen to report their data accurately, if we take this  
47 recommendation the way we have described it, it's extremely  
48 important that, if you're going to change, and that is better

1 report, that you clearly document that that's what you're doing.

2  
3 If you don't, it's going to be viewed as the stock declining or  
4 that you're overfishing, depending on which way you're going,  
5 and we don't want fishermen to penalize themselves for reporting  
6 accurately. There is a mechanism to deal with this, but only if  
7 there is documentation that says, hey, we're now reporting  
8 better, and then things can be adjusted to account for that,  
9 but, if you start reporting better, and this happened in one of  
10 the Puerto Rico fisheries, and -- Well, it happened in almost  
11 all the Virgin Island fisheries.

12  
13 Once they went into species-specific reporting, they were  
14 consistently over ACLs for a lot of them, and we said that was  
15 because they are reporting better now and ignore it. No  
16 problem, but we knew that, because the new forms were put in  
17 place. If you're using the same forms, but now you're just  
18 reporting more accurately, you need to document how that came to  
19 be. Otherwise, it's going to be treated as just overfishing,  
20 and we don't want that to happen. Please don't do that.

21  
22 This is an extremely important point. Everything has been  
23 scaled to the current landing reference periods, depending on  
24 which island we're talking about, but it should retain the  
25 behavior that's going on now, and so don't change the behavior  
26 unless you've documented that's what you're doing, and so we can  
27 incorporate that, and everybody benefits, and nobody gets  
28 penalized.

29  
30 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Richard. Blanchard.

31  
32 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Let me ask this question. Every meeting we  
33 come to, we are asked to give the best possible data possible,  
34 and now, I being a fisherman, I know exactly how fishermen  
35 think, for the most part.

36  
37 If they realize that they weren't reporting let's say as  
38 accurately -- Let's say maybe they made a mistake in how they  
39 were reporting to begin with and they made a change, they are  
40 not going to call the scientists up and tell them, well, you  
41 know what, I realized that I was making a mistake, and so I  
42 changed what I did. That ain't happening. I can tell you point  
43 blank that will not happen.

44  
45 As for the changing of the forms, that would be something that  
46 would be noticeable, because that comes out of DFW. You know,  
47 sometimes we have a tendency of saying underreporting, and I  
48 think that's almost like the overfishing statement. We've got a

1 tendency to just throw things out there and not think of what  
2 we're saying, and I think, when we make a statement sometimes of  
3 underreporting, it becomes a bad taste in some people's mouths,  
4 because sometimes what you think is actually happening is not  
5 actually happening.

6  
7 I had this conversation with the Commissioner earlier, as well  
8 as Carlos, as well as Ed and Mr. Magras, and I am going to give  
9 you a true account of what actually happened to me. This year,  
10 earlier this year, I went and I rolled up a string of my traps.  
11 It was in an area where divers used to dive, and it's a dive  
12 spot, but what happened was, with the tide, it pulled it too  
13 close, and there's a wreckage.

14  
15 I went to the one end of the string and I started to pull, and  
16 my line got tight, but, seeing that there was a problem with  
17 other divers before and it was a common practice to tie your  
18 trap to the bottom so you don't get it when you are around an  
19 area that they're diving, I assumes that was what was happening.

20  
21 I called up Howard on the phone and I said, listen, Howard, and  
22 this is the situation. I said that I'm ready to deal with this  
23 man, but the only problem is that he has divers in the water. I  
24 know, for me to confront him with my boat with divers in the  
25 water is against Coast Guard regulations, and so I would be  
26 finding myself in a bigger problem.

27  
28 He tells me, listen, don't worry about it. He said that he's  
29 going to have the officers ashore just file a report. I pull  
30 into shore, and I file a report, and I know the boat. The  
31 officer turned to me and said that he's going to make contact  
32 with these guys, and so about two days passed, and my cousin  
33 called me up on the phone, and he fishes, too.

34  
35 I explained to him the situation and he said, listen, Tony,  
36 these aren't these guys. These guys don't do that. He said to  
37 just go back and pull the trap and see if it doesn't come loose  
38 from the other end, which I was planning to do, because that's  
39 normally what you do when something like that happens. You try  
40 pulling from the other angle.

41  
42 Anyway, I tell him, I said, well, I was going to do that, but  
43 when them guys was in the water, they had a buoy next to their  
44 boat that looked like my buoy, but I'm sitting 300 feet away,  
45 and it looked like my buoy, and it's right around their boat,  
46 and so I can't come and pick it up.

47  
48 I tell him, I said, you know what, I am going to do that

1 tomorrow morning. I called up Howard on the phone, and this is  
2 how determined I was and how sure I was that these guys was  
3 messing with my gear. I told Howard, I said, listen. I said,  
4 you have your officers on hand, because, if I pull up to my gear  
5 and these men are on the site, and that's what is going on, I'm  
6 going to deal with them. He said, Tony, don't do that. He  
7 said, I'm going to have my officers on call.

8  
9 I went up and pulled from the other end, and the traps come  
10 clear. When I realized it, I sat back and I thought what had  
11 actually happened was the buoy that I was seeing was a dive buoy  
12 that the divers had in the water to mark where they was around  
13 the dive boat, which I thought was my buoy, but it was too far  
14 away to recognize that it wasn't my buoy.

15  
16 The trap was actually stuck, and, when I pulled it, it just came  
17 off, and everything came clear. I called up Howard on the  
18 phone, and I explained the situation. I said, listen, Howard.  
19 I said, don't let the officers make contact with these men if  
20 they ain't made contact yet, because that was my mistake. I  
21 made a big mistake here, and this is what actually happened, and  
22 I am sorry for going down that route, but it was my mistake.

23  
24 He said, okay, I understand. Then I run into the officer, and I  
25 asked him, and he said, no, I didn't make contact with them, and  
26 so I told him, you know what, don't worry about it. Me and  
27 Howard have got it cleared up. If I've got a problem, I clear  
28 it up.

29  
30 In the event of me doing this for over thirty-something years  
31 make a mistake like that, because I was seeing something that I  
32 thought was actually happening that wasn't happening, and I was  
33 willing to put my neck in a noose that these guys were messing  
34 with my gear, and just imagine sitting back and looking at  
35 numbers on paper and having to see that somebody is  
36 underreporting, but I was man enough to make it up and say,  
37 well, listen, it was mistake.

38  
39 The point that I'm trying to bring here is sometimes something  
40 looks like it's happening, and you could swear that it's  
41 happening, but it's probably not actually happening, and so, for  
42 me to go down the route of saying that somebody is  
43 underreporting, it's going to take a little more than numbers to  
44 persuade me to go down that road.

45  
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** You can go ahead, Richard.

47  
48 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** That is basically the end of the

1 presentation, and I was trying to use the term "behavior", and  
2 we don't know what the behavior is, and we're just saying that  
3 the numbers come from some set of behavior and that's the  
4 standard that we're looking at and don't change the behavior  
5 unless you fully document that you're doing that, because that  
6 will screw everything up.

7

8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel.

9

10 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Richard, what would be the proper way of  
11 documenting the last line that you have there?

12

13 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** That's a good question. One of the things  
14 that we did not get to, and this was a suggestion that was  
15 raised by Kate, who said that maybe we should be organizing a  
16 series of workshops and -- I don't know if it was training  
17 sessions or something like that, but I didn't actually get to  
18 the full language, because we never got to that point, of going  
19 to the various islands and talking about the need for this and  
20 what the impacts would be. Then maybe trying to work out, with  
21 fishermen, to do something that would have an obvious impact on  
22 reporting.

23

24 We could say, look, we went through these training sessions, and  
25 people understood the need for this and they're responding to it  
26 or whatever, but there was an effort made to do that, and so  
27 that might have been a recommendation coming out of the SSC, but  
28 we never got to it, although there was certainly, I think,  
29 general agreement that this was something worth doing, because  
30 obviously we do want to encourage the best data we can get.

31

32 If behavior changes and we don't know about it, then we're  
33 making assumptions that would in fact be wrong, and, depending  
34 on the methodologies being used here, we're talking about Tier 4  
35 now, but, if we went into a Tier 3 situation, I can't tell you  
36 which way that would go, whether it would benefit fishermen or  
37 hurt fishermen, in terms of what they're doing now, but,  
38 generally speaking, the better the information, the better our  
39 results are going to be.

40

41 Maybe you don't like the results, but they're going to be more  
42 accurate. Since I don't know what the results are, that's why I  
43 can't say whether it's going to be better or worse. Hopefully,  
44 if anybody feels that a stock is significantly underfished, then  
45 any assessment that we could run, in a quantitative sense,  
46 should reflect that and give you a much higher yield, if the  
47 data are sufficient to run the assessments.

48

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Blanchard.

2  
3 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I would just like to make a couple of  
4 observations on some of the stuff that I just observed here, my  
5 observations. This might be the way to go. Like I said, for me  
6 to really come to an answer to that, I've got to really  
7 understand what I'm looking at, but, as far as I -- To my  
8 understanding, the best of my understanding, I don't think this  
9 is going to work for the dolphin or the wahoo or the tuna in the  
10 Virgin Islands, because, like I said, once again, the low  
11 numbers.

12  
13 I think we're going to have to look outside of the box for at  
14 least these three species and come up with a different approach,  
15 because, like I said, I don't care how high we jog the buffer.  
16 If the number is low, the number of them ain't going to be high  
17 enough.

18  
19 The other thing is for the conch, especially in St. Croix. You  
20 know, there was a number that was tossed out there by David  
21 Olsen, and this is how this all came into play with 50,000  
22 pounds and a cap. Farchette could back me on this here.

23  
24 The whole point behind this is this was a number that, in my  
25 opinion, was just grasped out of the air. This could have been  
26 100,000 pounds, but he just pulled it out of the air and decided  
27 to put a cap on it at that number.

28  
29 I think what needs to be done is, the conch in St. Croix, we  
30 need to revisit that, especially, like Richard said, that, per  
31 hectare right now, it's showing more conch. Really, this cap of  
32 50,000 pounds, in my opinion, was not done correctly, and so I  
33 think we need to have kind of survey done on the conch,  
34 especially in St. Croix, seeing that the information showing  
35 that the conch has gone up per hectare, and this number just  
36 might be over 50,000 pounds.

37  
38 Now, the thing is that we talk about commerce. If the  
39 information that comes out of that says, well, listen, these men  
40 could get jacked to 100,000 pounds of conch, I don't see why  
41 they shouldn't get it, but the thing is that I think how it was  
42 done originally to put a cap on it at 50,000 pounds was not the  
43 right way to go.

44  
45 I think, up to today, they're still being penalized for it,  
46 because, now, they might take a reduction and a reduction, which  
47 was an unjustifiable way of doing things, and so we need to fix  
48 the problem, and, the way I see it here, either I'm going to be



1 part of the problem or part of the solution, and I would rather  
2 be part of the solution, because I ain't going to sit back here  
3 making the same mistake all the time and just overlooking it and  
4 business as usual, especially when we come into the island-based  
5 management plans, which we say we want to fix what ain't  
6 working.

7  
8 Well, these are the things that ain't working for me, and,  
9 although this ain't St. Thomas and that's St. Croix, or whether  
10 it be Puerto Rico and it don't look like it's working for them,  
11 I am going to still speak up for them, just like the lobster  
12 situation with their closed season and the situation we're in.  
13 Me personally, I don't think it will work for me.

14  
15 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Roy.

16  
17 **ROY CRABTREE:** I wanted to ask a little about conch as well.  
18 Richard, I think the slide show had an OFL of 512,718 pounds,  
19 and then an ABC of 37,000 pounds. I guess what jumps out to me  
20 is how big of a difference there is. Do you know what the basis  
21 of that OFL is?

22  
23 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I am not sure that I would agree with  
24 Tony's exact words on that, but I think there was a sense of the  
25 committee that this is something that came out of the assessment  
26 done by David Olsen back in the 1980s, I believe.

27  
28 **ROY CRABTREE:** Well, just looking --

29  
30 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** And, when we were doing this process  
31 before, or subsequently, it had gone through the Center, and it  
32 was found to be somewhat wanting. Now, I haven't gone through  
33 that, and so I don't know the details of that, but this is what  
34 was expressed by people who were a little bit more knowledgeable  
35 about that process than myself. That was the level that was  
36 chosen that's high enough that it's -- No one is worrying about  
37 going over the OFL.

38  
39 **ROY CRABTREE:** I can see that. The problem I have is how do you  
40 justify that low of a harvest?

41  
42 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Then the 50,000 -- Well, the 50,000 also  
43 was kind of a magical number that David Olsen came up with based  
44 on the fact that catches were going -- Reported catches were  
45 skyrocketing.

46  
47 **ROY CRABTREE:** All right, and the 37,000 pounds, that is --  
48

1 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** That is basically the current levels scaled  
2 to current landings.  
3

4 **ROY CRABTREE:** So they're not catching the 50,000 pounds?  
5

6 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** They are not reporting catching 50,000  
7 pounds.  
8

9 **ROY CRABTREE:** All right, and so -- Well, the problem I have  
10 with it is it seems to me, realistically, we don't know what the  
11 OFL is, which I think is correct, but, if you're going to accept  
12 that the OFL is over a half-a-million pounds, I have a very  
13 difficult time not making the case that we can harvest at a much  
14 higher level. I mean, why do we need that big of a buffer  
15 between the OFL and the ABC? I can't think of any species we  
16 have that much space.  
17

18 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** This is artifact. We said we have no basis  
19 for knowing what the OFL for conch in St. Croix might be.  
20

21 **ROY CRABTREE:** So why don't we say the OFL is unknown and not  
22 have one?  
23

24 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I believe that's allowable, under the  
25 regulations.  
26

27 **ROY CRABTREE:** Well, I mean, if you don't know what it is, I  
28 wouldn't make one up or stick with one just because somewhere in  
29 the past it got put on the books. I think you set yourself up  
30 with a real disconnect here, where I don't see how you can  
31 justify the ABC if you believe that OFL has meaning. If you  
32 want to justify the ABC, it seems to me that you then have to  
33 say that that OFL doesn't have any meaning and we don't think  
34 it's real.  
35

36 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** We could do that, but we would -- Let's put  
37 it this way. I don't know how you would get something  
38 defensible. We could just not define it, and I think Jocelyn  
39 told us that that was legitimate.  
40

41 **ROY CRABTREE:** What I would say is, if you don't know what -- If  
42 you don't have a way to estimate an OFL and you don't know what  
43 it is, I would rather not have one than to use one that clearly  
44 we don't think has any relevancy to what is happening.  
45

46 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** But OFL is important for the overfishing  
47 determination.  
48

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Jocelyn.  
2  
3 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Under the Guidelines, we have to make sure  
4 that the FMPs have a method for determining the overfishing  
5 status for the stock. I don't know if that specifically has to  
6 be an OFL or not, but there does have to be some way of  
7 assessing the stock status, and so that was the point that we  
8 were discussing at the SSC meeting last week.  
9  
10 I have some questions out to other folks to figure out what  
11 should we do in these data-limited situations, but, right now,  
12 we're looking at the Guidelines and saying that there has to be  
13 some way to determine the stock status and when overfishing is  
14 occurring.  
15  
16 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** If we had the flexibility, and because we  
17 have these SEAMAP surveys that are going on, we could treat  
18 these limits somehow in terms of densities and size structures  
19 and not quotas, but the law says that we've got to set a quota,  
20 and this is one of those situations -- In fact, most of our  
21 situations are such that we could manage a lot of these species  
22 better, and we are managing them better, with things like closed  
23 areas and closed seasons and we wouldn't have to worry about  
24 quotas.  
25  
26 **ROY CRABTREE:** I understand that, but that's not the law.  
27  
28 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** That's not where we are. That's right.  
29  
30 **ROY CRABTREE:** I don't want to belabor this point, but we'll  
31 have some discussion about it, but that is a -- The disparity  
32 here between the OFL and the ABC is something that pops out at  
33 me, and I agree with you that I would like to see us get to some  
34 basis of management for conch that relies on the density  
35 estimates somehow, but we're not going to do that in this  
36 amendment, because we need to get this amendment done in the  
37 next year, and none of this is the final word, and so I'm quite  
38 sure that we will come back to queen conch and look at that  
39 again, because it certainly strikes me as one that needs to be  
40 looked at.  
41  
42 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** It's certainly possible for the SSC, with  
43 the help of the Science Center, to look at densities and make  
44 some estimates about productivity and translate that into some  
45 kind of level, but that's something that takes some degree of  
46 analysis that's not going to be done in a committee setting.  
47  
48 **ROY CRABTREE:** Right. That would have to be done in a future

1 amendment.

2  
3 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I don't know about a future amendment, but  
4 we could do it in our next meeting, but we would have to go in  
5 saying, okay, this is one of the goals, along with the rest of  
6 the 4a species that we haven't set buffers for that need to be  
7 done. If we go in knowing that and have the preparation done  
8 ahead of time, it's probably something we could tackle, but it  
9 was not something that we could do in the confines of our  
10 meeting last week, and that's kind of where it came out of.

11  
12 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel and then Blanchard.

13  
14 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Just a question. You have to be very careful.  
15 First, you have to determine whether you have a problem with the  
16 queen conch or not. Can we leave it alone? The other thing  
17 about densities is don't think that density will solve your  
18 problem, because, when we worked -- Actually, Richard is our  
19 advisor for that in the Caribbean, but some of the countries  
20 want a density of 200 per hectare to be declared a healthy  
21 fishery, and some want to close the fishery when we are below  
22 that. Here, the density that we found before was seventy-one  
23 per hectare, and I believe that there are some other numbers.

24  
25 This is not something to take lightly, and, one way or the  
26 other, we have to solve this discrepancy between half-a-million  
27 pounds and 37,000 with the queen conch, because we have to  
28 justify whatever we do with the science and the information we  
29 have.

30  
31 Also, I don't think that an analysis like this can be done very  
32 quickly, because we have other things to do. As a matter of a  
33 fact, every time that you talk, I am trying to translate this  
34 into money and time, and you were talking about data workshops  
35 with the fishers. We have been talking about that for the last  
36 three years. Actually, the first idea was to go to St. Croix  
37 with that data workshop.

38  
39 The other thing that you want to have is a workshop for the  
40 council member and members of the DAP to discuss that  
41 presentation made by Richard with actual examples and numbers of  
42 the things that we can trace it from the beginning to the end of  
43 how the fishery behaves, and that probably -- You called that a  
44 top priority.

45  
46 At that time, we can also discuss the queen conch, but we need  
47 to tell Richard what would be the next step that you would like  
48 to see with the queen conch or the other species that we have.

1 Richard, are you finished?

2

3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes, and I've got Blanchard and Clay.

4

5 **TONY BLANCHARD:** The whole point we're trying to make here is  
6 we're going to the new ACLs for the island-based management  
7 plan, and I didn't want us making the same mistake that we made  
8 before bringing it into that. The way I understand, Roy, with  
9 wanting things done in a timely basis, but my question is this  
10 needs to get addressed when they go into the new island-based  
11 management plan. We ain't going to keep grasping at the 50,000  
12 pounds when we really don't know whether the fishery could  
13 sustain more or sustain less.

14

15 Me personally, I believe that it could sustain more, and so, for  
16 the years that this 50,000 pounds has been implemented, the  
17 people of St. Croix have been penalized, because they're not  
18 being allowed to go over the 50,000 pounds, if it is a healthy  
19 stock.

20

21 Now, they could be getting away with it for the last few years,  
22 since it's been implemented, if it is jeopardy and it does fall  
23 below the 50,000 pounds, but, either way, we need to find out  
24 what exactly is happening before we decide to just keep this  
25 50,000 pounds dangling in the air and say, well, this is a good  
26 idea for now.

27

28 **ROY CRABTREE:** There are a couple of things. One, if we try to  
29 fix every single problem with every single stock, we'll never  
30 get this done, because there are always problems, and remember,  
31 if we don't get this amendment done, we're not going to get  
32 these higher catch levels for things like spiny lobster and  
33 other species, and so I don't -- I suspect that it will be more  
34 difficult to come up with an assessment of some sort for queen  
35 conch than the timeline we have for this amendment, and so it  
36 may be that the best we can do is leave queen conch where it is  
37 for now.

38

39 Remember too that we're in court over queen conch. You  
40 remember, a year or so ago, we had a petition to list queen  
41 conch under the Endangered Species Act, and we came to a not  
42 warranted finding and did not list it, and we've been sued over  
43 that, and we're in briefings in court now, and so there's a lot  
44 of things going on with queen conch, because, if it did get  
45 listed, there wouldn't be any fishery anywhere, state or  
46 territorial waters or federal waters.

47

48 That is going to have to play itself out as well, but, I mean, I

1 would be fine with doing something with queen conch, but I just  
2 don't know how we would be able to get that done in the time we  
3 have to get this in. In my judgment, the benefits of getting  
4 some of these other issues, like spiny lobster and some of these  
5 things, fixed in the next year, I'm willing to hold off on queen  
6 conch for a little while.

7

8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Clay.

9

10 **CLAY PORCH:** Thank you. Two points. One, with regard to queen  
11 conch, I agree with Roy that it's maybe not expedient to come up  
12 with a different metric now, but, somewhat longer term, it's  
13 absolutely acceptable to set the basis for your MSY proxy to a  
14 target density of conch, provided you can agree what that target  
15 density would be, and then manage so that that density always  
16 stays above whatever threshold you specify.

17

18 What that requires though is you would have to monitor the  
19 density of conch annually, but that certainly can be done. It's  
20 been done by the New England Fishery Management Council.  
21 Whether annually or regularly, I am not sure there how often  
22 that would have to be. You usually think of annual catch  
23 limits, and so I suspect it would have to be more frequent.

24

25 **UNIDENTIFIED:** That's kind of what they do with scallops.

26

27 **CLAY PORCH:** Yes, and I'm not sure if they're still doing it  
28 with scallops, but I know they used that kind of approach  
29 before, basically hinging it on a density from some sort of  
30 survey, and so it's doable, but we just need to sit down and  
31 think about what that threshold would be and what's the target  
32 density.

33

34 The second point that I wanted to make is -- It's actually a  
35 question for Richard. When you showed the condition for use for  
36 the ABC control rule, it looked to me that you showed the ABC  
37 control rule as it stood at the beginning of the meeting, where  
38 it said the condition for use is no accepted assessment, but the  
39 stock has relatively low vulnerability.

40

41 I understood that, by the end of the meeting, the version that  
42 had been accepted had some additional words in it, which are  
43 subtle, but important, and it said no accepted quantitative  
44 assessment providing status determination criteria, but, in the  
45 expert opinion of the SSC, the stock has relatively low  
46 vulnerability, and so just some clarification of which one was  
47 ultimately -- Was the one that I just read the one that was  
48 actually accepted? Okay. Thank you.

1  
2 **ROY CRABTREE:** I guess, Bill Arnold and Graciela, we need to  
3 make sure, when this language goes into the amendment, that it  
4 reflects that change to the wording, right?  
5  
6 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Can you answer on the record Roy's question?  
7  
8 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** The wording of the ABC control rule,  
9 as it was accepted by the SSC, it's already in the documents  
10 that I just sent to Miguel with the changes that have been made  
11 from Friday to today, and so it includes the new wording of the  
12 ABC control rule. I can send it to everyone.  
13  
14 **MIGUEL ROLON:** So where are we, Mr. Chairman?  
15  
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** If Richard is done, the next thing on the  
17 agenda would be the Island-Based Fishery Management Plans,  
18 Review of Final Draft Environmental Impact.  
19  
20 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Before we touch on that, I will talk to Richard,  
21 and we have some money that we can use for density analysis,  
22 maybe, if it costs less than a certain amount, but, Richard, we  
23 would like to talk to you maybe afterwards, and I know you have  
24 to leave, but, in between here and the next meeting, see if we  
25 can put together a one-page work statement as to assess the  
26 density of the queen conch in the area of St. Croix. If that is  
27 something that we can prepare, then we can bring it over to the  
28 council meeting in April.  
29  
30 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Bonnie.  
31  
32 **BONNIE PONWITH:** I think I would have a keen interest in  
33 monitoring to take a look and see what densities are, but my  
34 sense, if I'm understanding what I am hearing correctly, is  
35 that, if you set an OFL proxy based on a measure of density,  
36 that it would require monitoring that on a routine basis to  
37 understand the influence, the relationship, between the fishing  
38 pressure that's being put on the stock and the stock response.  
39  
40 I guess I would ask Richard and Clay if I've got that right,  
41 because I would just want to be careful that we didn't stand  
42 something up that actually required perennial monitoring and  
43 only have one year's worth of resources to do that. Let me just  
44 ask -- If we're going to model off of the scallop fishery in New  
45 England, where it's density-oriented, they're going back and  
46 doing that on an either annual or periodic basis, right?  
47  
48 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Richard.

1  
2 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I am not sure you're asking the right  
3 person, because your question is, is this allowable? I mean,  
4 it's certainly doable, but it's going to cost money, but whether  
5 it's allowable, that's either Bill or Jocelyn I would think  
6 could address that.

7  
8 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Not to prolong the discussion, but that's my  
9 idea, to sit down with Richard and see if any of this is doable.  
10 Personally, I believe that, if the queen conch is not broken,  
11 don't fix it. Don't touch it, because, the more you mess with  
12 things, you end up finding out that what you did in the first  
13 place was wrong and now you are going to do the right thing  
14 under MSA and the fishermen will maybe have a 40,000-pound level  
15 rather than 50,000.

16  
17 Sometimes you have to be careful what you ask for, because you  
18 might get it, and, in this case, remember that we have to  
19 develop the record using the best available science, and we  
20 don't say data anymore, but science, and I believe that Richard  
21 and Graciela and I can look at this and then bring something to  
22 the next meeting that will make sense.

23  
24 The only reason we are doing an exception with the queen conch  
25 is because it is the only ongoing fishery of this species in the  
26 EEZ, because, as you recall, it's closed in Puerto Rico and the  
27 St. Thomas/St. John area.

28  
29 Anyway, enough said about that. Also, we have an international  
30 meeting on the queen conch, to present a management plan that  
31 was put together by two experts, and one of them is Richard, and  
32 it has been adopted by the majority of the countries that have  
33 queen conch or queen conch interests. Mr. Chairman, for the  
34 next meeting, we will report back to you on whatever transpired  
35 in that meeting with Richard and other experts.

36  
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Does anybody need a quick ten-minute  
38 break? That will work, ten minutes.

39  
40 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

41  
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We're going to get started again. The day is  
43 almost over. We are going to make a change to the agenda. We  
44 are going to leave the Island-Based Fishery Management Plans:  
45 Review of Final Draft EIS.

46  
47 **MIGUEL ROLON:** That section on island-based fishery management  
48 plans, we are going to discuss it first thing in the morning, at



1 nine o'clock tomorrow. What we are going to receive is the  
2 status of each one of those sections, a presentation by Bill and  
3 Graciela, and we may need some guidance from you as to some of  
4 the language, some of the directions, that we want to take, and  
5 no final action is going to be taken tomorrow, and so this is  
6 for the council to examine where we are.

7  
8 Then one important line is the Next Steps and the Timeline for  
9 Review, and that's when you decide that, for 2018, this is what  
10 we're going to do and when and how much time you will dedicate  
11 to meet with the SSC again and whomever is needed to be  
12 dedicated, and then Bill will give us a timeline that hopefully  
13 will implement this for the benefit of the fisheries.

14  
15 The idea here is that, the more you postpone the implementation  
16 of this, the more difficult it will be to assess the proper  
17 levels for the ACLs, and that will not be good for anybody, and  
18 so, Mr. Chairman, for tomorrow, when we get into this  
19 discussion, Bill will address it, and we will stop whenever we  
20 need to get more questions and receive the guidance, but the  
21 idea is not to keep doing this every meeting that we have. The  
22 idea is to move forward and have a timeline for 2018.

23  
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Bill.

25  
26 **ECOSYSTEM-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT**  
27 **ROADMAP IMPLEMENTATION PLAN STATUS REPORT**

28  
29 **BILL ARNOLD:** I am going to talk about the Ecosystem-Based  
30 Fishery Management Policy that our NOAA Fisheries Headquarters  
31 has established and the roadmap that they are having us develop  
32 for implementing ecosystem-based fisheries management.

33  
34 First, I would like to say one last thing about these island-  
35 based fishery management plans. I think I've come to at least  
36 the last four council meetings with a timeline for completing  
37 these plans, and every one of them has ended up like the HMS  
38 Hood. Does anybody know the HMS Hood?

39  
40 That was a battleship that went to war against the Bismarck, and  
41 the Bismarck took one volley and sent it to the bottom with  
42 everybody onboard, and so that's how I feel sometimes, and so,  
43 tomorrow, you guys are going to give me a timeline. I'm not  
44 going to give you a timeline. Then, whatever timeline it is,  
45 you're going to stick with it, and we're going to get these  
46 things done. That's my sermon for the day. All right.

47  
48 Ecosystem-based fishery management, again, this is a policy

1 coming down from on-high, and we are charged with implementing  
2 it, and so Headquarters has developed an implementation plan for  
3 ecosystem-based fishery management. This is a long-term plan,  
4 and all they're really looking at right now are some short-term  
5 goals to move the needle on getting these plans in place.

6  
7 Now, I would say, upfront, that, really, ecosystem-based  
8 fisheries management is probably a better opportunity for the  
9 Caribbean region than it is for any other fishery management  
10 region in the nation and for just about any other location  
11 throughout the world, because, if there is anywhere where the  
12 ecosystem drives the entire system, and especially the  
13 fisheries, it's right here in the Caribbean, and you guys know  
14 well, if you don't have the coral reef ecosystem, you have  
15 basically got nothing.

16  
17 The problem that has been occurring over the last ten, twenty,  
18 thirty years is that that coral reef ecosystem, that habitat,  
19 has been degrading. As it decreases from 100 percent to 80  
20 percent, the available fish for you to harvest decreases from  
21 100 percent to 80 percent, and, right now, it's probably more  
22 like 20 or 30 percent.

23  
24 While the fishermen may continue to fish at the level they've  
25 been fishing, the resource is getting depleted more and more,  
26 simply due to lack of habitat and lack of homes for these fish  
27 to live in, and, without those homes to live in, as you guys  
28 know -- It's kind of like being hit by a hurricane. It's tough,  
29 and you move somewhere else, because you can't live there, and  
30 so I think that's a pretty darned good analogy and one that you  
31 guys can really sink your teeth into.

32  
33 We've got an ecosystem, and it's getting hit hard, and we need  
34 to find out how to rebuild it, and there is no doubt that the  
35 health of the fish and the health of the ecosystem are tightly  
36 intertwined. Now, we have shown that with parrotfish.  
37 Parrotfish don't do anything for corals, but they do graze  
38 substrate and remove algae, and that allows corals to recruit,  
39 and so it's an indirect effect.

40  
41 There's a lot of indirect effects going on out there, and we  
42 need to make sure that these indirect effects are working to our  
43 favor and not to our detriment, and that's a lot of what  
44 ecosystem-based fisheries management is all about.

45  
46 There is a lot of cool terms and complex theories, but the  
47 bottom line is take care of your homes and give the fish  
48 somewhere to live and you will have fish, more fish, than you

1 need to harvest, and ACLs and OFLs and all of that would fall  
2 back into the background if we had historically healthy coral  
3 reef ecosystems out there.

4  
5 The bottom line is, as we talked about this morning, in a  
6 healthy, vibrant ecosystem, there is not enough fishermen in the  
7 U.S. Caribbean to overfish these stocks. What do you have,  
8 thirty people, on St. Croix? It's a matter of habitat loss more  
9 than anything else, and so that's what we're after with this,  
10 and so here is the policy that has been handed to us.

11  
12 Basically, it talks -- I am not going to read the whole thing,  
13 but it will inform and enable better decisions regarding  
14 tradeoffs. We want to recognize the interconnectedness, and we  
15 want to maintain resilient and productive ecosystems, and so,  
16 when something does happen, like a hurricane, that bangs the  
17 coral reef down, or a coral bleaching event, that coral reef has  
18 the strength to come back and rebuild itself, and so that's the  
19 policy.

20  
21 Here is the purpose, and there is five different points on this.  
22 The first step is to define what ecosystem-based fishery  
23 management is and then to describe the benefits of EBFM and how  
24 it relates to existing living marine resource management legal  
25 authorities and requirements, and that's a very tricky part of  
26 this.

27  
28 How does doing ecosystem-based fisheries management relate to  
29 the Magnuson-Stevens Act and its requirements to set reference  
30 points such as MSY, OFL, ABC, and ACL, all of the things that we  
31 were talking about this afternoon. They are not directly  
32 linked, and we have to be able to make that connection between  
33 those two very important approaches to managing resources.

34  
35 Then we establish a framework of guiding principles, and that's  
36 been done by an ecosystem-based fishery management team and in  
37 cooperation with our partners, and the idea behind this is to  
38 improve fisheries decision-making, provide social and economic  
39 benefits, and provide desired ecological outcomes, all of those  
40 things, and so you want healthy reefs, you want healthy fishing  
41 communities, et cetera, et cetera.

42  
43 We want to build on past progress and also, very importantly,  
44 clarify the agency's commitment to integrating management  
45 programs under all these changing variables, and another thing  
46 that I think is very important, and that certainly will fall  
47 within our fisheries ecosystem plan that Dr. Meyer is going to  
48 talk about, is we need to break down the barriers between NOAA

1 line offices, between state agencies, between our constituents,  
2 so that everybody is working together, because we always talk  
3 about how data-poor the Caribbean region is.

4  
5 The Caribbean region is data poor relative -- You could even  
6 debate this, but, if it is, it's relative to fisheries  
7 commercial landings data and recreational landings data, but we  
8 spend a lot of money down here doing habitat mapping and larval  
9 fish tracking and all these other things, a lot of money,  
10 millions of dollars, and so there are a lot of areas where we  
11 have a lot of data, and these data could be brought into an  
12 ecosystem-based approach to help us have a much better  
13 understanding and a much stronger capability to manage these  
14 ecosystems and the resources that they support.

15  
16 Here is the definition of EBFM. It's a systematic approach to  
17 fisheries management in a geographically-specified area. We  
18 have a very geographically-specified area. It contributes to  
19 resilience, and there is that word again, and sustainability of  
20 the ecosystem, and, of course, that ecosystem includes all those  
21 fish, including harvested species. This is not a methodology to  
22 reduce or eliminate fishing, but it's a methodology to support  
23 all of the components of a healthy ecosystem and the extractive  
24 activities that are associated with that ecosystem.

25  
26 It recognizes physical, biological, economic, and social  
27 interactions, and so those physical are current patterns,  
28 habitat structure, et cetera, et cetera, again among the  
29 affected fishery-related components of the ecosystem, and that's  
30 very important. That's including humans right in the  
31 definition, including humans, and it seeks to optimize benefits  
32 among a diverse set of societal goals, and so, from our point of  
33 view, we need to optimize fishing benefits, and we need to  
34 optimize tourism benefits, and we need to optimize shoreline  
35 protection benefits, and the list goes on and on.

36  
37 It's a management progression, and, at the bottom of this  
38 graphic, you will see "SS", or single species. That's the way  
39 we've always done things in the past. You know, you monitor,  
40 and that's what we've been doing today. You say, well, we need  
41 a queen conch annual catch limit, and that's very single  
42 species. It has nothing to do with spiny lobster or mutton  
43 snapper. It's strictly queen conch.

44  
45 Then we move up to an ecosystem approach to fisheries  
46 management, and that's where we are with parrotfish. We manage  
47 parrotfish not just for what the populations can sustain, but  
48 also with respect to their engineering components within the

1 ecosystem, and so, from a population point of view, it might be  
2 possible to harvest, sustainably, more parrotfish in St. Croix,  
3 but, from a habitat health point of view, you need to be more  
4 careful, and so that's an ecosystem approach to fisheries  
5 management.

6  
7 What we're talking about is the next level, is ecosystem-based  
8 fisheries management, where you really pull all these things in  
9 and they all have equal relevance, and you're looking at  
10 multiple species, and so that's the first column, where, instead  
11 of one species, as you had in the two lower rows, now you have  
12 got all the species operating together. It's there versus here.  
13 It's single species, single species, and then multispecies, and  
14 that's where we are now.

15  
16 Ultimately, down the road, you would want to get ecosystem-based  
17 management where everything is being considered and everybody is  
18 working together to maximize benefits, but, today, we're not  
19 talking about that. We're just talking about EBFM.

20  
21 What are the benefits? It considers environmental and  
22 ecological factors and the tradeoffs amongst them. It better  
23 understands cumulative impacts, and so, if you keep doing  
24 things, all these disparate things that look like they don't  
25 have any connections, but ultimately they do, that's what  
26 cumulative impacts are all about.

27  
28 You better communicate risks and uncertainties and the  
29 implications of management decisions, so we can better  
30 understand that, well, if we pick a 37,000-pound ACL for queen  
31 conch versus a 50,000-pound ACL for queen conch, what are the  
32 implications of that, and we need to understand that, and that  
33 is why we don't know what an OFL should be, because we don't  
34 necessarily understand the implications of densities of queen  
35 conch.

36  
37 Define interconnections and tradeoffs and reduce uncertainty,  
38 and there's that word again, by taking into consideration the  
39 interacting elements. Increase the likelihood, and I would like  
40 a better word than that, but increase the likelihood that  
41 ecosystem function is maintained, and that's absolutely  
42 essential to healthy fisheries, and forecast future conditions,  
43 and that's really important, so that we can, instead of  
44 responding to changes, we can anticipate changes and our  
45 management is proactive instead of reactive. Generally, at the  
46 present time, we're mostly reactive.

47  
48 Here are the six guiding principles, and this is sort of step-

1 wise. First, you implement planning. Then you advance the  
2 understanding of the processes, and you prioritize  
3 vulnerabilities and risks. You then explore tradeoffs and  
4 incorporate these ecosystem considerations into management  
5 advice, and then that should help you to achieve resilient  
6 ecosystems and maintain those resilient ecosystems.

7  
8 This is what that roadmap implementation plan looks like, and  
9 this is just a subset of the total, and I know that's hard to  
10 see, but the first column, the roadmap number, look on the far  
11 left, 1a2, 1a5, 1b1, and there are about thirty-five of those,  
12 but I just brought up a couple to show you what they look like.

13  
14 Then the roadmap action is, well, what is that item and what are  
15 we going to do? Well, we're going to develop a U.S. Caribbean  
16 Regional EBFM Engagement Strategy, and that's what I will be  
17 talking about with Alida and Elena and the others is, well, how  
18 are we going to get everybody involved in this and what's going  
19 to be the structure for having the fishermen be able to make  
20 their contributions and for having the dealers make theirs and  
21 for having the divers make theirs, and everybody should have an  
22 opportunity to be engaged in developing these strategies.

23  
24 What's the timing? Well, we have three different timing schemes  
25 in this right now. Short-term, those are basically things that  
26 are going on now. Medium-term, those are like up to five years  
27 out, and then long-term, which is farther, and, right now, we  
28 are focused, almost exclusively, on determining how we can  
29 ensure that our short-term goals, roadmap action items, are  
30 underway and being implemented.

31  
32 There is always an associated milestone with each action item,  
33 and that's what we're trying to achieve, and then you've got a  
34 target date, and so, for this associated milestone of a draft  
35 strategy for engaging participants, the target date is June 30,  
36 2018. That's not set in stone, but that's a reasonable target,  
37 and, again, there is about, and not exactly, but about thirty-  
38 five of these, and each of them has associated information, and  
39 so that is what the implementation plan is all about.

40  
41 The council received a letter, of course pretty much during the  
42 hurricanes, from Chris Oliver asking for council involvement,  
43 and not demanding council involvement, but just putting it out  
44 there that, if the council would like to participate in this  
45 process, then we would like them to participate in this process,  
46 and please let us know how you would like to participate in this  
47 process.

48

1 You might want to assign a staff member or have us provide  
2 regular reports or whatever it may be, however you would like to  
3 be engaged or not, because, again, it's not a requirement. It's  
4 an opportunity that you should not feel guilty either taking  
5 advantage of or not taking advantage of. It's totally up to the  
6 council.

7  
8 Like I said, Number 2 is it's the council choice if and how to  
9 participate, and this is for all the councils around the nation,  
10 and each council is taking a different approach. Some of them  
11 are not going to participate, and others are fully involved. As  
12 I said, Number 3, it's understood that the Caribbean Council is  
13 preoccupied, and we get that, and so there is no rush on doing  
14 this, although we are moving forward.

15  
16 As I said, at a minimum, staff will keep the council informed,  
17 and we welcome council participation in this ongoing and  
18 constantly changing, i.e., dynamic, process. That's really all  
19 I wanted to let you know, but a first step in this process, as  
20 directed by the Headquarters and by the ecosystem-based fishery  
21 management plan, is to develop a fisheries-ecosystem plan, and  
22 that's what Cindi is going to talk about today, and so I think  
23 that's all I've got, and I think it's time for her to step up.

24

#### 25 **UPDATE ON FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

26

27 **CINDI MEYER:** Hi. I'm Cindi Meyer, and thank you for the  
28 opportunity to speak with you guys today. I really look forward  
29 to moving forward with this ecosystem plan. The FEP is a  
30 guidance document and not a regulatory document, and what it's  
31 going to do is to help consider the ecosystem relationships  
32 between the species, their habitats, and everything from the top  
33 of the ridge to the bottom of the reef and out into the open  
34 water.

35

36 With this, we need a lot of data, and we especially need data  
37 from the land, from you guys that have the regional authorities,  
38 the water management districts, and we're still looking for a  
39 lot of that data, and so, if you can help us, we would greatly  
40 appreciate it.

41

42 The FEP is, as Bill said, part of the ecosystem-based fishery  
43 management and moving forward with that, and it gives you guys  
44 an opportunity to start looking at this as an ecosystem as a  
45 whole rather than at a single species or just a group of  
46 species.

47

48 Today, we're going to discuss the status update, the draft FEP

1 outline, the conceptual model, the draft model, and don't worry.  
2 There are no equations. I promise you there is no equations in  
3 this. Then the stakeholder engagement, challenges, and the next  
4 steps.

5  
6 What we've done is Graciela, Orian, and myself have worked a lot  
7 on this, to try to get it set up, and we've expanded the FEP  
8 outline, and I will show that to you. We've developed a draft  
9 conceptual ecosystem model, and we're still working on data  
10 compilation and organization and, also, we're starting some  
11 exploratory data analysis.

12  
13 The draft FEP outline, in our introduction, *Qualities of the*  
14 *U.S. Caribbean Coral Reef Ecosystem*, and we are avoiding the  
15 term "healthy ecosystem", because we already believe that it is  
16 healthy, and we want to maintain it, and so we need to figure  
17 out what the most appropriate baseline is and how we're changing  
18 and what targets we need to set to maintain a good ecosystem  
19 here. Also, we'll need to have discussions with you, probably  
20 at the next meeting or so, to talk about the goals and  
21 objectives of the FEP and to get your support or comments and  
22 suggestions.

23  
24 The next part would be the ecosystem description and  
25 characterization, and we're working on this by compiling the  
26 data. It's going to be physical, biological, and human  
27 environments involved in this. This is not just fish and  
28 habitats. We also want that socioeconomic component involved in  
29 it.

30  
31 As far as ecosystem analysis, we're looking at historical change  
32 analyses, so we can make sure that we set an appropriate  
33 baseline, and also the relationships within the ecosystem and  
34 their connectivity. The issues influencing the ecosystem, these  
35 are both the human and the natural. We need to be able to bring  
36 all of this information in. The hurricane and the result of it  
37 are going to play a major part in the ecosystem, as we all know  
38 that it has caused some changes.

39  
40 Then being able to determine those indicators and the  
41 vulnerability of the ecosystem, so that you can better manage to  
42 mitigate for these effects. Then we have the relationship  
43 between the FEP and the FMPs.

44  
45 A conceptual model, the conceptual model is not necessarily a  
46 statistical model. It's just taking different concepts,  
47 different elements, and figuring out how they link together and  
48 how they relate to each other, and so we started developing



1 this, and we are taking all comments and suggestions. That's  
2 part of this, is the engagement of all the constituents, and we  
3 can also, through expert opinion, statistical approaches, and  
4 from stakeholder input, we can develop the strength of these  
5 relationships and be able to figure out what's really going on  
6 in our ecosystem.

7  
8 This is just very basic. Notice there is no lines connecting  
9 anything. We have the habitat, and, under this, these are just  
10 some examples of things that would go under this main heading of  
11 the model. We have ecosystem influencers, and so we have  
12 natural and human. Notice these are not positive or negative.  
13 They are not marked as such. That is up to the constituent  
14 input to decide.

15  
16 Then we have the species groups, and, right now, we have them as  
17 what functional role that they're playing within the ecosystem,  
18 but this can be adapted to whatever your needs are, and then we  
19 also have the socioeconomic, and some of the things that we  
20 found really important were making sure that we integrate the  
21 cultural aspects.

22  
23 We have heard a lot today about making sure that the fisheries  
24 are back up and operating for the Easter season, because fish is  
25 in very high demand during that season, and that would be a  
26 cultural aspect that we would be able to look at and look at the  
27 connections for in this type of conceptual model.

28  
29 Not to think that -- I promise this is the most complicated  
30 slide I have, and there are no numbers, but this is what it  
31 actually looks like, in just our initial brainstorming, of all  
32 the different elements that we would be adding into this  
33 conceptual model. Now, that's not to say that we have to draw  
34 all the connections at the same time. We can look down into  
35 just examples to get a better idea of what's happening for an  
36 isolated species.

37  
38 Our example for today is the St. Croix lobster, and Graciela can  
39 fill in the blanks if I miss anything. We looked at just the  
40 basic habitat, and so hard-bottom, coral and seagrasses.  
41 Natural influences, just some examples would be weather events  
42 and oceanographic conditions. We have human influences, and so  
43 physical disturbance may be one of them. For fishing, we have  
44 not only commercial, but we have recreational and different  
45 methods of commercial fishing.

46  
47 For species groups, we're looking at what their different  
48 predators are, and we could also look at their prey

1 relationships. Then, for the socioeconomic, we have the state  
2 of the economy, the seasonality, and tourism. In this diagram  
3 here, this is the basic outline of the conceptual model, but  
4 what we really want to do is to be able to connect these and  
5 know how much each of these factors are influencing the overall  
6 status of the lobster in St. Croix.

7  
8 I am anticipating that, at a future meeting, we'll be sitting  
9 here connecting lines and weighting lines, and it's actually  
10 sort of fun. We have a method where you may all get a little  
11 gadget to be able to vote, so that you can actually vote and  
12 weigh it, and so it's an interactive process.

13  
14 What we can do is -- This is called Mental Modeler, and it's an  
15 online freeware that anybody can use, but what you can do is you  
16 can connect things. If we look at say our natural influences,  
17 how do natural influences, weather events, affect the St. Croix  
18 lobster? We can use this connection, and then, once we draw  
19 that connection, we can weight it. We can either say that it  
20 has a positive or a negative impact, and we can sort of weigh  
21 the severity of that.

22  
23 Now, one of the great things about this is that you can all have  
24 a different opinion, and we can track those different weightings  
25 and then come up with a general consensus, and we can explore  
26 people's ideas. If they say it's very strong, or very negative,  
27 then we can look into that and look at the other factors.

28  
29 Beyond the conceptual model, we're also looking at the habitat  
30 baseline, the baseline analysis, and Graciela has been working  
31 on compiling the benthic habitat maps. This is on ArcGIS  
32 online, and you can actually access it, and this is an example  
33 of St. Croix for the 1978 habitat mapping.

34  
35 Then what we can do is we can take and look at change analysis,  
36 and we can analyze the change in the benthic habitat between  
37 that 1988 and the 1999, and we can look for changes is available  
38 habitat, maybe changes from soft bottom to hard bottom, or vice  
39 versa. This morning, there was mention of that there was some  
40 sand bottoms that are now hard bottoms, after Hurricane Maria  
41 went through, and that's going to be very important information  
42 to know.

43  
44 The other part of this, and the big part of the fishery  
45 ecosystem plan, is our stakeholder engagement. This is going to  
46 be absolutely crucial to the success of this plan, because you  
47 are the ones that are out there on the water. You're the ones  
48 with the connection to the local fishermen, to the local

1 authorities, to everybody who is getting this data firsthand.

2  
3 This information really needs to be integrated into the fishery  
4 ecosystem plan. As I said, it's a three-tier approach. We're  
5 going to use the statistical approach, the expert opinion, and  
6 stakeholder input. Then we're going to be also looking at  
7 identifying differences between the islands. Notice that when I  
8 put up that example that I didn't put "lobster" down. I put  
9 "St. Croix lobster", because there is different factors  
10 influencing St. Croix lobster than there would be in Puerto  
11 Rico, and this model is also, and the fishery ecosystem plan, is  
12 an opportunity for you guys to bring forth those differences, so  
13 that we can account for them.

14  
15 Also, networking with the scientific community and integrating  
16 the data that's out there. When I started this project, I was  
17 told that the Caribbean was data-poor, and I wholeheartedly  
18 disagree. It's just slightly data-disorganized, but there is a  
19 lot of data out there, and it's really great, valid information.  
20 It's just bringing it together and synthesizing it in a  
21 meaningful way, so that it can be used in the fishery ecosystem  
22 plan.

23  
24 Some of our challenges are we are still having difficulties  
25 acquiring data, and so, if there's any way that you can help us,  
26 help Graciela, get some of this data, especially from the local  
27 authorities, that would be absolutely wonderful. We are trying  
28 to build cooperation within the agency, within NOAA, to access  
29 this and also to build a geospatial platform, so that this  
30 information will be available not only within the agency and  
31 within the council, but also out to the public.

32  
33 Some of the next steps are we need to focus on developing a  
34 strategy for stakeholder engagement and making sure that we can  
35 present this at public meetings, where it's an understandable  
36 format, where people feel comfortable bringing forth their  
37 information and their opinions and their expertise and making  
38 sure that we understand it and that we're accounting for it  
39 within the fishery ecosystem plan.

40  
41 Exploratory data analysis, Orian is actually looking at some of  
42 the fish community data and looking at the differences between  
43 the fish communities amongst the islands. He is using several  
44 different databases for this, and hopefully you will be seeing  
45 that either at the April or the August meeting.

46  
47 We're looking at prioritization for data gaps, and so one of the  
48 things is there is funding out there to start projects and

1 collect data, but sometimes the priorities are not exactly in  
2 line with what you as the council need to make your decisions  
3 and to have integrated into these ecosystem plans, and so  
4 hopefully this will give you another platform to set your  
5 priorities and get those funded.

6  
7 We're going to continue developing a refined outline and also  
8 refine the conceptual model and start using examples so that we  
9 can build an understanding with the stakeholders and get their  
10 input.

11  
12 If you have any further questions, you can contact Graciela or  
13 Bill. Also, Orian is a great resource, and I would say that you  
14 can contact me, but, unfortunately, I am taking a job in  
15 California in January, and so I won't be available past the end  
16 of the January for this, but you can always contact Bill. Thank  
17 you very much, and I will take any questions you have.

18  
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Are there questions? I have one. The  
20 ecosystem plans are supposed to, and maybe I'm wrong, but aid us  
21 in the development of our fisheries plan, and is that part of  
22 it? Okay, but we are going to probably have our fisheries plans  
23 already in place before this is completed.

24  
25 **BILL ARNOLD:** Fishery management plans are never static, Carlos.  
26 They're always changing, and so we will use these fishery  
27 ecosystem plans to guide amendments that improve and adapt those  
28 fishery management plans to changes in habitat, to changes in  
29 fishing community characteristics, changes in gear type, shifts  
30 in habitat, the relative availability of habitat, and the list  
31 goes on and on. Instead of working in a dark room, we're hoping  
32 to put some light on things.

33  
34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** On that same note, it could also restrict  
35 fishing in certain areas or change that, can't it?

36  
37 **BILL ARNOLD:** No, and, as Cindi said, the FEP is not a  
38 regulatory document. It's an informational document. The  
39 fishery management plans and amendments to those plans are what  
40 will guide your fisheries and how they are pursued. The council  
41 has control over that and not the fishery ecosystem plan.

42  
43 **STACEY WILLIAMS:** I just have a couple of questions about the  
44 conceptual model. Are you going to include larval connectivity?  
45 I'm Stacey Williams from Coastal Survey Solutions.

46  
47 **CINDI MEYER:** We can. It's really data based, and so, if we  
48 have data, or if it's something that we can get to integrate it

1 and be able to do the connections and the relationships and we  
2 have expert opinion on it or something solid that we can use to  
3 be able to connect it, we can put anything in here, and that's  
4 one of the great things about the stakeholder engagement, is we  
5 can put anything up there and then we can prioritize and see  
6 which ones are the biggest influencers and maybe focus on those  
7 for our management strategies.  
8

9 **STACEY WILLIAMS:** Also, a suggestion. You have coral reef  
10 habitat as a general, but there many different habitats,  
11 different type of coral reef habitats, and that influences fish  
12 communities and also benthic communities, and so maybe break  
13 that down even further, if you have that data.  
14

15 **CINDI MEYER:** Yes, I think we discussed breaking it into even  
16 the different types of corals, but it was getting very complex  
17 for this small screen, but we can definitely expand this to  
18 whatever level of detail that you all feel is appropriate.  
19 Thank you.  
20

21 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Two things about the connectivity  
22 issues. We have had at least one work regarding the larval  
23 connectivity off the west coast of Puerto Rico, and so the main  
24 thing right now is gathering all that type of data and putting  
25 it in one place.  
26

27 That would be available and basically to find out if the fish  
28 aggregations that we have been protecting over such a long  
29 period of time are really in the right place. I mean, if the  
30 larvae are moving off into the middle of the Atlantic, then they  
31 might not be in the right place.  
32

33 In terms of the habitat information, people collect information  
34 using different names for different habitats, and one of the  
35 issues that we're having is trying to compile what is equal to  
36 what, and so we're trying to keep it, first, as simple as  
37 possible, without forgetting that we have something like twenty-  
38 six or thirty habitat categories.  
39

40 This will be basically brought to the audiences to start seeing  
41 what's important where and how much weight it has in terms of  
42 what is known. For example, for the St. Croix lobster, one of  
43 the issues might be that, when you have storms, they run all  
44 over the place, and you can harvest more lobsters, and so that's  
45 an impact, but it's a positive impact for the fishery, in terms  
46 of the landings that they can take.  
47

48 These kinds of connections, that's what we're after, but most of

1 the information will come from the people who are either users  
2 or who are studying the areas or who are fishing these areas,  
3 because they do have some information on what type of habitat  
4 and what type of bottom has been there, and, most importantly,  
5 how that has changed over time.

6  
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Before I go to Marcos, and I'm still with  
8 this ecosystem plan versus the FMP, because I am kind of  
9 concerned with what would happen if you identify a habitat that  
10 may be critical. You may have to change -- Like restrict  
11 bottom-tending gear, for example, and could that happen?

12  
13 **CINDI MEYER:** Not through the FEP itself, and so there is no  
14 regulation. Think of this more as a resource document, and so,  
15 if you have a situation or a challenge come up in one of your  
16 fisheries, then you can refer to the ecosystem plan and look at  
17 the connectivity between the different elements and then really  
18 try to get the whole ecosystem picture before you come up and  
19 develop your strategies, your management strategies.

20  
21 We're just compiling everything so that you have a better  
22 synthesis of the ecosystem as a whole, and this is dynamic and  
23 changing, and so thing is, if there is something that comes up  
24 next year, maybe El Nino or La Nina that would have an effect,  
25 then we would be able to integrate some of that information into  
26 the FEP. This is not meant to be a static document. It's meant  
27 to be dynamic and that it can evolve with the evolving  
28 conditions.

29  
30 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Let me give you an example. Off the  
31 south coast of Puerto Rico, there is a port called Las Mareas,  
32 which was dredged many years ago. We have information from  
33 where that was done in the 1990s. Fishermen from the area say  
34 that that used to be a very good conch habitat. I mean, you  
35 could find conch all the time, including juvenile conch.

36  
37 Now, you cannot find juveniles or adult conch in that area, and  
38 the reason is that the habitat changed from being hard bottom,  
39 sand-covered areas and seagrasses to really mud-like bottom, and  
40 so a conch weighing five pounds is going to go under, and it's  
41 not going to be able to move or to use that habitat, and so the  
42 information that people can bring to the table is, for example,  
43 Las Mareas runs from Guyana to Salinas, and it's -- These are  
44 the coordinates, and we can calculate how much area was lost  
45 over that period of time as conch habitat.

46  
47 That is what this is all about, and so, in changing that  
48 habitat, you have to also change the way the population behaves,

1 because you don't have that habitat anymore. That also will  
2 include all of the areas that are under management right now,  
3 and it includes the U.S. Coast Guard and the safety zones that  
4 are areas where people cannot fish, because they are entrances  
5 to ports and things like that.

6  
7 When you start adding everything up, it ends up being quite a  
8 bit of area that has been protected over that period of time,  
9 and so that basically reduces the habitat that you have  
10 available for fishing, and so it's that interaction of things  
11 that we're after.

12  
13 For example, something that might cause a lot of problem right  
14 now is Maria and the loss of seagrasses and the sedimentation  
15 that has come down to the areas, and so, most likely, the  
16 juvenile conch that need -- It's a requirement, and they need  
17 clean sand and seagrasses to go under the sand and stay the  
18 first year or two, and that's going to be a problem, and that's  
19 going to be reflected years from now, when you don't have areas  
20 for recruitment off of certain areas around Puerto Rico and St.  
21 Thomas and St. Croix.

22  
23 That is the kind of dynamic work that we're looking after, what  
24 changes and how much it changes and what are the consequences of  
25 that. Most likely, what we're looking for is explanations of  
26 why we have such wide variability in some of the landings, and  
27 so this will hopefully show us changes in habitat and changes in  
28 the oceanographic conditions, et cetera, that we can then look  
29 at the landings and see what happened over that period of time.

30  
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just addressing the engagement from the fishermen  
32 to the process, indirectly, you can get a lot of information  
33 from the fishermen -- For example, on any given coast, there is  
34 present a seasonality of baitfish that they use to perform their  
35 fishery. In some cases, this is exactly the same bait that the  
36 fish are eating or there is similar species to that that the  
37 fish eat that you can make a closer analysis about what is going  
38 on in terms of baitfish.

39  
40 We don't have any information about that, and I think we should  
41 explore an engagement of the fishermen to give at least a list  
42 of species and the seasonality and engage them into providing  
43 you that kind of information, and I spoke to Graciela about  
44 that, and just think about.

45  
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel.

47  
48 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Are you finished?

1  
2 **CINDI MEYER:** Yes, sir.  
3

4 **MIGUEL ROLON:** What will be the next step for the council  
5 regarding this ecosystem-based management plan?  
6

7 **CINDY MEYER:** I think the next step is either the -- I believe,  
8 in April, we're planning to bring back a conceptual model and  
9 have you guys start making some of the connections, giving us  
10 your expert opinion. Then, after that, also to look at the fish  
11 community analysis and start to get an understanding of that and  
12 some of the differences we're looking at. Those are really the  
13 next two steps. We've done a lot of groundwork trying to get  
14 the data together and compile it and organize it so that we can  
15 move forward with this.  
16

17 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You also mentioned that the plan will be treated  
18 as a source document mostly, but, when fishermen hear the word  
19 "plan", they tie that to management measures that are going to  
20 screw my fishery. In this case -- I have been working with  
21 ecosystem management plans since the 1970s, when we started, and  
22 each one has a different opinion of what it should be and what  
23 it is.  
24

25 We also have the essential fish habitat document that is for  
26 revision now, and we want to make clear as to where are the next  
27 steps that we are going, and then Alida Ortiz also has -- We had  
28 a chat with Helena, which are the people who serve as our  
29 liaison officers with the community and the education, and Diana  
30 also, as the committee, and so we are ready to spread the word  
31 on ecosystem-based management, and we want to be ready to spread  
32 the word at the right time.  
33

34 What you're saying is probably in April we will have more  
35 information and you will be able to discuss, in detail, some of  
36 the issues regarding ecosystem-based management, and when do you  
37 think that this could be presented as a plan? Will be it be  
38 2018 or 2019?  
39

40 **CINDI MEYER:** I think I'm going to let Bill answer that  
41 question.  
42

43 **BILL ARNOLD:** Not until after the fishery management plans are  
44 done, and so there.  
45

46 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Okay. That's exactly my point, because we are  
47 like dogs chasing a car. When we cannot chase the red car, we  
48 jump after another one, and so I would rather finish what you



1 just said, rather than jumping up and down with ecosystem-based  
2 management plans here and there.

3  
4 The beauty about ecosystem-based management plans is we can  
5 blame somebody else besides the fishers for things happening.  
6 We can blame the coastal communities and upland issues that are  
7 happening, and so thank you for the presentation, and we will be  
8 looking forward for the next time we meet in April.

9  
10 **CINDI MEYER:** You're welcome, and thank you.

11  
12 **BILL ARNOLD:** Miguel, I'm here to take the blame, okay? That's  
13 my job.

14  
15 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You will. Don't worry.

16  
17 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. On the agenda, I have Other  
18 Business, and I owe Marcos time from earlier today.

19  
20 **OTHER BUSINESS**

21  
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** I will be very quick. I made a list, because I  
23 am worried in hearing all the efforts to help the fishing  
24 community, in terms of giving help to the fishermen and  
25 different other kinds of support, and my wishing list here is  
26 things that different groups that are addressing and permanent  
27 changes that make them much stronger after the new hurricane  
28 came by.

29  
30 One of the things that some people are pursuing is to support  
31 them to have solar panel facilities, at least partial, on the  
32 fishing village, because, once you have the emergency, if you  
33 have at least some sort of energy to have one freezer or one  
34 something for them to keep working, even though slow-paced, it's  
35 good for the community, ice machines with the same capability  
36 and freezers with solar panels ready. Boat secure storage plans  
37 or areas for the fishing villages should be taken into  
38 consideration and gear and supplies at low cost, to help the  
39 fishermen to find those ways to acquire the gear with the low  
40 cost.

41  
42 Find a way to organize gas and oil supplies for the fishing  
43 villages to go back to business after a hurricane or storm, and  
44 something that came up in one of the meetings that was very  
45 interesting is that, right now, for example in Puerto Rico,  
46 people that are here working are people from FEMA and from the  
47 military that are in all the hotels and to organize some way for  
48 the fishermen to sell or to include on the menu of those guys

1 the catches after the hurricane, just creating a new market for  
2 them, so they have somebody to sell the catches. I think it was  
3 a very interesting approach.

4  
5 Create a capacity or help the fishermen to be more expert or  
6 knowledgeable about new fisheries and not to depend on one  
7 single fishery, like the divers that just go for conch or go for  
8 lobster. If the bottom gets messed up, they cannot do anything,  
9 and just try to help them to be able to do other things.

10  
11 The support of local boat manufacturers, due to the economic  
12 benefit on the economy, local benefit to the economy, and the  
13 standardization of the fleet that makes the fleet much more  
14 resilient. That's it. Thank you.

15  
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Commissioner.

17  
18 **DAWN HENRY:** Marcos, are you guys going to be putting those  
19 areas of concern in your request for funding from the federal  
20 government? How are you proposing to fund --

21  
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** Actually, my intention on this is that people  
23 like you and Damaris and the Governor of Puerto Rico and people  
24 that have access to help the fishing villages, to guide them,  
25 because it's very easy to follow on the old way of doing things,  
26 just getting a boat and repairing the boat and keep doing  
27 business as usual. If there is better ways to create a scenario  
28 that they can be stronger as an industry, we should pursue that,  
29 and this is just some ideas that are very helpful.

30  
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Are we going to do -- Tony.

32  
33 **TONY IAROCCI:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At lunchtime today, we  
34 had formed a small ad hoc committee to discuss this alternative  
35 marketing that we were talking about today, primarily to deal  
36 with live lobster and live and fresh queen conch. We had  
37 industry and NGOs at the table and council members at the table.

38  
39 The committee is formed with Thomas Forte, Helena Antoun, Alida  
40 Ortiz, Raimundo Espinoza, Carlos Velazquez, and myself, and  
41 Stacey, who is involved with the west coast, and we'll hear more  
42 from her later on.

43  
44 Topics of discussion was basically to make sure that we inform  
45 the fishing communities and the people to know exactly what we  
46 were talking about and the marketability of the product we were  
47 talking about and what the next steps were going to be and  
48 putting together the first shipment and, like I talked about

1 earlier, Tommy Forte would handle the product on the east coast,  
2 and Stacey would do the west coast.

3  
4 We were looking at the permitting, partnerships, support,  
5 prioritizing our next steps, what funding options would be to do  
6 this and do it right, and making sure that the first shipment --  
7 I had four calls back from both the American partner and the  
8 Chinese partner from the states, and they're very interested in  
9 doing this and making sure that we do it right and make sure  
10 that we keep control exactly -- If we start this in Puerto Rico,  
11 Puerto Rico, and the people doing it in Puerto Rico, whether it  
12 be Thomas Forte or Stacey, and the fishermen would be part of  
13 this whole process. It would be their setup. It wouldn't be  
14 the Chinese coming in and taking over anything. They would be  
15 buying the product.

16  
17 Priorities, to make sure that we look at the options of Stacey's  
18 operation for future development on the west coast and expansion  
19 for that process. The setup for Tommy is to make sure that the  
20 chilling and the shipping was set up, so that Puerto Rico would  
21 start with the number-one -- A quality product would be shipped,  
22 to set the stage and the standard for a quality product. We  
23 want to make sure it's a quality product that would demand a  
24 high price.

25  
26 The last thing we want to do is to send a low grade, and that  
27 means that, number one, that the top-quality stuff, the number-  
28 one lobster, would be shipped and exported. The number-two and  
29 the lower quality, which we call meager or sub-standard, which  
30 is not the number-ones that the Chinese want, would go into the  
31 domestic market. That would help make sure that everybody got  
32 their setup.

33  
34 We would have to make sure, especially as -- I talked with  
35 Miguel earlier, and, dealing with the Chinese, you have to  
36 negotiate price and timing and all that stuff. That's where we  
37 have to be at the table and make sure they don't -- If they're  
38 paying so much somewhere else, they need to pay at least that or  
39 more down here.

40  
41 Timing, we're looking at putting this together and getting it  
42 going and hopefully get something set up by after the holidays.  
43 I am going to meet with Tommy Forte tomorrow and check out what  
44 he's got for shipping boxes, gel packs, and see about getting  
45 the first shipment -- Get the first shipment off the floor and  
46 trying to get that done.

47  
48 Now, I want to make sure, especially with the Virgin Islands,

1 that this is not a closed-door process. This is something that  
2 has potential for later on. I was a hard-head when anything new  
3 came to me, and I fished the same way for years.

4  
5 When you look at marketability and you're looking at ACLs, when  
6 you're getting paid seven-dollars and you're selling to one  
7 market and you're working X amount of time to get that ACL  
8 filled, can you work less and work smarter and make more money?  
9 That's a consideration, but it takes time for people to make  
10 change, whether it's Puerto Rico or New England or anywhere. It  
11 takes time for people to look at that and to progress into  
12 different chains.

13  
14 Let's see how this works out, and let's try a pilot program.  
15 Let's see what we can do and put it together. With that said,  
16 after she does, if there's any questions, but, Stacey, would you  
17 like to give a little on your side?

18  
19 **STACEY WILLIAMS:** Right now, I have a wet-lab facility at the  
20 Department of Marine Science in la Parguera, Puerto Rico, on the  
21 southwest corner of Puerto Rico, and the objective of this wet-  
22 lab is I collect post-larval diadema antillarum, which is the  
23 black sea urchin, and I raise them to a larger size, and this is  
24 actually a restoration project.

25  
26 I take these diadema, when they're a larger size, and I transfer  
27 them back to the reef, and I have had good success in last  
28 year's restocking efforts, and so I have a couple of pictures,  
29 but I don't know if it's necessary.

30  
31 The tanks that I have set up are a semi-closed system, in case  
32 something happens to the university pump. The water is  
33 constantly recycled, and there is also possibilities to do a  
34 closed system, and so I think -- I mean, right now, I have the  
35 setup for diadema, and lobster eat diadema, and so I would have  
36 to expand the operation, but I don't think that would be  
37 difficult, and I think it would be a great opportunity, because  
38 it's at the Marine Science Department, and students can be  
39 involved. They could actually use this as -- Some students  
40 could use this research as their thesis research, and so it  
41 could be a one-to-one win.

42  
43 How I collect the diadema is that I have mooring lines at the  
44 shelf edge, and, on these mooring lines, I have basically  
45 Astroturf plates that are hanging in the water column, and,  
46 during the summertime, I actually get a lot of lobster larval  
47 recruits, and so, when I bring these plates back and I put them  
48 in the tank, there are some lobster, and they do grow pretty

1 quickly.

2  
3 They eat algae when they're small, and so that's another option.  
4 It's not necessarily the fishermen catching the lobster and  
5 keeping them fresh to then ship, but also doing something  
6 similar to what I am doing with the diadema, is catching the  
7 post-larval lobster larvae and bringing them back to the lab and  
8 growing them to a larger size and then maybe shipping them.  
9 Those are a couple of options that can be worked around.

10  
11 **TONY IAROCCI:** One other thing to that point too is we had  
12 talked about, if that does get to that point, a percentage of  
13 the recruitment that would be thrown back into the resource,  
14 into the ecosystem, that would add to the sustainability of the  
15 fishery, because we want this to be a win-win not only for the  
16 marketability, but for the sustainability of the fishery, where  
17 we're adding back to the fishery. We don't want to just take.  
18 We want to be able to put back. With that said, is there any  
19 questions, or we can follow up with this later on.

20  
21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We can successfully farm lobsters?

22  
23 **TONY IAROCCI:** It's being done in a lot of places. I personally  
24 did a project with Tom Matthews three years ago in Florida in  
25 the tanks, from pueruli to -- Julian, you don't have to comment  
26 on this, but to three-inch carapace, which is legal in the  
27 states. Within one year, we had a three-inch legal lobster,  
28 within one year, confined in a tank. In natural habitat, done  
29 in an open area where you had good tidal flow and good seagrass  
30 and good feed, who knows what could happen, and I don't know. I  
31 am not a scientist.

32  
33 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I thought the larval stage for lobster was  
34 like a year.

35  
36 **TONY IAROCCI:** That's what a lot of people thought up until this  
37 project.

38  
39 **STACEY WILLIAMS:** You could collect the post-larval, and so you  
40 don't actually need to --

41  
42 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You are talking about two different things. One  
43 is the larvae and one is the pueruli, the juvenile. What they  
44 are talking about is to bring the juvenile to 3.0 carapace  
45 length.

46  
47 **STACEY WILLIAMS:** Yes, and so you don't even have to -- You  
48 could bypass that really difficult stage of raising the larvae

1 in the lab, and that's what I am doing with the diadema. You  
2 could actually collect the juveniles, or recruits, as you would  
3 call them, and then bring them back to the lab, and so all the  
4 hard work is really done, and that's what I am doing with  
5 diadema, because it's very difficult to raise diadema larvae in  
6 the lab. They have been trying for years, but I am able,  
7 actually, to collect really tiny sea urchins, less than a  
8 millimeter in size, and bring them back to the lab and grow them  
9 to about four centimeters, and so it can be done.

10  
11 I collect all different types of larvae, like sea cucumber  
12 larvae, and I collect a lot of sea cucumber larvae, and I  
13 collect other different species of urchins, and so this is a  
14 possibility that I think could be expanded to other different  
15 species.

16  
17 **TONY IAROCCHI:** That right there, what she just said, is so  
18 important. When I told those guys that I called this afternoon,  
19 they said they didn't believe, and I said yes, and that's why  
20 we're going to document it and get pictures of that. That is  
21 the hard part. That is what takes the time, and that's where  
22 the loss is, but this is all done naturally, and it's pretty  
23 amazing. Yes, Julian.

24  
25 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Before Julian, the other thing is that you should  
26 split the question or the project. One is the export of legal-  
27 sized lobster and the other one is raising the juveniles all the  
28 way to legal size, and you have to have a special permit.  
29 Otherwise, you are going to be penalized for having undersized  
30 lobster in captivity, and so there are a lot of technicalities  
31 and things that you should do, but I believe that your  
32 presentation is really to present a holding tank for the fishers  
33 who want to bring the lobster and treat them for export, the way  
34 that it had been discussed before, and that will take a little  
35 bit more.

36  
37 **TONY IAROCCHI:** Right, and that's why I said one of the things  
38 that we discussed, talking about that later, is traceability and  
39 being able to get the permitting to do this, because Raimundo  
40 had been dealing with that, and we talked about the time that it  
41 would take to take this to the next level, and that's why we're  
42 starting with the marketability of the legal-sized lobster.  
43 Julian.

44  
45 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Excellent point, Miguel, and thank you for that.  
46 My question was, to go along with what he was saying, was how  
47 will these farm-raised lobsters to legal size affect the ACL,  
48 due to the fact that they are coming out of the same fishery?

1  
2 **MIGUEL ROLON:** We do not have -- This has been done by France  
3 and other countries, and usually what they do -- That's why I  
4 said they have a special permit, the same that you do with the  
5 salmon. You have wild, live-caught salmon and then  
6 aquacultured, and you have to document that.

7  
8 The problem that they have found, and it's too late today, but  
9 one thing that is interesting is let's say that you have a farm  
10 that can produce 6,000 lobster a month. All of a sudden, it's  
11 producing 20,000, and you know that those 20,000 minus 6,000 is  
12 14,000 that is coming from the wild and through that channel,  
13 and so all that will come in the future, when we have all of  
14 this, and probably I will be retired or dead, but the thing is  
15 that there is an opportunity here to do something outside the  
16 box, something that will be different.

17  
18 The other part is that the fishermen can participate.  
19 Unfortunately, there are fishermen, in at least one point in  
20 Puerto Rico, that they thought about bringing the lobster in and  
21 the lobster will grow to marketable size in a couple of months,  
22 and the same thing happened in France, in Martinique, and so  
23 now, with scientists like Stacey and others, you can organize  
24 something that will have the support of science and that will be  
25 put together in order legally and all of that, but, as I said,  
26 you have to divide the two projects, and I believe that the  
27 thrust of the presentation this morning and the summary today is  
28 to provide the fishers an avenue to export the lobster.

29  
30 As Stacey graciously is offering her facilities for the  
31 fishermen, especially on the west coast that do not have these  
32 facilities, and, remember, when the fishermen are corralling or  
33 putting lobsters in the cages, there is always someone looking  
34 after those cages, and it happened to a fisherman, I told you,  
35 in la Parguera. He put together \$800 worth of lobster in one  
36 cage, and he was -- Probably by the next meeting we will be able  
37 to have some progress, or at least you can continue working on  
38 that, and, in 2018, we might be able to tell the fishing  
39 community that this works or it doesn't work or how to go.

40  
41 **EDWARD SCHUSTER:** How expensive is it to put a project like this  
42 together if someone, like a fisher, like myself, wanted to get  
43 into it, to raise the larvae into a marketable size?

44  
45 **TONY IAROCCI:** Eddie, I couldn't even begin to answer that, and  
46 I wouldn't want to answer that, because it's too time consuming,  
47 and, like Miguel had said, it's been done a lot of places. What  
48 intrigues me about this project is, and I have been involved

1 with this for quite a long time and researched this, and you  
2 guys know Tom Matthews, and it's been done in a lot of places.

3  
4 What Stacey had said earlier is the hard part is getting the  
5 larvae, getting the pueruli, getting that to that certain stage.  
6 That is what is time consuming, and that is where the lobster is  
7 lost. She has got an avenue where she is collecting for the sea  
8 urchin, and the lobsters are there, and they are already doing  
9 the grow-out, where you can self-contain and do that. Whether  
10 you do market some of that stuff or you put a percentage of that  
11 back into the wild to restock an area for a nursery area or to  
12 grow to legal size, that in itself enhances recruitment and  
13 enhances sustainability.

14  
15 That is a selling point in itself, being able to do that. Not  
16 all -- It takes, from what I've seen and what I've read, it  
17 takes a lot to get them out of pueruli.

18  
19 I have put collectors out in Florida and throughout the  
20 Caribbean coast of Nicaragua. To keep them alive and to get  
21 them to grow out is the challenge. She has already dealt with  
22 that not even trying. It's there and being done, and, like I  
23 said, that's very exciting. It really is.

24  
25 **STACEY WILLIAMS:** Just to answer your question, I think it's --  
26 It's all about permitting. If you get the permits, and you can  
27 have a small operation and have a tank and have a water pump,  
28 and it's that expensive, and so, if you do collect lobster and  
29 you want to keep them fresh, I don't think that it would be an  
30 expensive operation.

31  
32 I started with my budget very, very low. It was a pilot  
33 project, just to prove the concept. Now that I am expanding it  
34 and I'm putting out more mooring lines and more collectors, it's  
35 a little bit more expensive, but it's not that expensive if you  
36 have a couple of tanks and a water pump. I don't think it would  
37 be that big of a deal.

38  
39 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Thank you.

40  
41 **TONY IAROCCHI:** Thank you.

42  
43 **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

44  
45 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** All right. I have a public comment period  
46 for anyone. I don't see any hands. All right. Administrative  
47 Matters.



1  
2  
3 **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

4 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Very quickly, with the budget, for 2017, we have  
5 enough to finish until December 31. There will be some money  
6 that will be carried over to 2018, and, if you have heard,  
7 Congress avoided the closure of the government, even though, if  
8 they close the federal government, because we are grantees, we  
9 don't need to close the council. We have enough money to start  
10 2018, and that is the good news.

11 We have money to start 2018. Last year, it was very difficult,  
12 because we didn't have any money until almost half of it, but,  
13 this time around, National Marine Fisheries Service provided the  
14 necessary funding for the council to start 2018 on time.

15  
16 Regarding the closed session, we usually have a closed session  
17 when we are going to discuss matters related to candidates for  
18 the panels that we have. At this time, we don't have any  
19 vacancies, except for one, because, the SSC and the Outreach and  
20 Education Advisory Panel, their appointments last until 2018 and  
21 2019, and the same with the DAPs.

22  
23 We have one vacancy in the Outreach and Education Advisory  
24 Panel, and then Ruth was going to provide some names for the  
25 Outreach and Education Panel, and so will wait until next time  
26 for her to bring that to the attention of Alida Ortiz, and Diana  
27 is kicking me under the table, because she has something to say.

28  
29 **DIANA MARTINO:** Regarding the vacancy that we have, Israel  
30 Umpierre left in the DAP of Puerto Rico, and we had talked, and  
31 we were talking to Helena about Robert Long, which was the  
32 person that was --

33  
34 **MIGUEL ROLON:** (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

35  
36 **DIANA MARTINO:** Okay. I said nothing.

37  
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you very much. We are in recess until  
39 tomorrow morning, but, Commissioner, one quick --

40  
41 **DAWN HENRY:** Mr. Chairman, speaking about budget, the USVI has a  
42 request. We have some unspent funding for the liaison fund for  
43 2017, and we are asking for the council to consider carrying  
44 over those funds to 2018.

45  
46 I don't know if the council is aware, but the federal OMB, they,  
47 for grants that were expiring between the period of September 30  
48 through December 31, all of those grants were automatically

1 extended until September 30, 2018. For the council to grant  
2 this consideration, it would fall in line with the decision the  
3 federal government has already made in terms of as a result of  
4 the hurricanes in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and so we're asking  
5 for that.

6  
7 Secondly, it's my understanding that the DAP Chair -- They  
8 recently did some sort of a travel, and they were requesting  
9 payment, and are you familiar with that, Mr. Chair?

10  
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** DAP members did a travel and weren't  
12 compensated?

13  
14 **DAWN HENRY:** For travel days.

15  
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Right. I know what that's about.

17  
18 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Well, tell us.

19  
20 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** They don't get compensated for the travel  
21 day, just the day of the meetings, but that was in the charters,  
22 and that was already approved in the charter and their bylaws  
23 that compensation was for meeting days only.

24  
25 **DAWN HENRY:** Not travel days.

26  
27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Right.

28  
29 **DAWN HENRY:** Okay.

30  
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Unless -- I don't know if that can change.

32  
33 **DAWN HENRY:** Okay.

34  
35 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Regarding the carryover, do you have an opinion  
36 of whether we can carry over that or not yet?

37  
38 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** I forwarded your question to folks within  
39 the Department of Commerce Office of General Counsel, and I  
40 think they needed additional information to answer that, but I  
41 can forward you that email again and put you in touch with that  
42 person again to get that information.

43  
44 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Because one thing that we do, and I can do it and  
45 the Chair, is that you won't get any carryover and that money  
46 will go back to the base funding of the council, but we can put  
47 it back in 2018, and, rather than give you the \$25,000 in 2018,  
48 we can give you \$30,000, if the Chair approves it. Do you

1 approve it, Mr. Chairman?

2

3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Of course.

4

5 **DAWN HENRY:** Same difference.

6

7 **MIGUEL ROLON:** That way -- See, the liaison funds, the intent of  
8 the liaison funds, was to assist the local governments, and so  
9 you will not be penalized monetarily for sending people to  
10 attend council-related things, and so, at this time, it's  
11 something that we can do.

12

13 In the meantime, we can wait until we get this final legal  
14 opinion, but this mechanism would allow us to close 2017. Then  
15 we will have the agreement that, in 2018, you will receive  
16 whatever amount you have plus \$5,000. The same goes for Puerto  
17 Rico, but Puerto Rico doesn't use it, and so I don't know what  
18 they're going to do.

19

20 **DAWN HENRY:** Is it also appropriate for the discussion with how  
21 -- With our flight being cancelled and how we ended up coming  
22 here?

23

24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** (The comment is not audible on the  
25 recording.)

26

27 **DAWN HENRY:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

28

29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Anything else? Hearing none, we are in  
30 recess until tomorrow morning at nine o'clock.

31

32 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed on December 12, 2017.)

33

34

- - -

35

36

December 13, 2017

37

38

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

39

40

- - -

41

42 The Caribbean Fishery Management Council reconvened at the  
43 Marriott Stellaris, Condado, Puerto Rico, Wednesday morning,  
44 December 13, 2017, and was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m.  
45 by Chairman Carlos Farchette.

46

47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We are going to get started, and so if we  
48 could all take a seat. We are going to start with the roll

1 call, and I'm going to start with Vivian.  
2  
3 **VIVIAN RUIZ:** Vivian Ruiz, council staff.  
4  
5 **MARIA DE LOS A. IRIZARRY:** María de los A. Irizarry, council  
6 staff.  
7  
8 **CARLOS VELAZQUEZ:** Carlos Velazquez, council member.  
9  
10 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Tony Blanchard, council member.  
11  
12 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Damaris Delgado, Puerto Rico DNER.  
13  
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** Marcos Hanke, Puerto Rico.  
15  
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Carlos Farchette, Council Chair.  
17  
18 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Miguel Rolon, council staff.  
19  
20 **DIANA MARTINO:** Diana Martino, council staff.  
21  
22 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Jocelyn D'Ambrosio, NOAA Office of General  
23 Counsel.  
24  
25 **BONNIE PONWITH:** Bonnie Ponwith, NOAA Fisheries.  
26  
27 **JEREMY MONTES:** Jeremy Montes, U.S. Coast Guard.  
28  
29 **BILL ARNOLD:** Bill Arnold, NOAA Fisheries.  
30  
31 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Graciela Garcia-Moliner, council  
32 staff.  
33  
34 **NELSON CRESPO:** Nelson Crespo, DAP Chair, Puerto Rico.  
35  
36 **CLAY PORCH:** Clay Porch, NOAA Fisheries.  
37  
38 **JEFF RADONSKI:** Jeff Radonski, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement.  
39  
40 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Alida Ortiz, Outreach and Education Advisory Panel  
41 Chairperson.  
42  
43 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Jack McGovern, NOAA Fisheries.  
44  
45 **ALEXIS SABINE:** Alexis Sabine, Virgin Islands Fish and Wildlife.  
46  
47 **TONY IAROCCI:** Tony Iarocci, commercial fisherman.  
48

1 **JOSE RIVERA:** Jose Rivera, NOAA/National Marine Fisheries  
2 Service Habitat Conservation Division.

3  
4 **JOSHUA MOREL:** Joshua Morel, Clean Ocean Initiative.

5  
6 **DANIEL MATOS CARABALLO:** Daniel Matos Caraballo, Puerto Rico  
7 Department of Natural and Environmental Resources.

8  
9 **YASMIN VELEZ-SANCHEZ:** Yasmin Velez-Sanchez, Pew Charitable  
10 Trusts.

11  
12 **ROY CRABTREE:** Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries.

13  
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, everyone. We're in the  
15 continuation of the 161<sup>st</sup> Regular Caribbean Fishery Management  
16 Council Meeting being held at the Marriott Stellaris Hotel in  
17 Condado, Puerto Rico, December 13, 2017.

18  
19 Continuing with the agenda, what was left from yesterday was  
20 Island-Based Fishery Management Plans: Review of the Final Draft  
21 EIS Draft Actions and Alternatives for Each Island Group. That  
22 will be Bill, I believe. First, we have to get the roll call  
23 for the Go to Meeting.

24  
25 **VIVIAN RUIZ:** The Go to Meeting attendees are Maria Lopez and  
26 Sarah Stephenson.

27  
28 **ISLAND-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS: REVIEW OF FINAL DRAFT**  
29 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT DRAFT ACTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES**  
30 **FOR EACH ISLAND GROUP**

31  
32 **BILL ARNOLD:** Good morning. I want to go over where we are and  
33 where we're headed with all of these things, and I think it's a  
34 very important time right now for fisheries management in the  
35 Caribbean region. I think we have a lot of opportunities ahead  
36 of us, and I really would like for us to take advantage of them.

37  
38 The first thing I would say is, if we're going to be successful,  
39 we have to work as a team. All these ideas that this person  
40 knows more than that person or this group doesn't allow that  
41 group to talk, et cetera, et cetera, is incredibly  
42 counterproductive to what we're trying to get done. Everybody  
43 involved in this process has something important to contribute,  
44 and everybody needs to be allowed to contribute.

45  
46 I have suffered that too, being told that I shouldn't speak, et  
47 cetera, et cetera, and it's just the way that we're going to get  
48 things done, and so I really think that, starting from council

1 leadership down, everybody needs to accept that we are working  
2 as a team and we will achieve our goals only as a team.

3  
4 What I wanted to go over today, just to make sure that everybody  
5 is clear on where we're going, because I think there was some  
6 concern expressed yesterday about our fishery ecosystem plan and  
7 that it may be a distraction to the fishery management plans  
8 that we're developing, but it's not a distraction. It's a key  
9 component of the package that we're developing for fisheries  
10 management in the region.

11  
12 There is basically three components, or there's a lot of  
13 components, but there are three key components to developing an  
14 effective approach to fisheries management in the Caribbean  
15 region, and one of those is the fishery ecosystem plan that we  
16 talked about yesterday, and that fishery ecosystem plan is  
17 basically an encyclopedia, an electronic encyclopedia available  
18 to everybody, and it is a constantly-updated encyclopedia of all  
19 the information that we have available to us regarding fisheries  
20 and everything associated with the fisheries in the U.S.  
21 Caribbean region, but not just the U.S. Caribbean region,  
22 because this is a hierarchical document.

23  
24 It starts basically at the lowest level, and we can start as low  
25 as we want, but the level I started at is the individual island.  
26 We are doing island-based fisheries management, and so the  
27 fishery ecosystem plan first addresses the unique attributes of  
28 each of the three islands, and there are many unique attributes.

29  
30 There is a lot of things about St. Croix that are not the same  
31 on Puerto Rico and that are not the same in St. Thomas and St.  
32 John, and we all know that. That's why we're where we are, and  
33 kudos to Roy Crabtree for saying we need to move towards a more  
34 island-based management approach. I couldn't agree more, but  
35 the second level is the region itself.

36  
37 There are things that operate at the U.S. Caribbean region that,  
38 relative to the larger scale, these three islands do have in  
39 common. For one thing, we're all in this room together. There  
40 is no St. Eustatius in here, and there is no Jamaica in here,  
41 and there is no France in here. It's just the U.S. Caribbean  
42 region, and so that is hierarchical level too, but, as pointed  
43 out when Stacey Williams asked her question yesterday of what  
44 about connectivity, when you're talking about lobsters and where  
45 their larvae come from, you can't just operate in the U.S.  
46 Caribbean region.

47  
48 You have got to operate, at a minimum, Caribbean-wide, because

1 it may be that the Southern Windward are providing the larvae  
2 that drives this population. We may never know exactly how that  
3 relationship operates, and certainly we can't manage what goes  
4 on in the Southern Windward Islands, but we sure need to know  
5 about it, because, if we don't, if we operate in ignorance, we  
6 could make some really bad mistakes.

7  
8 Then, really, at the highest level, there is global  
9 considerations. If we -- This is where the cumulative impacts  
10 come in, and so say you decide that you are going to harvest  
11 less protein from the ocean in the U.S. Caribbean region. Well,  
12 that doesn't mean the U.S. Caribbean region needs less protein,  
13 but it just means that you're going to be getting less of it  
14 locally. Well, that has implications, because it's going to  
15 have to come from somewhere else, and that somewhere else could  
16 be -- Just using an example, it could be the Midwest, because  
17 you're going to use corn to feed cows instead of eating fish.

18  
19 Well, okay. Then you've got more nitrogen coming down the  
20 Mississippi River and expanding the anoxic zone down there and  
21 fewer tuna, and so now you have reduced your protein even more,  
22 and these are the kinds of global implications that decisions  
23 can have, and so you've got to work at all four of those  
24 hierarchical levels.

25  
26 Obviously, right now, we're working at the lowest level, the  
27 individual islands, and then the second level, which is the U.S.  
28 Caribbean itself, but we're not going to be able to stay at that  
29 level.

30  
31 Like I said, lobster is a good example. You have to understand  
32 their larval transport pathways and connectivity patterns, and  
33 you have to understand how currents operate and how they change,  
34 because the connectivity patterns change when the currents  
35 change, and this just isn't spiny lobster. It's also queen  
36 conch and a lot of other moderate to long-lived larval species.

37  
38 I mean, heck, in two weeks, three weeks, the life span, a short  
39 life span, for larvae, you can easily get from the Southern  
40 Windward Islands to Key West or even up the east coast of the  
41 United States, and so there is tremendous implications of  
42 understanding how the basin operates.

43  
44 Now you've got this fishery ecosystem plan, and that's your  
45 encyclopedia. You can use that information, as you see on the  
46 screen, to guide your decisions. We talked about a lot of  
47 things yesterday. We talked about lobster exports, and we  
48 talked a little bit about aquaculture, and we talked about

1 connectivity. Queen conch densities is a means of managing  
2 their reference points.

3  
4 We talked about lobster carapace length, and we use that, or  
5 could use that, to manage lobster, all of these options.  
6 Deepwater snapper, should we use permits or should we use  
7 electronic reporting? How can we benefit? In-season landings  
8 data and habitat changes, all of these things are contained in  
9 and guided by and can be accessed by anyone within that fishery  
10 ecosystem plan.

11  
12 You draw the information out of your fisheries ecosystem plan  
13 and you identify an issue that needs to be addressed, and you  
14 can use the information in that ecosystem encyclopedia to say,  
15 okay, well, here are some valid options that we can apply to  
16 address the issue that's on the table, and then all of that  
17 information from that FEP feeds your decision-making process,  
18 and that decision-making process is your environmental impact  
19 statement. It's not your fishery management plan. It's your  
20 environmental impact statement.

21  
22 When we talk about actions and alternatives, we're talking about  
23 our environmental impact statement, and you go through all those  
24 actions and alternatives, as we're doing now, and should we use  
25 ad hoc SSC guidance to set an ABC for queen conch or should we  
26 use densities or should we use landings from 2012 to 2016?  
27 These are different options.

28  
29 They are contained within the environmental impact statement.  
30 You set those decisions up, and you use your encyclopedia to  
31 guide them and provide information and then all of those people  
32 out there that live in these islands are going to be impacted by  
33 these decisions can access that encyclopedia so that they can  
34 learn about the issues.

35  
36 Then, when we have public hearings to obtain input on what the  
37 best approach is, these people come in informed, instead of  
38 coming in totally ignorant, and not by any fault of their own,  
39 but totally ignorant of the issue.

40  
41 We try to explain to them what's going on in the first thirty  
42 minutes of a meeting and then expect two hours of informed  
43 comment, and they can't possibly provide informed comment unless  
44 they've got some information behind them with which to make  
45 decisions. These aren't stupid people. They are very smart  
46 people, but anybody can be ignorant. I don't know how a  
47 locomotive works, but that doesn't make me stupid. It makes me  
48 ignorant of how a locomotive works. I get the wheels go around,



1 but I don't know all the details.

2  
3 Everybody is like that. You can be a brilliant brain surgeon,  
4 but that doesn't mean that you can tune your carburetor, and so  
5 that's the environmental impact statement. You make a decision  
6 based upon all that informed comment and discussion and good  
7 input. You try to make the very best decision you can, and you  
8 select a preferred alternative. Here is the council's preferred  
9 approach to addressing this issue.

10  
11 When that is passed through, an amendment to a fishery  
12 management plan is made, then it goes into the fishery  
13 management plan. The fishery management plan is nothing more  
14 than a description of how these fisheries actually operate. It  
15 doesn't make decisions, and it doesn't have choices. It says  
16 you have a nine-inch minimum size for parrotfish in St. Croix,  
17 you have 200 queen conch per vessel for commercial harvest in  
18 the U.S. Virgin Islands, and that's all it says. There is no  
19 debate, and there is no discussion, but it's just here's how  
20 this fishery operates, and then you can go back.

21  
22 That's what the big arrow is all about. You can go back and  
23 say, okay, now that the fishery is operating this way, is it  
24 operating the way we want it to? If it's not, you go back and  
25 you look at your encyclopedia and you say, well, based upon the  
26 information we have, what are we missing and what do we need to  
27 adjust?

28  
29 Then you can use that to say, all right, and so we're missing  
30 some information in this encyclopedia, and then that comes up to  
31 NOAA Fisheries and a lot of other people and then they set  
32 priorities for funding, and we can use this guidance to  
33 determine what our priorities are.

34  
35 We're in that process right now with our MARFIN grant program.  
36 Where should we spend the money? You don't just want to open it  
37 up to everything. You need to have proposals coming in that  
38 address gaps in our knowledge, and, of course, we have huge gaps  
39 in our knowledge, but which gaps do you need to fill now for  
40 specific purposes, and that encyclopedia helps to inform you of  
41 that.

42  
43 As I have said on many occasions before, everything works  
44 together. It's all tied up really tightly, and that's the way  
45 you want this to operate. The system operates on an island-  
46 based scheme, and it has to be constituent informed, and it has  
47 to be constantly updated, and the encyclopedia itself has to be  
48 available to all and this is how it's going to operate, and

1 that's what Cindi mentioned yesterday. We need everybody to be  
2 aware, and we need everybody to give us information, because we  
3 need as much information as we can possibly attain.

4  
5 Really, I just wanted to provide this context, so you understand  
6 where we would like to go with this, and, of course, until we  
7 get these new fishery management plans in place, we're really  
8 not going to be able to achieve these goals, and I think they're  
9 really important goals.

10  
11 We know that the fishery management plans we have in place right  
12 now are operating based on an era of landings and information  
13 that is completely outdated, and that was stressed on multiple  
14 occasions in the SSC meeting last week, and so we've got a new  
15 landings regime, and we've got a new information regime, and  
16 we've got an old set of fishery management plans, and we can  
17 operate under those, but we don't want to operate under them any  
18 longer than we have to, and that's why I keep stressing that we  
19 need to get these new fishery management plans in place.

20  
21 I get that you're sick of me saying that, but there is a reason  
22 for it. It's not just because I want to have some feather in my  
23 cap. I've got a whole, compete, totally successful, at least in  
24 my opinion, scientific career, and I don't need any more  
25 accomplishments in my career. I want to do this because I  
26 really think it's something important, and I think it can be  
27 exemplary for the nation and, even at a global scale, I think we  
28 can provide a way to manage in small-scale fisheries in tropical  
29 regions that depend on coral reefs that can be a model for a lot  
30 of other regions, and that's what I am working towards.

31  
32 I would like for everybody else to work towards that. If you  
33 don't, I am going to continue to work towards it. If I fail,  
34 well, that's the way it goes. Everybody that sets out to climb  
35 Everest doesn't make the top, but they're certainly not going to  
36 make it if they don't start, and so we'll do the yellow brick  
37 road thing. You've got to take that first step, and we're way  
38 past the first step, but that's where I am on this.

39  
40 I hope that the team will buy into it, and I'm not the leader  
41 here, but I'm just making some suggestions, but, those who do, I  
42 hope that they at least use this as a start point and build a  
43 context within all of which this operates that is where you  
44 think this should go.

45  
46 That's what I'm thinking, and that's why the FEP was discussed  
47 yesterday, and, when we talk about these fishery management  
48 plans and their associated environmental impact statements

1 today, I want you to be keeping this in mind, and so that's  
2 where we are, and, unless you have questions, I think that's our  
3 start point, but I would really like for, as we move into the  
4 island-based fishery management plans and their EISs, I think  
5 it's probably best for Graciela and Maria to lead that  
6 discussion, although certainly I'm willing to participate, to  
7 the degree that they want me to, but they're really leading on  
8 this, and so that's what I've got to say. Thank you.

9

10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel.

11

12 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I agree with everything you said. The task today  
13 is for the council to hear the presentation and provide any  
14 guidance that the staff needs, but we have to keep in mind that  
15 the goal is to put together a schedule in 2018 that will allow  
16 us to finish this, because we have been talking about this for  
17 the last two or three years, and, every time that we meet,  
18 somebody has a little bit of this and a little bit of that, and,  
19 if we keep doing that, the fishery will suffer.

20

21 Our goal should be to have that schedule put together, and it  
22 won't be perfect, but at least it gives you a goal to have these  
23 FMPs submitted to the Secretary as soon as possible with the  
24 best available scientific information that you can get.

25

26 Also, Bill said something that is very important. He said it's  
27 teamwork, and, in order for any team to work, you have to read,  
28 and every council member has to prepare for this task. What  
29 will be the first presentation? Are we going to follow the  
30 agenda as written?

31

32 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** You should have received the updated  
33 version of the actions and alternatives, and this includes the  
34 information that came out of the SSC meeting that ended last  
35 Friday, and so, of course, there is more information that needs  
36 to come into the documents, but we are, as you saw from  
37 Richard's presentation yesterday, digesting the information, the  
38 direction, that they provided to the staff.

39

40 In addition to that, the SSC had requested additional help from  
41 the Southeast Fisheries Science Center regarding such things as  
42 the back-calculation of the recreational fishery data for Puerto  
43 Rico, which is the only one that has it, because the year  
44 sequence that we're talking about is 1988 to 2011 or 2015,  
45 depending on the species, and the recreational data only begins  
46 in 2000, and so that's a topic of discussion that the SSC has  
47 had and requested help with.

48

1 **MIGUEL ROLON:** If I may, Mr. Chairman, that's probably one of  
2 the first things that we should discuss, this request, and to  
3 hear from the Center when that can be done in 2018, if possible,  
4 so that we can have our schedule designed to include that. We  
5 might probably need -- Graciela, probably we will need another  
6 meeting of the SSC sometime in the first quarter?

7  
8 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Hopefully at the beginning of  
9 February, and that's what we were thinking about, so that there  
10 would be enough time to put all that information into the  
11 documents and try to see if, by December of 2018, the document  
12 is ready for secretarial review.

13  
14 That is the ideal schedule, and so, having an SSC meeting -- It  
15 won't be a week, but it would be one or two days, and,  
16 basically, the request to the Science Center regarding what  
17 Shannon had developed for us during this past week, the CVs and  
18 the information that the SSC has developed, we started working  
19 on the specific language for the data request, and it's not  
20 really a data request, but it's really to review and provide us  
21 with the information that is needed to complete the homework, if  
22 I may.

23  
24 From our conversations with Shannon, it shouldn't take that  
25 much, because we're almost there, and so it would be up to the  
26 Science Center to determine if the beginning of February would  
27 be a good date to set the SSC meeting.

28  
29 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I don't expect the Center to give us an answer  
30 today, but soon, because, once we receive that information, then  
31 the SSC should schedule a meeting and go over it and then  
32 prepare the recommendation to the council.

33  
34 Ideally, we would not meet the SSC again until we've finished  
35 this, because, if we do that, then we will be changing paragraph  
36 after paragraph, and we will never finish, and so we want to  
37 hear from Bonnie on this one.

38  
39 **BONNIE PONWITH:** Thank you. What would help is some informal  
40 consultations between council staff and the Center to get a  
41 grasp of exactly what needs to be done and then formalize that  
42 in writing, so that we make sure that we hit the bullseye of  
43 that target and don't lose any time because of missing parts of  
44 that.

45  
46 Once we see it, I think the value of having the informal  
47 discussions in advance is it helps us to develop what we think  
48 is a credible timeline for what it would take to get those

1 materials to you, which gives you the lead time you need for  
2 getting the SSC meeting properly publicly noticed, and so I  
3 think that would be the most efficient way of proceeding on  
4 that.

5  
6 **MIGUEL ROLON:** So Graciela will take the lead on that one, and,  
7 by the first question, January or February, we'll be ready for  
8 that informal discussion. In order to expedite this in a way  
9 that all the council members will be able to grasp what is it  
10 that we want to do, the alternatives, the draft actions and  
11 alternatives, we have discussed this for a long time. Is there  
12 any new alternatives that the council should address today?

13  
14 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** The new language for the ABC control  
15 rule that the SSC has provided, that has already been included  
16 in the draft document that you received, and so that is already  
17 incorporated. Now, the SSC is developing what we call rules-of-  
18 thumb, so that the staff can actually plug into the numbers into  
19 the development of the OFL and the ABC, which is what the SSC  
20 would finally recommend to you after their February meeting.

21  
22 That is part of the informal discussion that we will have with  
23 the Science Center, and, also, it's very valuable to have  
24 Jocelyn at the SSC meetings, because she guides us in terms of  
25 the legality of what we have to follow and what the SSC can and  
26 cannot do, and so it's all based on that.

27  
28 The document is basically the same that you have seen before.  
29 It has this new language from the ABC control rule, and it  
30 actually also includes the determination of indicator species  
31 for those stocks that will have one, and it's separate and  
32 different for St. Thomas/St. John, for St. Croix, and for Puerto  
33 Rico.

34  
35 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Just for the council, what the staff has done is  
36 to incorporate -- Remember that each island area provided a list  
37 of the species that were going to be managed, and so that's  
38 already there and you don't have to go over it again. However,  
39 here, we need to talk about yesterday's idea to have a one-day  
40 workshop to clarify this jargon and the graphs and everything,  
41 and I believe that that should be taking place sometime during  
42 probably the last part of February or the first half of March,  
43 so you will be able to grasp all of this and be prepared for the  
44 April meeting.

45  
46 We should wait until the SSC meets, in case they have something  
47 else to add. Then you don't have to go back. You will have  
48 that information there, and so there will be a matter of having

1 a one-day workshop, and probably we can do it, as we have done  
2 before, with the joint meeting of the DAPs and the SSC and the  
3 council members, and so we can have a meeting like that, and it  
4 will be dedicated to only a description of this methodology, and  
5 then it will be questions and answers from the audience as to  
6 how we can clarify that for the public and for the members of  
7 the council. If we do that, then we can be prepared for making  
8 other decisions at the April meeting, but we need to know  
9 whether you agree or not with that schedule.

10  
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Commissioner.  
12

13 **DAWN HENRY:** I think the suggestion is a good suggestion. My  
14 follow-up thought would be, since you mentioned the public at  
15 that meeting, would it be possible for there to be a prior  
16 meeting just so that at least the GVI, as well as the Science  
17 Center, that at least we all have a better understanding, at  
18 least internally, that we're headed in the right direction  
19 before we do it publicly, to me temper having disagreements and  
20 too much confusion, and so that would be my suggestion.  
21

22 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You can do that on your own, but all meetings of  
23 the council have to be public, and this meeting is just for  
24 orientation purposes, but that doesn't mean that we cannot go  
25 with your idea and let's say have one in St. Thomas/St. John and  
26 get as many people as possible of the players, the fishers, who  
27 are not here and fishers who are not members of the DAPs can  
28 attend.  
29

30 That way, the more we explain to the public on the decision-  
31 making of what is it that we are doing and what is it that we  
32 intend to do, the better. Sometimes, when we have these  
33 meetings, somebody can come up from left field and say something  
34 that is better than anything that we have said about any  
35 particular issue, but my point is that, whatever we do here, we  
36 have to put it on the schedule and we have to monitor that.  
37

38 What we have done so far is that the staff will have a  
39 conference, an informal conference, with the Center to make sure  
40 that we, each other, understand what we want to do, and the  
41 Center will then work on these numbers and what Graciela  
42 mentioned, and then we will have the orientation meeting after  
43 the SSC, and I will coordinate with the Regional Office and the  
44 Center to make sure that we have the right people there.  
45

46 If we have an orientation meeting with the same jargon and  
47 everything, we are going to be wasting our time. We have to  
48 digest that the way we do it with the Marine Recreational

1 Education Program, and Maria Delmar was able, with the staff,  
2 Bill's staff, they put together a good, good presentation of the  
3 whole system, from the get-go all the way up to adoption of the  
4 regulations, and that's the kind of thing that we need to do  
5 here, but focusing only on the presentation made by the SSC  
6 Chair yesterday. The next steps, Graciela?

7  
8 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** One more thing regarding the -- You  
9 also should have received a copy of the SSC presentation that  
10 Richard gave yesterday, and that one goes through the  
11 alternative that deals with the indicator species, the  
12 alternative that deals with the tier assignment, meaning the  
13 species that are okay to be in 4a, because we're only dealing  
14 with Tier 4. There is no accepted assessment done for any of  
15 the species, and so Tier 4a and Tier 4b.

16  
17 The intent of the SSC, and it's in one of the slides, is to  
18 actually allow for more harvest for those species that actually,  
19 in their expert opinion, in the expert opinion of the DAPs,  
20 because this has a history of meetings between the SSC and the  
21 DAPs jointly, having had presentations from the Science Center  
22 and the Regional Office at these meetings, and so they have been  
23 following this. The information that comes in for the public is  
24 also taken into consideration and debated by the SSC to make a  
25 final statement.

26  
27 In the case that there is very little information for some  
28 species, then they have to make that determination if these  
29 species don't have enough for us to deal with them the way that  
30 we deal in 4a, and so we have to move them to 4b, and you saw,  
31 from the slides yesterday, that it's a very limited number of  
32 species, and those include mostly the ones that are really  
33 vulnerable to fishing pressure and to other issues that the SSC  
34 accounts for when looking at the information.

35  
36 That presentation summarizes where the SSC is at this time, and  
37 it gives us, the staff, information to proceed with the  
38 calculations that need to be -- They are not actually looking at  
39 the end result, and so they don't see the poundage that will  
40 result from these ABCs at the end, but the intent is to make  
41 sure that the species that can tolerate additional harvest from  
42 what they have right now, based on the ACLs that were put in  
43 place in 2010 and 2011, is achieved, and the main examples would  
44 be things like the spiny lobster, the dolphin, the wahoo, et  
45 cetera.

46  
47 In terms of the document and the SSC presentation, these are the  
48 two main documents that you have in your hands right now, and,

1 if you read them, they are set up in a way that they follow one  
2 step to the next to the next, and the idea is that, in the near  
3 future, you would be selecting a preferred alternative, and so  
4 that one would be the one that would be most developed and  
5 presented to the general public as what the council is thinking  
6 about at the time that they are taking these to public hearings.  
7 Then, at the end, you will finalize the document with a  
8 preferred alternative, and that will establish the new regime  
9 for each island.

10

11 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The other thing that we should do at the  
12 orientation meeting is forget about the acronyms. Instead of  
13 saying Tier 4a and -- Just tell me what kind of fish are there  
14 and what is it that we're talking about, because, every time  
15 that we do this -- I know it's in the document and you cannot  
16 explain that every time, and that's why you use acronyms and all  
17 of that, but what confuses a lot of people is that, three years  
18 ago, I knew what 4a was. Yesterday, I knew what it was. Ask me  
19 today, and I don't recall.

20

21 If you tell me that the lobsters are there, or the nine pounds  
22 of triggerfish are there, then I know what we're talking about,  
23 and that's what the orientation meeting should be. It should be  
24 based on the best science available, and we will try to make it  
25 as less jargon as possible, and so we will be better prepared  
26 for that.

27

28 The five actions that we have here, species managed, species  
29 grouping, Graciela more or less covered them, because they are  
30 in the document that you saw yesterday that Dr. Richard  
31 Appeldoorn showed us on the screen, the group of species, and he  
32 highlighted which one is the indicator species.

33

34 We also have the reference points, and, Graciela or Bill, can  
35 you explain to us what a reference point is and how this should  
36 be explained, or not explained, but what are the reference  
37 points and how are they embedded in the plan?

38

39 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** This is where the information that is  
40 available regarding the fisheries comes really into play, and it  
41 comes into play via the commercial and recreational landings  
42 that are available via the information on the life history of  
43 the species that has been considered by the SSC and the general  
44 public, and, the process that you went through of establishing  
45 the annual catch limits, the ACLs, in 2010 and 2011, it's one of  
46 the alternatives that you have here.

47

48 There is going to be a selection of a sequence of years for



1 which the landings are considered to be stable, reliable, and  
2 can be used to establish either a mean, an average, for that  
3 period of time.

4  
5 That period of time, in essence, is not the same for everyone,  
6 and the big difference between what was done then and what is  
7 being done now is that, specifically for the Virgin Islands,  
8 there was a change in the way that the forms that the commercial  
9 fishers providing information -- It changes from family, like  
10 parrotfish and snappers and groupers, to species-specific  
11 information.

12  
13 However, there was an additional change in 2011. From 2011 to  
14 2016, there is one form that was developed, and there is another  
15 change in 2016 for which we only have six months of data. So,  
16 that is the kind of information that is going into the  
17 development of the reference points and specifically into what  
18 the SSC is doing, which is the overfishing limit and the  
19 allowable biological catch, which is how much can the population  
20 of X fish take without being put in a position that it might not  
21 recover.

22  
23 By recover, we mean that you have to have enough individuals in  
24 that population to grow to maturity and to reproduce so that you  
25 can continue fishing. That is the kind of information that goes  
26 into determining the OFL, or the overfishing limit, and the ABC,  
27 the allowable biological catch.

28  
29 Finally, once the ABC is provided to the council by the SSC,  
30 which, by law, that's what they have to do, the council members  
31 have to decide if that needs to be buffered down from what the  
32 SSC is providing you or kept at the same level that they are  
33 providing to you depending on the management risk that you want  
34 to take.

35  
36 During the ACLs, you decided on a buffer of 10 percent for  
37 certain species, and you decided on a buffer of 15 percent for  
38 some others, such as the groupers, and that would be the same --  
39 That part of the process would be the same that you will be  
40 deciding on once this is presented to you.

41  
42 Because we don't have assessments -- Well, actually, we do have  
43 assessments that determine that there is no evidence of  
44 overfishing or problems with the fisheries that we have looked  
45 at as of today, but there is no actual quantitative assessment  
46 done that would tell you that a species is overfished or  
47 undergoing overfishing.

48

1 We have to rely on the expert opinion, the expert opinion not  
2 only of the scientific community, but also of the general  
3 public. Because we don't have a way of establishing the maximum  
4 sustainable yield, we have to use a proxy, and what we have used  
5 to date is basically average catch.

6  
7 **DAWN HENRY:** What is considered expert opinion of the general  
8 public?

9  
10 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** We have hosted a number of meetings  
11 when we've been developing these island-based FMPs, both  
12 official and informal meetings with the public, and we invite  
13 everyone who wants to come, and we usually get more information  
14 from the commercial fishers or the recreational fishers now that  
15 we are including in the island-based FMPs such things as  
16 dolphin, which tend to be more recreational than they are  
17 commercial. Because they have such a long history of being  
18 involved in the fisheries, they bring information to the table  
19 that might not otherwise be available.

20  
21 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The information from the public that we talk  
22 about, there are two or three categories. The first one are the  
23 fishers that belong to the District Advisory Panels, commercial  
24 and recreational, but also you include even the consumers,  
25 because the consumers also have a responsibility, and they may  
26 tell you, well, I wish we had this fish available.

27  
28 You go all the way to different tiers, and you ask a guy in  
29 Minnesota whether he would like to see a bluefish in *National*  
30 *Geographic* next time, and they have an intrinsic value for that.  
31 What we have done in the record that has been presented to you  
32 several times is that we go to the scientists and we go to the  
33 council members and we go to the District Advisory Panels, and  
34 we have meetings in the context of public hearings or education  
35 programs, and there are people that are allowed from the public  
36 to bring to the discussion any item that they think should be  
37 addressed by them.

38  
39 There are some members of the public that may not be fishermen  
40 at this time, but they have been fishers before, and they bring  
41 that experience into the discussion. The whole idea under the  
42 Magnuson Act is that we do this in the open and everybody who  
43 has something to contribute can have the opportunity to do so,  
44 and that's what we say to the public.

45  
46 That also includes the local agencies. Your department and  
47 Damaris's department, you interact with other agencies that may  
48 have, for example, the people that work with the coastal zone,

1 and they may have something to say regarding habitat and habitat  
2 protection. You have the environmental quality board, and they  
3 may have something to say about the quality of the water. All  
4 of that will be included in that encyclopedia that we call now  
5 the ecosystem-based management plan. This is important that  
6 everybody understands this and we put it on the record.

7  
8 Graciela, are there any of these reference points that could be  
9 affected by Irma and Maria and the statistics program, or that's  
10 something that we can just go on and work in the management plan  
11 that we have and that could be addressed some other time?

12  
13 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Well, the information that comes to  
14 the Science Center from the DPNR and the DNER is up to 2017 for  
15 the Virgin Islands, the first six months of 2017, and so that is  
16 probably what we have on the database right now, but we are  
17 thinking that it's only up to December of 2016.

18  
19 That information, for 2017, really should be coming online this  
20 month or next month, and it probably won't be available to --  
21 Well, it might be available to the SSC in February, but what  
22 they're looking for, specifically for the Virgin Islands, is the  
23 period of time between 2012 and 2016, when the forms have  
24 changed to provide information on the species-specific fishery,  
25 for example red hind instead of groupers, and that's what it  
26 used to be, and so that's the information and the reference  
27 period that the SSC is looking at in terms of developing their  
28 overfishing limits and the allowable biological catch.

29  
30 **MIGUEL ROLON:** How about Puerto Rico?

31  
32 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** These considerations of the  
33 socioeconomics of the fisheries are taken into consideration  
34 when there is deliberation by the SSC, and one of the earlier  
35 ways that the SSC looked at it was that, to determine if you  
36 have an indicator species, one of the criteria that was used is  
37 the marketability of that species and the variability in that  
38 market when it's available.

39  
40 At the SSC meetings, the DAP chairs from St. Thomas/St. John,  
41 St. Croix, and Puerto Rico are present at the meeting and  
42 provide input and information to the SSC. In fact, at the July  
43 meeting of the SSC, or the April meeting, they were in contact  
44 with the fishers when there was information needed directly from  
45 the fishers into the specific fisheries that they were  
46 discussing. That input is on a continuous basis.

47  
48 One of the things that you look at when you look at the time

1 series of everything that's been landed is you look at things  
2 like Hugo in St. Croix, and you look at the -- We had  
3 availability of the USVI economic -- The government provided a  
4 document that had all the information on the economy up to 2015,  
5 I think it was, and so Walter Keithly, who is an economist, was  
6 at the meeting and provided that information to the SSC. It was  
7 looking at the number of tourists that come to the island and  
8 therefore thinking in terms of the market that is available for  
9 the species.

10  
11 Because specifically the USVI has been so -- At every meeting,  
12 they have talked about the market-driven fisheries, that, if you  
13 don't have the demand, you won't go out fishing and you won't  
14 put it in the freezer, and that's also taken into consideration,  
15 and so all this debate at the SSC meetings goes on.

16  
17 What indicators and what information do you have to actually  
18 plug into the equation, that is where the expert opinion of the  
19 SSC then puts a yes or a no, basically presence and absence of  
20 data, and then it makes a judgment call to make a determination.

21  
22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Blanchard.

23  
24 **TONY BLANCHARD:** The year sequence from you said 2012 to 2016,  
25 when the forms was changed, but what jumps out at me is I  
26 understand where we want to go with the latest data that is on  
27 the books, and, because of the separation of the different  
28 species, and what pops out at me is that the changes that are  
29 made -- The big problem came in with the hind being tied in with  
30 the grouper species.

31  
32 Now, let's say the red grouper is separated from the hind and  
33 the yellowfin and everything else. Now, the problem that I see  
34 that is going to arise from that situation is the economy for  
35 the Virgin Islands, and I ain't speaking for anybody else, is on  
36 a spiral downhill.

37  
38 It's been slowly, let's say falling apart, for whatever reason,  
39 whether it's because of the lack of people wanting to buy the  
40 local fish, or, because of the economy, they can't afford it,  
41 whatever the reason is, but the taste for local fish, let's say,  
42 has declined.

43  
44 Now, because -- I understand we're going to factor that in, but  
45 the problem is that I don't want us to be tied into a year  
46 sequence that shows low numbers, and what is going to happen is  
47 that we have to come up with an ACL and an OFL, and that's going  
48 to probably drop them lower on the scale that we could actually

1 catch them.

2

3 Let's say, in the event that something happens that people start  
4 to buy into the market more, we would actually be locked into an  
5 ACL that does not really reflect the fishery's health, but what  
6 it does reflect is the numbers that we are bringing in because  
7 it's market driven.

8

9 Now, my thing is, when I asked legal counsel the last meeting,  
10 there was no problem in taking two different sequences of years  
11 to use to go by for the SSC. There was nothing legally stopping  
12 them to do that. My thing is I could understand if we're going  
13 from the 2012 to the 2016, and what I would look at is  
14 percentages, because what it will tell me is that, if we're  
15 cutting back on the market, if the hind, compared to the rest of  
16 the grouper stock, was 90 percent of that stock, we would know  
17 that really the numbers that is being reflected back to the  
18 previous ACL may change, but they ain't going to change that  
19 drastically.

20

21 In other words, if 90 percent of the grouper stock in the  
22 previous ACL was hind, and we look at 2012, they would basically  
23 be the same, because people change, but they have a tendency to  
24 stay with what they know, and so what I'm saying is I think,  
25 before we lock ourselves into one sequence of years, we need to  
26 look at the previous ACLs, because that really reflects what the  
27 stock was. We look at the changes that were made from 2012 to  
28 previous, and I know where the problem came in with the  
29 angelfish and the squirrelfish, and I think it was another  
30 species that was there that was not on the previous catch  
31 report.

32

33 The numbers would -- I could say that we would probably work off  
34 of those numbers from 2012, because it was not identified on the  
35 form, and that is the latest information we have on them, or at  
36 least percentage-wise, but, to go and to say that we're going to  
37 lock ourselves into the last years of information because it's  
38 the latest information that we have on the books, seeing that  
39 the economy is in a spiral going downhill, and with this  
40 hurricane situation, it ain't making it no better for us,  
41 because I could just imagine what this year, and probably next  
42 year, and maybe the year after is going to look like.

43

44 We are being penalized because of not of the damage that is  
45 being done to the stocks or the health of the stocks, but we are  
46 being penalized because we are not using the stocks, and that's  
47 where I have an issue with it.

48

1 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** I am glad that you mentioned the  
2 groupers and red hind specifically for St. Thomas, because, as  
3 you said, you are correct in evaluating the percentage that the  
4 council had requested to look at the percentage of red hind  
5 within the grouper complex.

6  
7 It turned out that it was between 80 and 88 percent, and that  
8 increased to about 90 percent or so, and so, now that you have  
9 the form, what has been shown is that the amount of red hind  
10 that is being landed is accounted for as red hind, and,  
11 specifically for red hind, that's one of the species groups,  
12 because it's landed alongside rock hind, but not alongside the  
13 coney and the graysby, and so those are a separate complex.

14  
15 The SSC is recommending that they will deal with red hind as  
16 being one of the groups that should be allowed more harvest on,  
17 and the reason for that is not only that it's being reported as  
18 a species in the forms, but also that fishery-independent data  
19 that comes out of the MCD and no-take zones since 1999 has  
20 protected the spawning aggregations of red hind.

21  
22 The number and size of the fish that are being recorded and  
23 reported are much larger than they were before, and the sex  
24 ratio has also improved, and so St. Thomas red hind has shown  
25 quite an increase in both numbers and sizes, and so the SSC has  
26 taken that into consideration and is recommending that the rules  
27 that they have developed actually be altered to include these  
28 exceptions to the rule, so that it could be allowed more  
29 harvest.

30  
31 The ABC that they will be recommending to the council is going  
32 to be higher, and, therefore, it's the council's prerogative to  
33 decide if the management uncertainty on the red hind is high or  
34 low.

35  
36 If you think that, with the no-take with the Grammanik Bank  
37 closure, with the seasonal closures that are in place, with the  
38 market changes that have taken place, red hind will not need a  
39 buffer from the ABC to the ACL, then you can have an ACL that is  
40 very close to the ABC. If, on the contrary, management  
41 uncertainty for other species that will be presented to you, if  
42 you think that management is not doing what it's supposed to be  
43 doing, then the risk is higher. Therefore, your buffer then  
44 between one and that other has to be higher.

45  
46 Specifically, they are looking at each one of these species or  
47 species complexes separately, and they have done that in order  
48 to develop the rule and the exceptions of the rule that will

1 apply to each one of the species complexes that have been  
2 proposed for management in the federal waters of the U.S. Virgin  
3 Islands and Puerto Rico.

4  
5 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I have a question. Let me see how I want to  
6 phrase this here.

7  
8 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** I forgot the other question. Year  
9 sequences, in the document, you have a number of alternatives  
10 that include looking at the longest year sequence that you have  
11 available, and so, in this case, it would be looking at groupers  
12 from 1998/1999 for the Virgin Islands up until 2011. The  
13 problem is that, in 2011, once you change the form, it's only  
14 species-specific, and you don't have a grouper category.

15  
16 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Graciela, we already -- We don't have to rehash  
17 the whole discussion again.

18  
19 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Everything that has been discussed,  
20 all the year sequences that were used in the ACLs before in 2010  
21 and 2011, the 2012 to 2016, and the longest year sequences, are  
22 already addressed.

23  
24 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Exactly, and so we don't have to go over that  
25 again, and that's my point. The only thing that I had my  
26 question is because, yesterday, some of the folks in the  
27 audience were asking me what will happen with the statistics  
28 after Maria. You already answered that question, and you went  
29 from whatever starting year to 2016, and the council already  
30 went through that.

31  
32 We also have another chance, and this is the kind of thing that  
33 probably we will include in the orientation meeting, at the  
34 April meeting to go over all of this, but we don't want to  
35 rehash, every time that we meet, the same discussion again,  
36 because we already did it. The only thing that we need to  
37 address is whatever happens now that is different, and,  
38 actually, somebody asked me about the intent, about the council  
39 and the intent of the SSC.

40  
41 Remember that a fellow chairman from St. Thomas told me, Miguel,  
42 how much can we get away with, from the scientific point of view  
43 and legal point of view, and that's what we're really after. We  
44 want to maximize the return to investment of the fishers,  
45 provided that, number one, we comply with the Magnuson Act, in  
46 terms of the provisions that we have and the responsibility to  
47 protect the resources, taking into consideration the biology and  
48 the socioeconomics and also the legal aspects of it.

1  
2 That is what they are trying to do, but we don't have a -- We  
3 don't have to rehash, every time we meet, the same discussion  
4 over and over again, and I believe that Tony is right in that  
5 that discussion already took place, and we take note, because  
6 that will happen, and that's why these things are flexible.  
7 They are not in concrete, because we will be able to visit them  
8 at that time, but I believe that, until we have the management  
9 plans in place, we will keep spinning our wheels in the same  
10 place.

11  
12 Unless we have those management plans in place addressing the  
13 difference between St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix and Puerto  
14 Rico, we won't move anywhere, and the other thing is that we  
15 have to keep in mind that, the longer that we stay developing  
16 these management plans, the longer the closures will also stay  
17 there, the closures that we have now that we want to address.  
18 We will have these closures with the best available science now,  
19 and that doesn't necessarily have to be the best way to go, but  
20 we will do it.

21  
22 A positive thing that happened is that we have been able, and  
23 this is something that was started when David Olsen was around,  
24 but we were able to get the red hind out of the group and treat  
25 the red hind in the best way possible, because the fishers and  
26 the scientists are telling us that the red hind behave  
27 differently and that we have red hind everywhere. Actually, the  
28 chairman wanted to export red hind somewhere else.

29  
30 That is the kind of things that we will have in the document,  
31 and we also have to go over 4 and 5 and then the schedule, but  
32 we don't want to depart any of these points without answering  
33 any of the questions that you may have.

34  
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I've got a question. I know nobody wants to  
36 rehash, but sometimes -- Some things are kind of bothering me  
37 here. When we started these new island-based plans, I thought  
38 that we were going to start over from the beginning with not  
39 using the old ACLs and that those were out and all that stuff,  
40 but we're still working based on the 240,000 pounds of  
41 parrotfish, when, before, for the old ACLs that we worked at, we  
42 were using data that was 404,000 pounds.

43  
44 Then the SSC recommended 300,000, but, because of their  
45 ecological importance as grazers, we reduced it to 240,000  
46 pounds with that 5.882 percent reduction for grazing, but  
47 they're still using that, and so I don't know why we're not  
48 going based on what the 404,000 pounds was to come up with an



1 ACL that we're going to be coming up with now, instead of using  
2 the same 240,000.

3  
4 I am kind of confused on where we are with that, and then, when  
5 you look at the time series, and here we go rehashing, but the  
6 time series for the whole period, you have over a million pounds  
7 of parrotfish that is being discarded and not being considered  
8 for anything. I need a little bit of clarification on what --

9  
10 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** The SSC looked at what they had done  
11 before, because they had taken an approach to look at the  
12 parrotfish prior to 2010 and 2011. Now, after the ACLs were  
13 set, there was also, specifically for St. Croix, the development  
14 of a minimum size for parrotfish, and so the discussion centered  
15 around the regulations that are in place and the protected areas  
16 that are in place, and, in this case, it's St. Croix  
17 specifically, because it's the parrotfish unit that has the most  
18 landings and the most -- The fishery is prosecuted the highest  
19 of all the islands.

20  
21 They looked at the two species that are landed the most, but  
22 then the recent landings of those two species, or actually one,  
23 is only 2012 to 2016, and so everything prior to that is  
24 parrotfish. Their ecological significance, but the additional  
25 protection that they have received over that period of time, is  
26 also something that the SSC discussed and took very seriously,  
27 and so part of the discussion, and this is what you saw earlier,  
28 were the exemptions that they were developing to the default  
29 rules that they are providing for the staff to follow through.

30  
31 In that case, parrotfish most likely end up with an additional  
32 reduction, most likely, because this is not finished yet and  
33 they haven't finalized that recommendation to you, and so the  
34 reduction of the parrotfish actually went even further, because  
35 of the lawsuit that we had at that time, and that's where that  
36 5.8822 came into being and reduced from 300,000 pounds to  
37 240,000 pounds of parrotfish in the Virgin Islands.

38  
39 In addition to that, the ban on nets and the way that it used to  
40 be fished has also been considered, but parrotfish are very high  
41 on the list of ecologically-important species, and the main  
42 reason for that being that they are grazers, and so they are not  
43 as good as the diadema, the black urchin, but they are good  
44 grazers, and, in the amount that you can keep them on the reef,  
45 the health of the reef will be better. Therefore, it's expected  
46 that the fisheries, the coral-reef-based fisheries, should be  
47 better.

48

1 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Carlos presented a key question that was from the  
2 beginning. The fact that we will establish these area FMPs  
3 doesn't mean that we will keep what we had, and, actually, it  
4 doesn't have anything to do with the management plan. The  
5 process that you have in place now calls for a reduction for any  
6 of the species, for all the reasons that Graciela just  
7 mentioned, and so you have to be mindful of all of this, because  
8 sometimes we think that, by changing the way that you operate,  
9 that it will have X results, but they are not guaranteeing that  
10 that will happen.

11  
12 In the case of the parrotfish, it is important for St. Croix --  
13 Actually, it's a first class and second class, and not as much  
14 in Puerto Rico and maybe St. Thomas/St. John, but the parrotfish  
15 is one of those species that has been hammered by  
16 environmentalists and other scientists as an important, key part  
17 of the reef.

18  
19 Not all the species of parrotfish are that important, and three  
20 of them are already threatened species, almost, and so that is  
21 what has changed, Carlos, during this year, and that's why also,  
22 for us, we have to keep in mind those explanations when we have  
23 the orientation meetings and also we go to the public, and so  
24 the explanation of why we went from 400,000 all the way to what  
25 we have now is part of the record.

26  
27 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** The things that the SSC looked at, one  
28 of them had to do with susceptibility and productivity, how much  
29 will the -- Is the stock able to produce and how vulnerable it  
30 is to fishing and to variable oceanographic conditions and to  
31 how fast it reproduces and that kind of thing, and so parrotfish  
32 are one of those that reproduce very fast, but then they are  
33 also hammered by the fishery.

34  
35 When they looked at the susceptibility scores, the parrotfish,  
36 because of all the protection that they have in place, et  
37 cetera, were not in the low end of the susceptibility score.  
38 They are smack in the middle, and so those are some of the  
39 issues that Richard was raising yesterday, what do we do with  
40 these species that are right in the middle of the between one  
41 and three scale.

42  
43 I was just looking, again, at the graph, to make sure that it  
44 was in the middle, and you have three other parrotfish that are  
45 on the lower end, and so those that have an ABC of -- The SSC  
46 will be proposing that no harvest will be on those, and so,  
47 again, give the opportunity to the SSC to finalize the rules  
48 that they are applying and, as I said, they are looking at every

1 single group and every single species with all the information  
2 that's available.

3  
4 We actually had other participants at the SSC meeting who were  
5 actively providing information also the SSC, from the published  
6 literature and the SEDAR that we had on specifically redbtail  
7 parrotfish, and so we've already gone through the process of  
8 looking at all the information that's available for these  
9 species.

10  
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I am not looking for an increase in what we  
12 had before of 240,000. I think the fishermen have grown  
13 accustomed to that number, but they sure are not going to get  
14 accustomed to now come up with a 2012 to 2016 year sequence that  
15 shows 180,000 pounds, and then you're going to take a reduction  
16 on that one again. That is my concern.

17  
18 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Graciela, probably that will be a good example to  
19 present at the orientation meeting, a real example. We can talk  
20 about the lobster and the queen conch, but this one is very  
21 important for the Virgin Islands, and I believe that we should  
22 address that the orientation meeting so everybody will be clear  
23 as to what is happening.

24  
25 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Miguel, perhaps an idea would be that  
26 we have one example of each island of what could be very  
27 contentious. Like, for example, I would defer to the St.  
28 Thomas/St. John to let us know what species they would like to  
29 discuss, and the parrotfish for St. Croix, and then for Puerto  
30 Rico to let us know what would be the group to bring as an  
31 example.

32  
33 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Let's go to Number 4.

34  
35 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** The Action Number 4 has to do with  
36 essential fish habitat, and you have alternatives in the  
37 document that include, but is not limited to, what you had done  
38 before regarding essential fish habitat. In that case, it would  
39 be the functionality of that habitat as it refers to the  
40 species.

41  
42 For example, you would have the -- Of the new species that you  
43 have added to the group, then we have the description of habitat  
44 for everything else. For the new species that you have added,  
45 include some of the reef fish, like cubera snapper, yellowmouth  
46 grouper, and gray triggerfish. In that case, they are part of  
47 the reef fish complex, and they actually were part -- Some of  
48 them were part of the original reef fish list way back when, in

1 the 1980s.

2  
3 The manta, the spotted eagle ray, and the stingray are for  
4 Puerto Rico only, and so the description of that habitat would  
5 have to be developed, but they are circumglobal tropical  
6 species, and so they occur throughout the Atlantic and the  
7 Pacific.

8  
9 For the coastal pelagics, the ones that are not under the HMS  
10 management, like little tunny, blackfin tuna, the king mackerel,  
11 cero, and wahoo, the council had been a participant of the 2002,  
12 I believe, it was, dolphin wahoo fishery management plan for the  
13 Gulf of Mexico, the South Atlantic, and the U.S. Caribbean, and  
14 so there was that bit of information regarding the habitat of  
15 these species, but, again, dolphin and wahoo extend from Brazil  
16 all the way to New England now, with the expansion of the warmer  
17 waters and being found so far north.

18  
19 Then one of the options is to do the same thing that we did  
20 before, and so the information from the description of the  
21 habitat will be brought, and we have gone a little bit further,  
22 because there is now the GIS information and the maps that are  
23 available from the original benthic habitat for those species  
24 that are directly related to one of these habitats.

25  
26 There are other options, and that would be to use, for example -  
27 - You can go as far as using the densities of the populations to  
28 describe that specific habitat. One of the things that we've  
29 done is, in the EFH five-year reviews that we have had to date,  
30 we have included the potential areas where that habitat might be  
31 available, and so, for coral, we have maps where coral could be  
32 potentially found, even if we don't have an actual map of where  
33 these are.

34  
35 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Graciela, can you briefly tell us the status of  
36 the revision of the five-year plan for essential fish habitat?

37  
38 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** We have received funding for the five-  
39 year review, and one of the discussions was to whether we should  
40 do all the species here or have the five-year review deal with  
41 that. We have the funding, and we have to publish the  
42 requirements for the person or the company who is going to do  
43 this, and so that's on the -- That's waiting to happen.

44  
45 The EFH this year includes not only doing the literature review  
46 to update the information, but also to convert the information  
47 that is found to a GIS so that the layers of this information  
48 would be available, instead of on paper, actually online, so

1 that you can go and see the new maps or whatever new definitions  
2 there are.

3

4 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Damaris, what is the status of the digitizing of  
5 the information in Puerto Rico, digitizing all the information  
6 in Puerto Rico regarding the fishery statistics that was started  
7 some years back?

8

9 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** We have Daniel Matos from the Lab that maybe  
10 could answer that information, that question.

11

12 **DANIEL MATOS CARABALLO:** Will you repeat the question, please?

13

14 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Daniel, do you remember the project that was  
15 started by Puerto Rico and an NGO to digitize the fisheries  
16 statistics program in Puerto Rico? Then it was going to be  
17 adopted by the Virgin Islands, and what is the status of that  
18 project? Is it still alive or --

19

20 **DANIEL MATOS CARABALLO:** The project is still alive, and it's in  
21 progress for the last -- I think, from April until June or July,  
22 we made great progress, and the company name is Shellcatch, and  
23 they were contracted by the Nature Conservancy, and we already  
24 have twelve or fifteen commercial fishers following a pilot  
25 project to finally have a final product.

26

27 However, because of Hurricane Maria, we are now on pause, and so  
28 hopefully, after January or February, when everything will be  
29 normal again, we will continue. The Nature Conservancy will  
30 continue the contract with Shellcatch, and that's the last time  
31 that I talked with them about that, but this is in progress.

32

33 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thank you, and the reason that I brought this to  
34 your attention is because, when Graciela talked about the  
35 revision of the essential fish habitat, we are going to move  
36 from paper to a way that you can use the internet to access this  
37 information.

38

39 The fishers requested this five years ago, and I remember Tony  
40 said that, at one meeting, that one of the things that -- He  
41 didn't want to have a phone that was smarter than him, but, at  
42 the same time, he wanted to have that information at hand, so  
43 the fishermen can know what are the different fishing grounds  
44 and the habitat in those fishing grounds, and that was important  
45 for the fishers and also for the science and supporting all of  
46 this that we're doing.

47

48 They might use that for density studies and characterization of

1 the substrate, so we can assign some value in terms of the yield  
2 per hectare or whatever unit to those areas, and that why it's  
3 important to have this information here, the way it's going to  
4 happen. Graciela, if we do all of this, by the end of 2018, we  
5 will have the revision of the essential fish habitat?

6  
7 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Yes.

8  
9 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Okay.

10  
11 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** One more thing, now that we're on the  
12 essential fish habitat issues, is we've been in conversations  
13 with the DNER, because they are submitting proposals to the  
14 Coral Reef Conservation Program, and one of them, we are hoping,  
15 includes the thirty-plus years of monitoring information from  
16 some of the reefs around Puerto Rico. Specifically, I think  
17 they have something like fifty-two reefs that have been surveyed  
18 over thirty years, but that information is only in paper reports  
19 or electronically-available PDFs.

20  
21 The idea is to do the same thing that we've been doing with the  
22 historical landings and the mesophotic reefs, is to bring it  
23 into the GIS format so that you will be able to look at the  
24 changes in habitat and fish communities over that period of  
25 time.

26  
27 I know that, with the hurricanes, there have been some  
28 exceptions made to the submission dates of most of these  
29 proposals, and so I don't know exactly what the status was, but  
30 the idea was to move forward with that specific proposal.

31  
32 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Now we can move to Number 5, Framework Measures.  
33 Is there anything else that we need to add or that you need from  
34 the council?

35  
36 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** In terms of the essential fish  
37 habitat, once you read the alternatives that are available in  
38 the document, I mean it goes from what we've done before, which  
39 is probably one of the things that we will be doing, but there  
40 is also additional information for which we might not have what  
41 we need to do, and so densities, for example, we talked  
42 yesterday a little bit about queen conch densities in St. Croix,  
43 for example, and how they have been increasing, but that is over  
44 -- It's three or four years' worth of information, and it's for  
45 very specific sites.

46  
47 It's the kind of data that might not be available to us, and so  
48 the levels from one, presence and absence, all the way to having

1 specific population information as related to the habitat, and  
2 the alternatives are there, but we might not have the data.

3

4 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I am trying to move forward with this document,  
5 and so the question to the council was whether there is anything  
6 new that the staff needs from the council at this time. If not,  
7 then we can move to Number 5.

8

9 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** The alternatives that you have  
10 considered under the framework procedures go from very extensive  
11 and open -- Everything that we can think of that can be done via  
12 framework to change the management measures to condensed  
13 versions of these frameworks.

14

15 I believe that, the ones we've had, we've responded to what the  
16 council had requested the last time, and so it's also included  
17 here, and then it will be your prerogative which approach you  
18 want us to take and what would be your preferred alternative at  
19 the end of the process.

20

21 **MIGUEL ROLON:** To refresh your memory, the framework approach  
22 is, rather than amending the plan every time that something  
23 happens, you list the things that the Secretary can do if the  
24 conditions merit the Secretary to do so.

25

26 For example, let's say that you have a group of species that are  
27 fished with traps, and then, all of a sudden, people abandon  
28 traps and they use gillnets now. The framework would allow you  
29 to do that if you have a change in gear. Then you have to  
30 decide, okay, if that happens in the future, this is what we  
31 would like to see.

32

33 Each one of those framework approaches need to go to a public  
34 hearing and all of that, but you don't have to amend the whole  
35 plan again, and that's why it's important you read these  
36 documents. You already considered all of this, but, if you read  
37 them and you find something that we have missed, please let us  
38 know, and, between here and April, that's the time that you have  
39 to do so.

40

41 The framework is nothing but a list of measures that you can  
42 take, or the Secretary can take, if conditions arise that merit  
43 that action to happen. Damaris.

44

45 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** I have a question for Graciela. Since there  
46 are gaps in information regarding the density of the species, of  
47 populations of species, is there space where you could -- Where  
48 some people could train some of our staff in DNER so we could

1 try to help fill out those gaps? Maybe not in the short term,  
2 and maybe not for our milestones right now, but maybe for later,  
3 where we could try to -- Even maybe the Rangers could help us  
4 out, depending on the procedures and the methods, but we could  
5 try to build up a little bit more information about the status  
6 of the populations of the species.

7  
8 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** I can bring that, for example, to the  
9 SEAMAP meeting on Friday, this Friday, and let them know,  
10 because one of the ideas is that fishery-independent surveys  
11 contribute to the information that we need.

12  
13 The other thing is to put you in contact with the rapid  
14 assessment group that comes, and it's done every two or three  
15 years, and so they do go around Puerto Rico and the Virgin  
16 Islands and do a rapid assessment of habitat and fish  
17 communities on a twenty-five-meter-by-two-meter transect, and  
18 that would require diving, but, then again, it might be of  
19 interest to that group to include the staff from the DNER.

20  
21 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Damaris, sometimes you go data mining to see if  
22 there are any published papers regarding the densities, but,  
23 most of the time, you have to really jump in the water and  
24 assess what is happening there, and certainly Natural Resources  
25 can help with what Graciela just said, and there is also Sea  
26 Grant, and they interact with divers, and they have a protocol  
27 that they can follow to study densities of the different  
28 species.

29  
30 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Thank you.

31  
32 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Specifically, if you do submit a  
33 proposal to look at the thirty years' worth of information for  
34 fifty-something reefs around the island, that would probably  
35 give us some specific information on density and density changes  
36 over those thirty years.

37  
38 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Okay. Graciela and Bill, next steps and the  
39 timeline review, and this is a call to the council members.  
40 This is something that, when Bill was talking about the team, we  
41 are the team, and so, if we commit to this timeline, we should  
42 be mindful of that timeline for the next several meetings that  
43 we are going to have in 2018. Remember that the goal is to  
44 finish this product to be submitted to the Secretary by the end  
45 of 2018. Bill and Graciela, what about the timeline?

46  
47 **BILL ARNOLD:** What we had hoped for was that the SSC would  
48 finish up their process, defining their process, for assigning



1 ABCs, and that is the one undeniable job that your Scientific  
2 and Statistical Committee has, and it's written right into the  
3 Magnuson-Stevens Act. The SSC will assign ABCs, and the council  
4 cannot exceed those ABCs. That's very important to keep in  
5 mind.

6  
7 The council could determine that they need to have a lower ABC,  
8 but they can't have a higher ABC, and so we essentially, and  
9 certainly I would look for Jocelyn's input on any legal aspects  
10 of this, but my understanding is we need to get those ABCs out  
11 of the SSC, and so they did get most of them, as Richard  
12 reported, but they didn't get them all, and, before they can get  
13 all of them, the process for every stock or stock complex  
14 established, they apparently need some additional input from the  
15 Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

16  
17 The timing is fundamentally dependent upon this sequence of  
18 events, and the sequence of events is the Science Center  
19 understands what the SSC needs, and I don't think they have a  
20 clear understanding of exactly what the SSC needs, and so the  
21 first thing that we have to do is get a clear statement from the  
22 council to the Science Center saying this is exactly what we  
23 need out of you, and we don't need anything less, and we don't  
24 need anything more, but we need this. That's a critical memo  
25 that has to be produced as quickly as possible.

26  
27 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Can you help us with the language and Carlos can  
28 sign us before he retires in August?

29  
30 **BILL ARNOLD:** I can't assist with that. That's really what the  
31 SSC -- They need to state, through the council, what they need  
32 from the Science Center.

33  
34 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Graciela.

35  
36 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Richard and Shannon and myself have  
37 been already working on these things and issues, and so, as Dr.  
38 Ponwith said earlier, we will have an informal discussion of  
39 that. We need to know, from all the other memos that we have  
40 requested input from the Science Center, if they are running  
41 lists or if we need to do an actual memo.

42  
43 We might have to, because of these last changes to what the SSC  
44 was seeing, but we will work on the language in the coming  
45 weeks. I know that the Science Center is finishing the red  
46 snapper assessment, and so that is --

47  
48 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Excuse me, Graciela, but, for some of the

1 species, you already have an ABC, if I understand correctly what  
2 Bill just said. Others are missing, and probably we should  
3 concentrate on those that we need to have the ABC. Roy asked a  
4 question yesterday, and he mentioned the word "unknown".

5  
6 Are we forced, Jocelyn, to have an ABC for everything that we  
7 have there, or can we just say I don't know and move that  
8 species somewhere else, some category of unknown, or, once we  
9 have that species in a management, we shall have an ABC for each  
10 one of them?

11  
12 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** The Act is clear about the different  
13 required components of a fishery management plan, and one of  
14 those is ACLs, and the ACLs are derived from the ABC. If you  
15 determine that species require conservation and management, then  
16 you need to develop the management measures, which include the  
17 ABCs and the ACLs for those species.

18  
19 I think one of the things that others had talked about is  
20 whether there are species that don't require conservation and  
21 management and that might be included as ecosystem component  
22 species, and so I think one of the things that folks were maybe  
23 thinking about coming out of understanding what the SSC is able  
24 to develop is, if there are species that are better included as  
25 part of the ecosystem, rather than ones that the council has  
26 decided require conservation and management, but that would,  
27 again, require going back to the first action and looking at how  
28 those species were included and looking at the rationale and  
29 seeing, okay, for ones that require conservation and management,  
30 we need to develop the management measures.

31  
32 Others that we think are important to manage as part of the  
33 ecosystem, perhaps those could be dealt with in a different way,  
34 and there are criteria to consider whether something requires  
35 conservation and management, and we could discuss that as those  
36 issues arise.

37  
38 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Can we postpone the determination of an ABC for  
39 any particular species in a management plan, or, once you have  
40 it in the management plan, you shall have the ABC?

41  
42 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Right. Once it's in the management plan as  
43 a species that you determine requires conservation and  
44 management, then it has to have those management measures,  
45 including ABC.

46  
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I've got a question. Who determines -- Go  
48 ahead.

1  
2 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Before you ask that question, the SSC  
3 -- This is something that Jocelyn brought to the attention of  
4 the SSC. One of the groups that is causing exceptions to the  
5 rule is the Grouper Unit 4 or 5, depending on whether it's  
6 Puerto Rico and St. Thomas or St. Croix, and that includes  
7 things like the red grouper and the yellowfin grouper, et  
8 cetera.

9  
10 One issue for Puerto Rico is recreational landings, and that is  
11 why we have to deal with the recreational landings through the  
12 Science Center. For St. Thomas, on the other hand, it was the  
13 fact that they have a Grammanik Bank and a seasonal closure for  
14 yellowfin and that group.

15  
16 For St. Croix, the fact that there is very little information  
17 and landings from that group, and so, taking all this  
18 information into consideration, that was part of the questions  
19 that the SSC had, and, because they already are under  
20 management, because they are part of the way-back-when FMUs and  
21 the fact that they have a seasonal closure in place, and so  
22 they, de facto, are part of the island-based management plan.

23  
24 They are vulnerable, and they aggregate for spawning, and they  
25 have all the conditions of late in reproduction, et cetera, and  
26 so that is one of the issues that the SSC needs to finalize, but  
27 that is one that they discussed whether it's an ecosystem  
28 component or not, and, because they are already under  
29 management, they are not an ecosystem component species.

30  
31 **MIGUEL ROLON:** What I am really after is how can we move forward  
32 with the process without getting stuck with one ABC that the SSC  
33 cannot provide to us. That's what I wanted to hear, is if there  
34 is any roadblocks that you see that will not allow the SSC to  
35 develop an ABC for us for any other species.

36  
37 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** The SSC is about to finish with the  
38 rules, and they just need like a two-day meeting, and, in fact,  
39 we were thinking whether it would be a webinar or an in-person  
40 meeting, and so they are in the process of doing that.

41  
42 There was another alternative, and one of the issues had to do  
43 with actually developing an OFL before they got to the ABC, and  
44 we had council information that you cannot determine OFL and go  
45 directly to an ABC, and so that's something that the SSC was  
46 already working on. The minimum species that they have to deal  
47 with --

1 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You discussed all that in the presence of legal  
2 advice?  
3  
4 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Yes.  
5  
6 **MIGUEL ROLON:** So that is something that -- Because, in the  
7 past, OFL and ABC was -- You're locked in, but, if we can do  
8 that, that will speed up the process.  
9  
10 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** We do need to have objective and measurable  
11 criteria for determining when the fishery is overfished and  
12 overfishing, and sometimes that is set through the OFL, but  
13 there are proxies and other status determination criteria that  
14 the NS 1 Guidelines allow the SSC to consider and the council to  
15 consider.  
16  
17 That is one of the options that we discussed, and, in terms of  
18 looking at the contents of the fishery management plan again, it  
19 is clear that we have to have annual catch limits, and,  
20 obviously, those are usually set through ABCs, but I will think  
21 about whether there is flexibility not to set an ABC, but, of  
22 course, we still do need the annual catch limits for those  
23 species that require conservation and management.  
24  
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Roy and then Bonnie.  
26  
27 **ROY CRABTREE:** I mean, the best situation is to get the SSC back  
28 together, and hopefully they give us ABCs for everything and we  
29 move ahead, but, if we end up that they can't or just don't, for  
30 whatever reason, give us an ABC for a species, I don't believe  
31 that means that we can't move forward and we can't put it in the  
32 fishery management plan.  
33  
34 We would have to set an annual catch limit for that species, but  
35 all the statute really says is the annual catch limit may not  
36 exceed the fishing level recommendation of the Scientific and  
37 Statistical Committee. Well, if they don't give us one, then  
38 we're not exceeding it, and so that starts getting messy when we  
39 start working without a catch level recommendation or an ABC,  
40 but I don't think it stops us dead in the water, and, if the SSC  
41 just concludes, well, we just don't know and we can't give you  
42 an ABC for this species, that doesn't mean that we can't manage  
43 that species, and so that's my take on it, but I think the best  
44 thing to do is to get them back together and try to get all of  
45 this taken care of.  
46  
47 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Are you going to be sitting next to me in court  
48 when they --

1  
2 **ROY CRABTREE:** Do what?  
3  
4 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Are you going to be sitting next to me in court  
5 when they tell us that --  
6  
7 **ROY CRABTREE:** No, that will be the lawyers, and they can worry  
8 about it. I can tell you that we have put in place annual catch  
9 limits in other management plans without ABCs on a few  
10 occasions. It's the exception, but we've done it. The statute  
11 has a lot of things. We're supposed to manage species if we  
12 believe there is a need to manage it, and we have to have an  
13 annual catch limit.  
14  
15 If an SSC doesn't give us an ABC, that doesn't excuse us from  
16 our responsibility to manage the species, and so we could be  
17 sued for failing to manage a species and someone could say you  
18 can't use the SSC not giving you an ABC as an excuse to avoid  
19 management, and so it's not that clear, a lot of times, how all  
20 of these things get put together, and we're getting pressures  
21 from all different sides of things, and so, again, best case, is  
22 let's get the SSC back together.  
23  
24 We do need to figure out what it is that they want to see from  
25 the Science Center and then find out if the Science Center can  
26 deliver on that, but, if the SSC is asking for something from  
27 the Center that's going to take a long period of time to  
28 produce, then, in my judgment, we can't wait on that. We need  
29 to work on something short-term and get this done.  
30  
31 If there are long-term things, like we talked about conch, we'll  
32 come back in and amend the plan after that work is done, but  
33 this has been going on -- We need to get this done, and I think  
34 it's important to a lot of our fisheries to get this done.  
35  
36 **MIGUEL ROLON:** If I may, the reason I brought up this is  
37 because, at the CCC, with the other councils, the same issues  
38 have come up, and the Executive Directors will have sidebars  
39 discussing this all the time, actually with the Regional  
40 Administrators and the people who attend these meetings.  
41  
42 The same question was presented on the west coast three or four  
43 years ago, and, actually, Don McIsaac was the one involved, and  
44 they told us the same thing that Roy just mentioned, that, for  
45 the record, the council shall -- They are charged with the  
46 responsibility of the ACLs, even though you may not have, at the  
47 time, an ABC from the SSC.  
48

1 The whole idea is that we don't stop the process and we move  
2 forward with as much as we can, so we can have the document  
3 submitted, and remember, when the document gets to be submitted  
4 to the Secretary, it will go to public hearings and all of that,  
5 and it might be disapproved or partially approved or whatever,  
6 but at least we will have something to submit.

7  
8 Again, to recapitulate, in these next steps, the staff will meet  
9 with the staff and form the meeting that Bonnie mentioned, and  
10 we will have, as soon as possible in the first quarter of 2018,  
11 a meeting of the SSC, and hopefully we will have as many ABCs as  
12 possible, and then the ABC will identify why you don't have an  
13 ABC for that, and then the council will have an orientation  
14 meeting to go over all of this with specific examples from each  
15 one of the areas.

16  
17 Then, at the April meeting, we will continue with this  
18 discussion, and, hopefully, by that time, we will have a more  
19 complete document that can be discussed at the meeting and move  
20 forward from there.

21  
22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Bonnie and then Bill.

23  
24 **BONNIE PONWITH:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand the push  
25 to get this done. This has been a long, arduous process, and  
26 we've put a lot of labor into this. The thing that I wouldn't  
27 want to do is, as we get close to what we're setting as our  
28 finish line, take shortcuts on the science, and so Dr. Crabtree  
29 said the best-case scenario is we get those ABCs out of the SSC,  
30 and it is my ardent hope that we get those ABCs out of the SSC.

31  
32 I think that's a really, really important step, and so we will  
33 work closely, informally, to help build the language of the data  
34 request from the Science Center, so that we get it right the  
35 first time. I like that approach to those communications, to do  
36 it informally and make sure we understand exactly what we need  
37 and what's going to be deliverable out of that and then send it  
38 formally, so it's carefully documented and we don't have any  
39 missteps.

40  
41 Then make sure that that timing of getting those data is well  
42 enough understood that we know exactly when to set up that  
43 council meeting, so that it can be publicly noticed and so that  
44 the timing and the spacing between the SSC meeting and the  
45 council meeting is far enough apart that the council can study  
46 what the SSC has done, because I just really think this process,  
47 the way it's going to work the best, is for the SSC to be able  
48 to succeed in their charge of delivering the council with an ABC

1 that can be used for setting an ACL. It is just my parting hope  
2 for this council, is that's the way that we're able to carry  
3 that through.

4

5 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Bill.

6

7 **BILL ARNOLD:** As has been pointed out, it is a bit of a  
8 balancing act. What I would like to see, ideally, and I'm not  
9 saying that we can accomplish this, but, ideally, the Science  
10 Center would deliver their product by the end of January. The  
11 SSC would meet sometime in February, and those aren't set in  
12 stone, but I do think that the part about the SSC getting their  
13 ABCs set before the end of February would be really ideal for  
14 the people who are going to write these very large and involved  
15 documents, because there is six documents that have to be  
16 prepared, a fishery management plan for each of the three island  
17 groups and an environmental impact statement for each of the  
18 three island groups.

19

20 That writing is what is going to require the greatest amount of  
21 time, and what they are going to be preparing are public hearing  
22 drafts, and so, to prepare those public hearing drafts, they  
23 need guidance from the council as to what they feel, without  
24 finalizing their preferred alternatives, to at least provide  
25 some guidance as to what they anticipate their preferred  
26 alternatives will be, and this is not unprecedented. You have  
27 already done the very same thing both with Action 1 and with  
28 Action 3, Alternative 3. You have said Alternative 3, which is  
29 the ABC control rule, is your preliminary preferred alternative.

30

31 What we need, in the spring, is for all of the preliminary  
32 preferred alternatives to be identified, and those preliminary  
33 alternatives can be very stock-specific and very island-  
34 specific. It's not one single alternative that applies to  
35 everybody.

36

37 For example, you could -- These are just examples, but you could  
38 say, for queen conch in St. Croix, our preliminary preferred  
39 alternative is to use the 50,000-pound previously established by  
40 the Science Center ABC. Like I said, maybe or maybe not. Your  
41 preferred alternative, preliminary preferred alternative, for  
42 spiny lobster may be that we want to use Alternative 3, the ABC  
43 control rule, and the SSC process, et cetera, et cetera. This  
44 applies to -- There is a lot of combinations and a lot of moving  
45 parts here.

46

47 I would, ideally, like to have that council meeting that  
48 responds to the SSC's meeting, and I would like to have that

1 council meeting in March, rather than April, and then have the  
2 next council meeting, instead of in August, probably in  
3 September, potentially even in October, and that gives the  
4 writers months and months that they're going to need to prepare  
5 these documents.

6  
7 Then, in that fall meeting, we bring these public hearing drafts  
8 to the council, and they identify -- They formally identify  
9 their preferred alternatives, and they direct staff to go out to  
10 public hearings and receive comments. We would also publish  
11 these public hearing drafts for comment by the general public,  
12 and then we would come back in December, and it doesn't have to  
13 be December. We need a forty-five-day comment period, minimum,  
14 and so it could even be in late November.

15  
16 We would come back and present the final commented versions and  
17 the comments to the council, and they respond to those comments,  
18 and, if they are happy with where things are, they vote to  
19 submit these fishery management plans and their associated  
20 environmental impact statements to the Secretary of Commerce for  
21 approval.

22  
23 If that's the case, it's still going to take several months to  
24 get everything done and get the final approval from the  
25 Secretary and get these things stamped as finalized. That would  
26 take us into 2019.

27  
28 Now, I feel it's very important that we have these new fishery  
29 management plans in place in 2019. 2017, okay, it's a bit of a  
30 wash, because of the hurricanes, and the same thing is going to  
31 be the case in 2018, because it's going to take a while, as you  
32 guys know, for these fisheries to recover. That's what we went  
33 over yesterday, and that's why it was so important to go over  
34 all of that yesterday.

35  
36 The recovery will not happen until, at best, well into 2018, and  
37 that means that landing levels are going to be very, very low,  
38 and, while we will have to assess those landings and we will  
39 have to determine whether ACLs are exceeded, et cetera, et  
40 cetera, it's possible that we could determine that no closures  
41 are needed for 2018 based on the situation, but that's not  
42 probably going to be the case in 2019. In 2019, we all hope,  
43 very, very much, that we can return to normal operating.

44  
45 When we do return to normal operations, we want these normal  
46 operations to reflect the new era of data reporting and the new  
47 era of fishery management and not the old era, and the old era  
48 has involved closing spiny lobster in Puerto Rico, even though



1 nobody thinks that spiny lobster should be closed in Puerto  
2 Rico, and shortening the season, similarly, for deepwater  
3 snapper, even though that appears to be a very healthy fishery.

4  
5 Basically, the fishery management plans that we presently have  
6 in place were very functional during their time, but it's time  
7 now, as everybody recognizes, to move to a new regime, and I  
8 would really like to see that new regime in place in 2019.

9  
10 To get it in place in 2019, we need to be submitting following  
11 that winter of 2018 council meeting, and that's why I'm so  
12 adamant about this time schedule, and I realize that it creates  
13 some pressure, but, just because it creates pressure, it doesn't  
14 mean that it needs to create rush. It just needs to create some  
15 focus and dedication on the part of everybody to meet these  
16 timelines and get these things done.

17  
18 I can't say when the Science Center can respond to the data  
19 request, and I can't say when the SSC members are going to be  
20 ready, willing, and able to convene a meeting, and I can't say  
21 when the council is going to be able to convene a meeting and  
22 prepare their preliminary preferred alternatives. What I can  
23 say is this is the ideal step-wise process and timing for us to  
24 meet our goals.

25  
26 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We are going to take a quick ten-minute  
27 break, and I've got a question about ecosystem-based species  
28 when we get back.

29  
30 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

31  
32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We are going to get back together here.  
33 Okay. We are going to continue with this meeting. I did have a  
34 question about ecosystem-based fish. I just wanted to know,  
35 really, who decides the species that will be put in the  
36 ecosystem-based thing? Is it the SSC or the council?

37  
38 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Are you talking about the ecosystem  
39 component species, like, for example, if you were going to move  
40 one species to that group?

41  
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I am specifically talking about red grouper  
43 and black grouper and tiger that is not really found on St.  
44 Croix, but it is in St. Thomas/St. John, but, on St. Croix, if  
45 there are any, there are very few, and I don't see why  
46 management -- Maybe, if they start catching them more often,  
47 maybe we can revisit it and put it back.

48

1 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** There are a few questions. Number  
2 one, are they historically at low levels? The answer is  
3 probably no. Probably yellowfin was more common than it is now  
4 in St. Croix than -- More common before than now.

5

6 **MIGUEL ROLON:** (Mr. Rolon's comment was in Spanish and was not  
7 transcribed.)

8

9 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** The SSC requested, from General  
10 Counsel, the information on the ecosystem component species to  
11 specifically deal with this Grouper Unit 4, but the answer is  
12 that you already have under management -- You already have a  
13 rebuilding plan that went through, and so it was not an option.

14

15 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Your question is who determines that, the SSC,  
16 the Center, the Commerce Department, or the council?

17

18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Right.

19

20 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The answer is the whole team, because the SSC is  
21 supposed to provide the information as to why, and you already  
22 approved a protocol to do that, how the species trickle down  
23 into the different categories.

24

25 You have those species, for example, forage species and other  
26 species that are important to the ecosystem, and you set aside  
27 those species for the ecosystem. Some of them you don't fish  
28 for, and you put it there, but the answer to your question is  
29 you have a mechanism with the SSC, and the SSC is the starting  
30 point to discuss this, from the scientific point of view, and  
31 then it comes to the council, and then you have to justify it as  
32 to why you are taking that species in that particular category.

33

34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Roy.

35

36 **ROY CRABTREE:** I mean, everybody has a hand in all of this. The  
37 SSC is advisory to you, and, ultimately, the council votes on  
38 those things, and so the ultimate decision on what is in the  
39 fishery management plan is the council's.

40

41 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** That will work.

42

43 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Bill, you mentioned March, but, in March, we have  
44 other meetings already. The quickest that we can do that,  
45 according to the schedule that I received from your office, so  
46 we can have the participation of Roy, is -- Roy will be at a  
47 meeting in the Gulf on April 16 to 19, and then can we do the  
48 meeting the first week of April?

1  
2 **BILL ARNOLD:** Yes, we can do it when you guys can do it.  
3  
4 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The whole thing is that Bill -- Personally, I  
5 believe that the sooner the better, and so he was thinking,  
6 rather than have the meeting in April, to have it in March.  
7  
8 **BILL ARNOLD:** Easter is April 1.  
9  
10 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Excuse me?  
11  
12 **BILL ARNOLD:** Easter is April 1. I know you have tried to  
13 schedule after that, because that's basically the end of season.  
14  
15 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I am talking about the first week of April, the  
16 3<sup>rd</sup>. It could be the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> of April. I am just  
17 thinking out loud here, and we have the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of April are  
18 Tuesday and Wednesday. Is that acceptable to council members  
19 around the table?  
20  
21 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Yes.  
22  
23 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Okay, and so the next -- We can talk about it  
24 later, but we are trying to see whether we can do it in St.  
25 Croix or Puerto Rico, because of the price, and the only hotel  
26 available at this time is the Buccaneer, and so Diana will look  
27 at it, and we can then get together with the Chair too for the  
28 final destination, but April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> will be the council  
29 meeting.  
30  
31 **CARLOS VELAZQUEZ:** Let me clarify that. The Holy Week starts on  
32 March 25, yes?  
33  
34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I don't know. I don't pay much attention to  
35 Easter, and so I don't know what the dates are.  
36  
37 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The meeting will be in Puerto Rico, because FEMA  
38 has taken over the Buccaneer for the rest of the year, and so it  
39 probably will be this hotel or the Vanderbilt or whatever is  
40 suitable for the per diem rate and all that, April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.  
41  
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Blanchard, you had a question?  
43  
44 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Yes, I've just a question to throw out there  
45 about the groupers, just for sake of what Farchette was asking,  
46 because of the low numbers that are caught. I was wondering if  
47 there is any way to eliminate some of the species if we catch  
48 them at a low rate. In other words, let's say we catch ten

1 pounds of a species. Do we really need to manage that? That's  
2 the question.

3

4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Roy.

5

6 **ROY CRABTREE:** My view is, if you only catch ten pounds or so,  
7 the answer is most likely no. Now, if it's a protected species  
8 that's closed, like Nassau grouper and that's why you don't  
9 catch it, then that's a different story, but, if it's a species  
10 that is open and available to fishermen and they don't catch it,  
11 that would indicate to me that it's not a significant part of  
12 the fishery and we probably don't need to manage it.

13

14 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Okay, and so let me ask you a question. Let's  
15 say, just for instance, what would be the cutoff point as to a  
16 species that we would not need to manage because it would be  
17 caught in low poundages, a fish that we catch no more than a  
18 hundred pounds, let's say, or 200 or 300?

19

20 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I know you're going to say the same thing, but we  
21 have one of those species, because, when you lock a species into  
22 the management unit, you have to have an ABC and an ACL and all  
23 that, and one of them is --

24

25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** The wrasse.

26

27 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The ACL is seven pounds. In one of these  
28 meetings, we were thinking about what are we going to do and how  
29 many days are we going to close for recuperating two pounds,  
30 because the ACL was seven pounds, and we went over by two  
31 pounds. Personally, I believe this is ridiculous.

32

33 **ROY CRABTREE:** It is ridiculous, and the reason that happened is  
34 because we had a catch level, and then we decided to split it up  
35 among the three islands, and I think it was hogfish in St.  
36 Croix, and apparently they don't really catch them there, and so  
37 it came out this ridiculously low number.

38

39 Just off the top of my head, I would think the cutoff would be  
40 higher than a hundred pounds, but I don't think there is any  
41 magic number there. I don't know, Bill, if we have thought  
42 about that enough to come up with one, but a hundred pounds or  
43 so certainly isn't much of anything, in terms of landings.

44

45 **MIGUEL ROLON:** If I may, I was in a meeting with other councils,  
46 and it was kind of funny, because the whole Caribbean catches  
47 less than three-million pounds. The Mid-Atlantic Council, in  
48 the good old days, they had a cutoff of five-million pounds.

1 Any fishery five-million pounds or less would not be worthy of a  
2 management plan.

3  
4 Then the law was amended, and, if you have a management unit,  
5 you have to have an ACL and all that, and, on the west coast,  
6 the example was the salmon fishery. They developed this quota  
7 with blood, sweat, and tears, and, all of a sudden, they amended  
8 the law, and now they have to revisit all of these salmon quotas  
9 and everything to establish ACLs for each one of the areas that  
10 they have the salmon.

11  
12 The law forced the issue, and, by the way, as we speak, they are  
13 now trying to provide more flexibility with a couple of bills,  
14 but the law forced the issue, and that's why it's so important  
15 that each council member understands the protocol. Once you  
16 have a species in the management unit, what you can do, and then  
17 look at ways that you can -- I say escape that.

18  
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Jocelyn.

20  
21 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Under the guidelines, there are stocks that  
22 require conservation and management, and that is stocks that are  
23 overfished or subject to overfishing or likely to become  
24 overfished or subject to overfishing, and so those are  
25 considered to require conservation and management and be  
26 included.

27  
28 Beyond that, the guidelines have a list of factors that the  
29 council can consider when deciding whether stocks would be  
30 included as requiring conservation and management, and so you  
31 could consider those factors and decide whether you wanted to  
32 include something, and those include whether it's an important  
33 component of the marine environment, whether it's caught by the  
34 fishery, whether the FMP can improve or maintain the condition  
35 of the stock, whether the stock is a target of the fishery,  
36 whether it's important to the commercial, recreational, or  
37 subsistence users.

38  
39 Then there's a number of other factors, and so it's more than  
40 just the amount of catch, but you might be able to look at that  
41 amount of catch and consider these factors and decide whether  
42 you wanted to include it.

43  
44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Roy.

45  
46 **ROY CRABTREE:** Councils have made very different decisions on  
47 this. Miguel brought up the Mid-Atlantic Council, and I think  
48 they manage twelve species, and so, if it's not a major fishery,

1 they don't manage it. The South Atlantic probably has sixty  
2 species in the Snapper Grouper plan, roughly.

3  
4 We probably manage more species down here than just about anyone  
5 that I can think of, and so councils have made very different  
6 decisions over the years, but, when the statute was reauthorized  
7 and we shifted to annual catch limits and things, it made it  
8 problematic to manage species that have very low landings,  
9 because it's hard to track them, and it's hard to know where to  
10 set the catch limits.

11  
12 In response to that, the Gulf and the South Atlantic Council  
13 have both removed some species from the fishery management  
14 plans. Then you also have the ability to make species ecosystem  
15 species, which means you can collect data on them and things,  
16 but you're not going to directly manage them, but you have a lot  
17 of discretion in deciding what you want to manage, but, if you  
18 decide to manage something that only has fifty pounds a year  
19 caught, understand that's going to be a problem unless you put  
20 it into one of these species groups with an indicator species,  
21 and then you're going to manage it as an aggregate, based on an  
22 indicator species, and that might work.

23  
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Bill.

25  
26 **BILL ARNOLD:** All right, and so let's review how we got here,  
27 because we've been working on this for a very long time. It  
28 took probably two years to get through Action 1, which was  
29 choosing species for management.

30  
31 We had DAP meetings and we had SSC meetings and we had council  
32 meetings. We had a very specific and step-wise process to  
33 determine which species should be managed. If you're going to  
34 start plucking them out, every species you pluck out of there  
35 has to have a rationale as to why, in spite of all that input  
36 and all that effort, this species should not be managed, and I'm  
37 not saying that's not the case, and I'm not saying we shouldn't  
38 drag this out for another two or three years, but that's what is  
39 going to be involved, because you're going to have to go back  
40 and you're going to have to revisit everything, and, when you're  
41 talking about species to be managed, I really think that you  
42 should be reconvening your DAPs and putting it in front of them.  
43 They had a tremendous input into the species to be managed.

44  
45 Second, and Roy pointed this out, Action 2 assigns indicators,  
46 and those indicators are generally the species within any  
47 complex that have the highest landings and are most  
48 representative, and so I don't think that you're going to end up

1 with a lot of low-landings species, and the reason you are going  
2 to get low-landings species, and this is something that I  
3 mentioned yesterday that you have to stay aware of, is landings,  
4 for whatever reason, have dropped way, way down in the Virgin  
5 Islands, down to 20 or 10 percent of what they used to be, and  
6 so this is the new era of reporting.

7  
8 Whether that's due to economics or whether that's due to  
9 underreporting or whatever it may be due to, and I'm not passing  
10 any judgments, but the fact is the landings are way down, and so  
11 your ABCs, if they use an average landings sequence to determine  
12 what the ABC should be, those ABCs are going to be far less.

13  
14 Now, one way you could avoid this, to some degree, and I don't  
15 know what degree, is you don't use indicators. You get all the  
16 data you have for all the species in a complex and you add it  
17 up, and then, instead of having an indicator that might only  
18 have 600 pounds, you have the whole suite, and that has 1,100  
19 pounds or something like that, but, fundamentally, it doesn't  
20 change a thing.

21  
22 You have still got a complex with low landings, and, instead of  
23 comparing one species with 600 pounds of landings to its average  
24 catch, you are comparing five species that have 1,100 pounds of  
25 landings against their average catch, but the outcome is the  
26 same, regardless.

27  
28 It might look prettier with higher landings, but it really,  
29 fundamentally, doesn't change anything, and so that's your  
30 Action 2 and the indicators. The other thing is, the most  
31 important thing is, I wouldn't get too wrapped up in this until  
32 we get these ABCs out of the SSC and get them finalized and  
33 bring them back and then the council can look, with full  
34 authority, at how these things are laying out, and they might  
35 identify a stock, or a stock complex, and you say, you know,  
36 that really isn't, at the present time, in need of full  
37 conservation and management, and here is our rationale as to  
38 why.

39  
40 We are not going to take it out of management, and we're going  
41 to drop it over into the ecosystem component species, and we're  
42 going to keep an eye on it, and, during that time, if more data  
43 are needed, if more analyses are needed, we will do that, and,  
44 if they need to be brought back into management, we can do that  
45 via an amendment to the new FMPs, but, and I keep stressing  
46 this, I wouldn't get too far ahead of yourselves.

47  
48 What we need to do now is basically three steps. The Science

1 Center needs to understand what data are needed, and then they  
2 need to provide those data to the SSC. The SSC needs to use  
3 those data to finish off their process and get the ABC  
4 establishment process in place for every stock and stock  
5 complex, and then the council needs to meet the first week of  
6 April, as we just discussed, and go over all of this in a very  
7 in-depth consideration, with plenty of time between that SSC  
8 meeting and that council meeting, so the council members have a  
9 chance to look things over and prepare themselves for that  
10 meeting, and then make those final decisions and identify those  
11 preliminary preferred alternatives.

12  
13 If some of those preliminary preferred alternatives result in  
14 species being placed in the ecosystem component category, then  
15 okay. Those species don't get assigned ABCs and ACLs, and then  
16 they are no longer under the purview of the SSC with regard to  
17 establishing an ABC, and we move forward from there, but what  
18 you're talking about now is just premature to be too concerned  
19 about it.

20  
21 I mean, you can talk about it all you want, but you're not going  
22 to really understand if and what stocks or stock complexes may  
23 require such considerations until we get those SSC outcomes.

24  
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** All right. Thanks. I understand what you  
26 said that all these things were -- I don't want to belabor this  
27 or take years again, like you said, to justify why we want to  
28 put these things out, but, in every DAP and every SSC meeting,  
29 I've said the same thing over and over, that red, black, tiger,  
30 yellowfin, yellowmouth, and yellowedge are not found on St.  
31 Croix as abundant as people think they are by data. I think  
32 they said 4,000 pounds in twenty years, but I will let that go.  
33 Bill.

34  
35 **BILL ARNOLD:** Okay, and so that's good, Carlos, and what we  
36 would do -- My vision of this would be that we come back at that  
37 April meeting and we determine what the outcomes are. If we  
38 find that that's the case, then the council may determine that,  
39 for St. Croix, these species should be moved over to the  
40 ecosystem component, and here is why, and that is your  
41 preliminary preferred alternative for that group of species and  
42 that's how we prepare the document. That's fine. That's  
43 doable.

44  
45 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Mr. Chairman, also, we are going to have that  
46 orientation meeting, and probably what we could use, something  
47 that has worked before, is, at the Verdanza, they have that big  
48 room, and you can have all the council members and all of the



1 DAP members will receive a first day of orientation and  
2 everything that we have discussed that we are going to address  
3 at the orientation meeting.

4  
5 The following day, the three DAPs can meet separately, and you  
6 can go over the list of species after the SSC meeting, and so  
7 you can write down all the comments that you may have for the  
8 council meeting and recommendations that you may have for the  
9 council meeting.

10  
11 You already did the list of species, and you went all separate  
12 groups by area, and you have that, and so, this way, you will be  
13 better informed and better prepared for the April meeting on the  
14 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> to make -- To assess what we have and then put on  
15 the record your objection for whatever species in St. Croix or  
16 St. Thomas or Puerto Rico. At this time, Mr. Chairman, we all  
17 agree, and do we have any questions regarding the timeline?

18  
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Bill.

20  
21 **BILL ARNOLD:** I am just not clear. This orientation meeting,  
22 that will take place between the SSC meeting and the council  
23 meeting? Is that the idea?

24  
25 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Yes.

26  
27 **BILL ARNOLD:** So, we have to make sure that we have -- That is  
28 some important time gaps between these meetings, because there  
29 is no sense in having it after the SSC meeting if you have it so  
30 quickly after the SSC meeting that the information can't be  
31 matriculated and prepared and everybody get it.

32  
33 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Remember, in the case of the orientation meeting,  
34 it's that -- Especially the Commissioner mentioned that council  
35 meetings like this, with all this jargon that we have been  
36 discussing and all these little graphs, is very difficult to  
37 follow.

38  
39 What we will have to have in that orientation meeting is  
40 specific examples that you can follow through the intricacies of  
41 the model that we have here, and that doesn't have anything to  
42 do with the schedule that we have, but it's just for the council  
43 members and members of the DAP to be better prepared for the  
44 April meeting. That's all.

45  
46 We don't want to use that meeting for juggling these species  
47 that we have, but the DAP meeting -- The DAP members have  
48 requested before that, before we meet with the council, to have

1 a chance for them to revisit some of the things that they  
2 already reviewed, and mostly that includes the species in the  
3 management list.

4  
5 It probably could be a one-day meeting that they will say, okay,  
6 go ahead with the list, and we will see what happens after the  
7 April meeting, but they would like to have a chance to look at  
8 this before we have the CFMC meeting.

9  
10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Bill.

11  
12 **BILL ARNOLD:** Okay, and, needless to say, this process is super  
13 important to fisheries management in the Caribbean region, and  
14 this is going to set you guys up for years to come, possibly  
15 decades to come. These FMPs we have in place now were -- The  
16 first one was put in place in 1985, and so I'm all for getting  
17 plenty of input.

18  
19 Another thing you might want to think about, and I am just  
20 putting this out there, is, following that first week of April  
21 council meeting, the next council meeting certainly won't be  
22 until August, or maybe until September, and I would prefer that,  
23 and it's hurricane season, and I get it, but so is August.  
24 Maybe, during that time, you have some -- We have discussed this  
25 before, but we have some other public workshops.

26  
27 Now we know where the council intends to go with this, and you  
28 have established your preliminary preferred alternatives, and we  
29 take those out there and have meetings during the summer,  
30 possibly during the early summer. You could even consider,  
31 sometime after the April meeting, you have some informational  
32 meetings, and then you have like another council meeting, and  
33 you have four council meetings this year.

34  
35 You can come back and respond to the public input as a first  
36 round of this and then adjust, and give the writers time to  
37 adjust, to any changes you might make based upon those  
38 informational meetings.

39  
40 Then we come back at the September meeting to finally establish  
41 these preferred alternatives and move this thing forward,  
42 because I am in full agreement that, as important as this is,  
43 you definitely want to have as much input and as much clarity as  
44 you can possibly achieve so that everybody -- Nobody is going to  
45 be happy, but everybody is going to be as happy as possible with  
46 the final product.

47  
48 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, like Miguel was mentioning about the

1 timeline, if we're -- I am all for any amount of meetings that  
2 would get it done, and so I don't know how everybody else is  
3 with this, especially if we do it before August. My term is up.  
4

5 **MIGUEL ROLON:** If we all agree with that, we will then -- The  
6 Chair and I will put it together, in conference, and we will  
7 coordinate with the Regional Office, Graciela and Bill, and then  
8 we also will be coordinating with the Southeast Fisheries  
9 Science Center to -- Bill.

10

11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Bill.

12

13 **BILL ARNOLD:** One thing regarding timing, and Roy and Jocelyn  
14 may have some input on this, is that there is an ending of  
15 terms, as Carlos pointed out, council member terms, and new  
16 council members are elected, and there is a time component  
17 associated with that, and I don't know how that will influence  
18 this timeline.

19

20 Do you have to have an August meeting to do that? Could it be  
21 in July or could it be in September when you deal with that? I  
22 don't know, but that may influence it, particularly if you  
23 decide to have an additional council meeting. How does that fit  
24 with this requirement to address term changes?

25

26 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Actually, Roy himself eliminated that from the  
27 SOPPs. August 10 is the last day of this fellow here, and  
28 August 11 is the first day of whomever comes to replace him from  
29 St. Croix, but we have the flexibility to accommodate the  
30 timeline that we have, and so we don't have to meet on that  
31 particular week to address that, and so we have that  
32 flexibility.

33

34 We did that because we wanted to make sure that we can  
35 accommodate the Regional Office participation in the meeting,  
36 and so we have that flexibility. Of course, we are working on  
37 the old SOPPs, because the new SOPPs were submitted years ago,  
38 and I haven't seen any reply from Washington, and so we all  
39 agreed to have that flexibility, and so we did away with that  
40 worry. I hope that the new guy doesn't have to reinvent the  
41 wheel and ask stupid questions that will go all the way to 2019  
42 and just come up with the same things.

43

44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Are we good? Are we good with the  
45 timeline? Tony Iarocci.

46

47 **MIGUEL ROLON:** For the group, Tony asked us -- He forgot about  
48 something yesterday, and so this is something good for the

1 fishermen and some possibility of acquiring a cheaper material  
2 for your traps, and it will be five minutes.

3

4 **TONY IAROCCHI:** Thank you. A quick update on the project for the  
5 exportation of the lobster. It looks like we're going to try  
6 our first 500-pound shipment next week, and I'm going to meet  
7 with Tommy Forte this afternoon, and so hopefully things are  
8 going to move forward.

9

10 We did talk about -- Bill, could you put those pictures up,  
11 please? We have developed a different type of trap, because  
12 right now, after the hurricanes in the states, wood is hard to  
13 come by, and most of the stuff we're using is wood. We have  
14 made a transition to wire, which you guys do use here, and we  
15 did try some of these traps, and it's similar to the plastic  
16 trap that the guys in St. Thomas use and some of the guys in  
17 Puerto Rico, and they have used it in other places.

18

19 What we're looking at is building a trap here, but trying to get  
20 the guys back fishing. There is a company -- I have given the  
21 catalogs out to the DAP members. This company does recycled  
22 trap rope, which is -- It's the trap rope that you guys use down  
23 here, the black poly, the same sizes, but it's recycled, and  
24 it's like two years old that the guys transfer over from the  
25 states.

26

27 It's fifty-cents a pound compared to \$2.50 a pound, what you buy  
28 that stuff at new, and so it's a real -- It's a lot less cost  
29 and investment purposes. Gloves, standard cotton gloves and the  
30 rubber gloves, they're a dollar a pair. The standard drone  
31 spoons that everybody uses to catch kingfish, snapper, and  
32 trolling, they're a dollar to \$1.50 apiece.

33

34 It's stuff that's going to get guys back on the water without  
35 getting a bunch of money of investment setup. They can buy this  
36 stuff a little cheaper, and I've got access to that stuff, and I  
37 just want to make sure that fishermen have access to the  
38 material they're going to need and be able to get stuff at a  
39 reasonable cost.

40

41 Hopefully there will be funding opportunity for these guys to  
42 get stuff and we can get the right equipment for these guys. I  
43 am not telling anybody to try anything or do anything, but, if  
44 you can buy stuff at a less expensive price and get back on the  
45 water, it's a lot easier to do it that way. Thank you.

46

47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I thought you were going to take half-an-  
48 hour. What happened there?

1  
2 **TONY IAROCCI:** No, I said five minutes.

3  
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** You can leave the gloves with me. Okay.  
5 We're going to break for lunch. We will be back at 1:30.

6  
7 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on December 13,  
8 2017.)

9  
10 - - -

11  
12 December 13, 2017

13  
14 WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

15  
16 - - -

17  
18 The Caribbean Fishery Management Council reconvened at the  
19 Marriott Stellaris, Condado, Puerto Rico, Wednesday afternoon,  
20 December 13, 2017, and was called to order at 1:35 o'clock p.m.  
21 by Chairman Carlos Farchette.

22  
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We are on the conclusion of the agenda, the  
24 Outreach and Education Report, and then we have just a couple  
25 more things after that. That is Alida Ortiz.

26  
27 **OUTREACH AND EDUCATION REPORT**

28  
29 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Good afternoon. I am really very, very happy that  
30 we are all here, and my solidarity with all for what happened in  
31 our houses and everywhere, but I'm happy that we are here, and  
32 we will be here for a long time.

33  
34 For the Outreach and Education Advisory Panel, we don't have  
35 very much to inform at this time. First, our meeting that was  
36 supposed to take place in November had to be canceled, and so we  
37 haven't had much contact. We know that people are working, and  
38 we still have some work at the office at the council.

39  
40 The lack of communications and the lack of internet and the very  
41 different landscape that we have in transportation -- For  
42 example, when I go from Humacao to San Juan, it may take me  
43 forty-five minutes, but, at this time, I don't know if it will  
44 take two or three hours or four or more, and so there is very,  
45 very little that we can do, either in communication or getting  
46 anywhere, but, anyhow, we have been working when we had an  
47 assignment at outreach and education.

1 First of all, we had two meetings with the fishers, and one was  
2 in the Cataño villa pesquera, where the fishers had requested  
3 some orientation on the regulations of the council and on the  
4 regulations also of DNER for the work, and so Helena and Miguel  
5 and Diana and myself went there and spent quite a few hours with  
6 them working and talking about what were the questions and how  
7 things could be improved.

8  
9 This is the villa pesquera that Cortina presented yesterday that  
10 the damage is quite large, and so many of the things that we  
11 discussed at that moment had to be considered all over again,  
12 and the other one was in Playa Santa, with few fishers, but this  
13 is very interesting, because this was after the hurricane, and  
14 the villa pesquera didn't suffer a lot, but the fishers and the  
15 places where they had their equipment or where they had the way  
16 to get out to the water were damaged.

17  
18 In spite of that, they wanted to go out, and some of the fishers  
19 were going in the water already, and they said that, for some  
20 reason, they felt that fishers were invisible in this situation,  
21 because a lot of importance is put here in Puerto Rico for the  
22 plantains and for the agriculture and for plants, and, for the  
23 fishers, they didn't have that same attention, and they wanted  
24 to see ways, alternatives, where they could get some type of  
25 work related to the fisheries but in conditions like they are  
26 now, and they are asking about the possibility of new  
27 initiatives in their villa pesquera, new information to the  
28 consumers, telling them that, yes, we are fishing, and it might  
29 not be the same grouper and snapper that we used to fish, but  
30 this is the fish, and it can be eaten and it's edible and it's  
31 very good.

32  
33 They also wanted to see where they can develop some kind of  
34 tourism activity around the area with whatever they had, and so  
35 the interest and the intention of not quitting, of not leaving  
36 the place, is there, and it was a very positive action.

37  
38 The other thing that we are working with is you remember the  
39 last meeting, and some people were interviewed for a video on  
40 the positive actions of the fishers in Puerto Rico and the  
41 contributions that they make to conservation, and so we have  
42 been working with GeoAmbiente and with the production people,  
43 and, now, they are going back to the field. They are going back  
44 to the villa pesqueras to see what changes have happened there.

45  
46 They are not going to change the idea of the video that fishers  
47 are positive people and they make good contributions to  
48 conservation and they are working, and so we were expecting to

1 have at least a minor presentation today, but, due to the  
2 hurricane, due to all the things on transportation, that cannot  
3 be done. We hope that, probably by February, we will have a  
4 meeting with Miguel and with the administrative staff of the  
5 council to see what has been done.

6  
7 Then, at the April meeting, we will have the entire production,  
8 but they are still working, and they are visiting, and some of  
9 the materials that -- They have photographs from airplanes and  
10 from visiting on the ground, and I think that it will be very  
11 important to the literature that we'll be using later in the  
12 council, and so it will be in April that we will make that  
13 presentation.

14  
15 The other thing that we have been working on is also kind of  
16 held because of, again, the hurricane, is the calendar for 2018.  
17 The theme that we selected for the calendar is essential fish  
18 habitats, because this is a concept that we have to understand  
19 not only when we are making the fishery management plan, but  
20 just as local knowledge, citizen knowledge, and so we have been  
21 working with that. It should be finished very, very soon,  
22 probably by this week, because it is just the arrangement of  
23 some of the photographs, and it should be in your hands early in  
24 2018.

25  
26 We have all these habitats that are the same ones that we have  
27 been finding in the fishery management plans, and then, each  
28 month, we'll have one of those habitats and what are the  
29 characteristics, and then, in the same month, we will have  
30 conservation measures or conservation conduct that people have  
31 to have around this habitat so that we can have healthy habitats  
32 for a healthy fishery. That is the calendar.

33  
34 The other thing that we began working with are the fact sheets  
35 on consumer responsible for sustainable fisheries, and we were  
36 supposed to have an activity in November, and, again, it was  
37 erased by the hurricane, but the information on the consumer  
38 responsibility for sustainable fisheries is still working, and  
39 we are going to continue with the rest of the fact sheets that  
40 are going to be distributed in the fishing villages.

41  
42 For the Virgin Islands, we haven't done much in this moment. We  
43 have, today, received a note that Ruth Gomez is going to be part  
44 of our O&E AP, and we will have Sarah Mitchell as the  
45 representative substituting at some times, Gomez or Makisha that  
46 is out of the Virgin Islands at this moment, and so hope that,  
47 by March, we will have our next meeting, and then we will put  
48 all of this together, and so this is the report that I have for

1 the council.  
2  
3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Alida. Any questions for Alida?  
4  
5 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Okay.  
6  
7 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Alida, are you going to include the education  
8 regarding the exports of lobster? Have you met with the group?  
9  
10 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** We should do that, but this is something that I  
11 just found out yesterday, and so we will get very much in touch  
12 with Tommy Forte and Helena and Tony Iarocci and see if we can  
13 make note that -- This is something that needs, I think,  
14 probably, and that's not my field, but it needs some marketing  
15 approach, so that people know, outside of the fishing village,  
16 that these things are done, and so, yes, we will put that as  
17 part of our outreach and education, definitely.  
18  
19 **YASMIN VELEZ-SANCHEZ:** Are you working with TNC on the seafood  
20 consumption, the responsible campaign?  
21  
22 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Yes, and, in the last meeting, we presented what  
23 TNC gave us, and there is a bit of a different approach, but it  
24 still, in essence, is the same. We are counting on the consumer  
25 and not in the restaurant only, but the people who go buy in the  
26 fishing village, and they usually ask for something that is in  
27 closure or that it is not there, and, if they don't get it, they  
28 go buy salmon, or they go buy tilapia, and that's not what we  
29 want to do. We want the consumer to know what they eat and what  
30 is eatable and how can they cook it differently, so that it is a  
31 good plate, and it will be for the fishing village, and it will  
32 be for the supermarkets and things like that.  
33  
34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I have a little suggestion, because, over on  
35 St. Croix, the enforcement office, where they come to register  
36 and get their fishing permits and all that stuff, and register  
37 the boats, there is a monitor on the front desk that has boating  
38 safety information being put out while the customer waits, and  
39 so I would like to maybe find or develop a short video that they  
40 can download into that and give fishing regulations to the  
41 boaters or customers that come in there, while they wait and  
42 they're looking at --  
43  
44 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Okay, and do you mean in terms of consumers on the  
45 regulations?  
46  
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** No, in terms of fishing regulations.  
48



1 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Okay. Great. Helena, you can help me with that.  
2 If you have any kind of video already that we could use, but,  
3 yes, that's a good idea, and probably we might get it also from  
4 the people who are doing the other video.

5  
6 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We don't have a video, but we'll have to work  
7 on making one somehow.

8  
9 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Great. We'll take care of it.

10  
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Even just the information.

12  
13 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** It could be a slide show.

14  
15 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** A slide show, right.

16  
17 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** A slide show that changes every so many minutes.

18  
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Exactly. Okay.

20  
21 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** I will take note. Any other --

22  
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I think outreach and education is number one  
24 on the priority list, and so I believe that we need to all push  
25 for outreach. Thank you, Alida. Next, I have the Enforcement  
26 Reports and Puerto Rico DNER.

27  
28 **ENFORCEMENT REPORTS**  
29 **PUERTO RICO DNER**

30  
31 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** We have Sergeant Eileen Runda, and she's going  
32 to speak in regard to the enforcement in Puerto Rico.

33  
34 (The presentation was in Spanish and was not transcribed.)

35  
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any questions for DNER Enforcement? Then  
37 we'll move on to the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Commissioner.

38  
39 **USVI DPNR**

40  
41 **DAWN HENRY:** Good afternoon again to the council. DPNR Division  
42 of Environmental Enforcement, on September 6, after the passage  
43 of Hurricane Irma, the Governor, Governor Kenneth Mapp, he  
44 instituted a state of emergency, and, as part of that state of  
45 emergency, all law enforcement officers, including DPNR  
46 Enforcement officers, they were directed to be under the Virgin  
47 Islands police department, and, as of today's date, they remain  
48 under the Virgin Islands police department.

1  
2 We did, in terms of responding to both hurricanes, enforcement,  
3 one of their biggest tasks, is they have been working alongside  
4 the U.S. Coast Guard in dealing with vessel recovery in the  
5 territory. We estimate that we have over 400 sunken derelict  
6 vessels in the territory that we need to remove from territorial  
7 waters, and so that is part of the responsibilities for the  
8 Division of Environmental Enforcement, and they have been  
9 working really hard to accomplish that task.

10  
11 The Governor recently renewed the state of emergency, and so now  
12 it's in effect until January 4, 2018, and so we need to wait to  
13 see what happens then. Just a note is, while we're under the  
14 state of emergency, the enforcement officers are still allowed  
15 to, if we get any complaints regarding the fisheries, they will  
16 respond, and they will report, but, as of today's date, under  
17 the hurricane recovery, we have not had any such complaints for  
18 the department to respond to, and that ends the report for DPNR.

19  
20 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Commissioner. Any questions for  
21 Enforcement? Miguel.

22  
23 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thank you, Commissioner. Just a curious  
24 question, because I -- Anyway, we have the same problem in  
25 Puerto Rico. Can the U.S. Virgin Islands government remove  
26 those vessels without the consent of the owner?

27  
28 **DAWN HENRY:** Yes, once I as the Commissioner I deem the vessels  
29 to be derelict, and I have the power and the authority to remove  
30 the vessels, and that's what we are doing.

31  
32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Coast Guard.

33  
34 **JEREMY MONTES:** Just a small side note on that. Most of the  
35 vessels were marked with a sticker or a notice that said they  
36 had up until December 1 to claim the vessel, and I believe, in  
37 the Virgin Islands, about 200 of the 400 vessels were claimed.  
38 That doesn't mean that it's the owner's responsibility to clean  
39 it up.

40  
41 They can still get the federal assistance for it, but, as of  
42 December 1, we've just started moving on with the removal of all  
43 vessels, both Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. For what it's  
44 worth, back in Florida as well. We're pulling all those boats  
45 and cleaning up everything after the storms.

46  
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any more questions for DPNR? Miguel.

48

1 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Not a question, but a suggestion by one of the  
2 fishers. He asked me whether the council was willing to support  
3 using those vessels for artificial reefs, and I said to him,  
4 well, you can create a bigger problem, because there are many of  
5 them that probably you end up jeopardizing the fishing grounds,  
6 because that will be detrimental in some areas, and, also, you  
7 will be entangling and everything, but that's something that  
8 some of the fishermen wanted.

9  
10 They also asked me whether any association can request the Coast  
11 Guard or the local government of Puerto Rico to use any of these  
12 vessels that have been abandoned by the owners, and I said,  
13 well, you have to contact DNER, and I don't know if they contact  
14 Damaris or whatever, but there is some interest about some  
15 people who want to do that.

16  
17 Others would like to use or donate them as artificial reef,  
18 because they don't have to pay for the removal, and they just  
19 claimed the insurance and left the island or left it there, and  
20 that's creating a problem for the disposition of those vessels.

21  
22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Blanchard.

23  
24 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Well, the artificial reef might not be a bad  
25 idea. The problem is, before you could use it as an artificial  
26 reef, and the Coast Guard could verify that, you've got to make  
27 sure that you've got it well cleaned up and that you don't cause  
28 an oil spill or some kind of other damage with hazardous  
29 material onboard, and so, actually, the idea of artificial reef  
30 probably ain't that far-fetched, and I think it might actually  
31 be a good idea, but it's just that you need to put them at a  
32 strategic place, and probably strip the masts off of the yachts,  
33 so that you wouldn't get stuck up on them that easy.

34  
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sorry, but not going to happen. Bonnie.

36  
37 **BONNIE PONWITH:** Artificial reefs are an interesting concept for  
38 that, and I agree that it's something that you would want to  
39 really sit down and consider really, really carefully and plan  
40 very carefully, because artificial reef one day can become just  
41 a bunch of junk on the beach really quickly if you don't, and  
42 there are just the physics of it, to make sure you put it  
43 somewhere where you know it's going to stay and it's out of an  
44 energy area enough that it's not going to get swept up and scour  
45 some good natural habitat.

46  
47 Also, it doesn't end up detracting from good natural habitat and  
48 that those relationships are understood. There is some very

1 successful artificial reef programs in other places, where  
2 fishermen are -- They are very popular with people that fish,  
3 but part of that success, I think, is a really good, careful  
4 plan.

5  
6 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** That is precisely why it won't happen.  
7 Fiberglass will not be allowed as artificial reef material. It  
8 doesn't stay on the bottom, and I know, for St. Croix, there is  
9 only one permitted site, and I think it's already full, but I  
10 believe that Fish and Wildlife has already applied for a new  
11 site years ago, but we don't know the status of that, as yet.  
12 Any more questions for DPNR?

13  
14 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** I just wanted to say that I agree with what  
15 has been said about the very careful planning of artificial  
16 reefs and that we already had sunken vessels in Puerto Rico  
17 before this hurricane, and so we already had kind of spontaneous  
18 artificial reefs in Puerto Rico, and, besides that -- We have  
19 really good ones, and we have characterized some sailboats in  
20 the east coast of Puerto Rico, where those sunken sailboats are  
21 really precious areas for fisheries.

22  
23 As part of other initiatives that we have had in the past with  
24 coral reefs, with the coral reef program in Puerto Rico, we have  
25 identified those areas as really nursery areas for our  
26 fisheries, and so the benefits of those types of artificial  
27 reefs are there, but I also agree that we have to be careful.

28  
29 Besides, the process in Puerto Rico, as I understand it, is that  
30 we have to consult with the owners of the vessels. We don't  
31 have that full capacity that the Virgin Islands has, and so we  
32 need to consult them, and, if they don't want the vessel to be  
33 removed, or they don't allow the Coast Guard and EPA to remove  
34 it, then we have to leave the vessel there, and so we will have  
35 some --

36  
37 Since we have hundreds of those vessels right now sunken due to  
38 these hurricanes, we probably will have some spontaneous sunken  
39 vessels that are artificial reefs there anyway in Puerto Rico,  
40 unfortunately.

41  
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Artificial reef sites are real good. I mean,  
43 it promotes -- It's good for tourism, and it's good for dives,  
44 and it's good for fishing and fishermen. If it's done right, it  
45 can develop into a real good -- It grows a lot of coral and  
46 stuff on it, and I think they're needed. I think it will  
47 enhance places that are dying. Anything further for DPNR?  
48 Hearing none, U.S. Coast Guard.

1  
2 **U.S. COAST GUARD**  
3

4 **JEREMY MONTES:** Good afternoon, everybody. Just to echo some of  
5 the same sentiment that we've all been hearing over the last  
6 day-and-a-half, the Coast Guard was very busy in the aftermath  
7 of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, a little bit of Jose, and  
8 Nate, for what it was worth, even though Nate ended up being a  
9 little bit less than what they were anticipating, but, to focus  
10 on some of the efforts that we had down here, over 400 vessels  
11 sunk or were damaged in the Virgin Islands, and the number is  
12 about 350 for Puerto Rico, of just what we're able to find in  
13 the vicinity of federally-regulated channels.  
14

15 Luckily, we were able to, in very, very quick time, open up some  
16 of the major ports in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and  
17 the way we were able to do that was we deployed ten additional  
18 aircraft, thirteen cutters, and 1,200 people days after the  
19 storm, to the point to where, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, we had  
20 cutters operating off of the south coast of Puerto Rico and off  
21 of St. Croix.  
22

23 We intentionally did that, because we anticipated our  
24 communications network going down. Those towers are located in  
25 the mountains and on each of the islands in the Virgin Islands,  
26 and all towers were either destroyed or disabled from the  
27 hurricane, and so we used that network of vessels to ensure the  
28 safety of navigation at sea for everybody that was arriving to  
29 provide assistance, and we also used our buoy tenders to open up  
30 the ports within days.  
31

32 I think the longest one was one of the smaller privately-owned  
33 ports on the south coast of Puerto Rico. That was one of the  
34 ones that I think it took almost two weeks to open up, but that  
35 allowed us to start flowing in our relief supplies. We  
36 delivered thousands of gallons of water and diesel, and I  
37 apologize to anybody who got an MRE, a meal ready to eat, from  
38 the Coast Guard or from the federal government at all.  
39

40 They're not the greatest thing in the world, but, when you've  
41 got nothing else available, it's an absolutely blessing, and  
42 it's been nice to see that we were also able to start cooking  
43 and delivering fresh food for people that was not an MRE quickly  
44 after the storm as well, and we are still very much engaged in  
45 the relief efforts for the islands down here.  
46

47 However, we've been able to shift our focus back to our  
48 traditional law enforcement operations as well, and so the only

1 major damage we had was one of our small piers here was  
2 significantly damaged, and we actually took out one of our  
3 boats, and then our facility over in St. Thomas, where we  
4 normally keep a couple of small boats over there, was very, very  
5 damaged, and so we're operating at, I would say, about 85 to 90  
6 percent capacity at this point, and we do have vessels out  
7 actively patrolling in support of all of our eleven statutory  
8 missions, with the exception of ice-breaking, and we do that on  
9 the beach.

10  
11 Other than that, the only other fun venture we have going on  
12 right now is there is a prototype system that was sent up on a  
13 satellite a couple of years ago, and we've been selected down  
14 here, particularly in the Mona Pass, to use that technology to  
15 monitor for illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing between  
16 kind of that disputed zone between where the Dominican Republic  
17 and our EEZs combine.

18  
19 We are getting daily reports on it. It's nothing that I'm able  
20 to use to pass off to any of my operational units or any of our  
21 partners down here, because I get the report the next day, or  
22 even later than that, but we are using that to establish a  
23 pattern, to see if there is any creep of foreign-flagged fishing  
24 vessels coming over and trying to exploit our EEZ, under the  
25 assumption that we're no longer patrolling those waters because  
26 we're in the recovery phase.

27  
28 If anybody knows of any other areas off of St. Croix or off of  
29 St. Thomas, any places that are subjected to potential illegal  
30 fishing from foreign-flagged fishing vessels, please let me know  
31 about it. I can easily get them to kind of relocate where they  
32 send that satellite and use that technology, just so we can  
33 establish that new pattern that we may be having now, post-  
34 Maria, so we can fully understand what's going on in our EEZ and  
35 make sure that we're keeping our EEZ ours. That ends my report,  
36 and I will answer any questions.

37  
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any questions for the Coast Guard? Damaris.

39  
40 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** I just want to say thanks for the work that  
41 you did and keep doing in Puerto Rico with the recovery after  
42 Hurricane Maria, and so thank you very much. I know that it has  
43 been very hard work.

44  
45 Some of the people that have been working with you in the  
46 project are people under my supervision, and so I know the long  
47 hours that it has taken, and it's a big project, and so thank  
48 you very much, and the same with all the people from NOAA that

1 have helped us in the process with the disaster, fishery  
2 disaster, declaration and the donations and everything, and so I  
3 just wanted to take a minute to say that. Thank you very much.  
4

5 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Ditto. Any more questions for the Coast  
6 Guard? I know I ate a lot of MREs in Hurricane Hugo, and, ever  
7 since then, I promised myself never to do it again. I will go  
8 fishing before I eat an MRE. Thanks. Okay. Next is National  
9 Marine Fisheries Service.

10  
11 **NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE**  
12

13 **JEFF RADONSKI:** Good afternoon. Priorities is what we're  
14 working on right now. We should be bringing out our next five-  
15 year priority document soon. I think it's going through the  
16 clearing stages right now, and we've had councils and partners  
17 and everybody that have made comments toward the priority  
18 documents. I don't think you're going to see a lot of changes  
19 from our previous document. I think it will just be cleaned up  
20 a little bit in how it looks.

21  
22 Like everybody else, the hurricanes had a major impact,  
23 especially on our Southeast Division, because had the Houston  
24 area, the Keys, and then the Caribbean that was impacted. Of  
25 course, the Caribbean, we've been impacted the most. Lynn Rios  
26 is still without power, and it's very difficult for him to  
27 communicate, and there's no internet.

28  
29 I don't know if you guys know, but Lynn is slated to retire in  
30 March, and so there will be another vacancy that we'll need to  
31 fill. Raul Pena is an enforcement officer, and I was hoping  
32 that he would show up to the meeting this week, but he is here,  
33 and I think he's completed his training, and so now we're  
34 working on what is going to be his mission down here, and he'll  
35 probably be doing a lot of work in the ports and traveling to  
36 other locations to help out, but we haven't forgotten about the  
37 Caribbean.

38  
39 It's something that's always on our minds, but the work that can  
40 be done right now is probably not the highest priority of trying  
41 to go out there and try and take care of minor violations. In  
42 cases that we do have down here that are in the federal court,  
43 they are stymied because of the hurricane themselves, and so  
44 it's going to be interesting, and it's going to be rebuilding.

45  
46 We're going to be rebuilding down here with new personnel, and  
47 hopefully we will be hiring an agent soon and we will get Raul  
48 going and get back to normal ops. I know everybody down here

1 wants to be back to normal ops, and so time will tell.

2  
3 If you go to the NOAA OLE site, we do have our priority  
4 documents there, and I think our annual report is up there as  
5 well for NOAA OLE as a whole, which will include the Southeast  
6 Division and Northeast Division, et cetera, and so that's all I  
7 have for this report. Any questions?

8  
9 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Questions for NMFS? Thank you. Coast Guard,  
10 you were talking about the satellite pinging for IUU, and is  
11 that for the U.S. Caribbean only that that satellite is working?

12  
13 **JEREMY MONTES:** No, they're also using it over on the  
14 Texas/Mexico border, and I believe the California/Mexico border  
15 as well. They're just trying to monitor those close borders on  
16 our EEZ.

17  
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Under Other Business, I have Marcos Hanke.

19  
20 **OTHER BUSINESS**

21  
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** I was speaking to Nelson Crespo and to Carlos  
23 Velazquez and to Daniel, and we want to make sure that the  
24 report made by Daniel -- We make sure that it is the case that -  
25 - It was a very informative job that he did, but there is  
26 another information coming up that will be the official numbers,  
27 and those were very partial numbers, and I just want to  
28 highlight this.

29  
30 In the Naguabo Villa Pesquera, where there was the cleaning  
31 station and the shoreline, when the Department of Agriculture  
32 went there, they estimated a lot of money, close to \$2 million,  
33 in the rebuilding of that shoreline plus the dock that was  
34 affected. I mean, this is going to add up to a lot of money to  
35 the damage for Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

36  
37 I want the record to be clear that the numbers that Daniel  
38 presented was very partial, and it was a good effort from his  
39 part to start the discussion, but, the fishermen that represent  
40 here on the council, we all agree that that damage is much more  
41 than what was presented.

42  
43 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Damaris.

44  
45 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** You're right. That was a preliminary report,  
46 and we are doing a more extensive analysis, similar to what the  
47 Virgin Islands did, and we're almost done with that study, and  
48 so hopefully we're going to be able to use it in order to get



1 additional funds for recovery after the hurricane, with the help  
2 from NOAA of the disaster declaration in fisheries, and so, yes,  
3 we're going to have more detailed information.

4  
5 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Bill.

6  
7 **EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT DISCUSSION**

8  
9 **BILL ARNOLD:** I have other business. We have received an  
10 exempted fishing permit request from the Clean Ocean Initiative,  
11 and we want to make the council aware of this. It's strictly  
12 informational. If you have any concerns or objections --  
13 Because this was not, due to timing issues, not noticed in the  
14 agenda, it's not available for voting, and so, unless you do  
15 have issues, we just want to let you know that we are processing  
16 this permit for exempted fishing, and I wanted to go through it  
17 real quickly with you.

18  
19 I believe there are Clean Ocean representatives here, and so I  
20 am not the expert on this. My staff member, Sarah Stephenson,  
21 is, and she's not available. The connection is not good enough,  
22 and so I will do the best that I can. If there are any  
23 concerns, I would ask you guys to back me up a little bit. Like  
24 I said, it's just informational, and I really think it's  
25 probably a proactive and positive project, but let's go through  
26 it.

27  
28 The idea here is an exempted fishing permit actually allows  
29 somebody to harvest species that otherwise would be covered by  
30 the Magnuson-Stevens Act and would fall under our ACLs and all  
31 of our other regulations.

32  
33 Clean Ocean Initiative is requesting an EFP to collect deepwater  
34 corals, obviously managed under our Corals and Reef-Associated  
35 Plants and Invertebrates Management Plan, in the EEZ off of  
36 Puerto Rico. Now, what they intend to do is collect deepwater  
37 corals, sponges, and other invertebrates that have settled on  
38 decommissioned submarine telecommunication cables.

39  
40 Those telecommunication cables are being retrieved from the  
41 deepwater environments in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ, and I believe  
42 this is not just to get them out of there, but there's a lot of  
43 value in the metals that are included in those cables, and  
44 they're going to recover those metals, I believe for profit.

45  
46 The project aims to provide an opportunity, in addition, and  
47 this is kind of a value-added component, but it will provide an  
48 opportunity for scientists and students to study the taxonomy,

1 growth, behavior, and genetics of these deepwater organisms.  
2  
3 These are some of the telecommunication cables coming out of  
4 Puerto Rico, and I believe the green ones are going to be  
5 retrieved in the first phase of the project and then the red  
6 ones in the second, but I do believe the idea is eventually to  
7 recover all of these deepwater cables, and obviously they don't  
8 get from shore to deepwater without going through shallow water,  
9 and so you've got to keep that in mind as well.  
10  
11 The research methods, there will be two vessels. One vessel is  
12 a benthic survey vessel that will operate a remotely-operated  
13 vehicle, and that vehicle will conduct video benthic viewings,  
14 transects, along the cable corridor, and they will transplant  
15 specimens from the cable to surrounding habitat, to get them out  
16 of the way, and, if necessary, the ROV will locate -- Obviously  
17 it's a very capable ROV, but it will locate, cut, and prepare  
18 the cables for retrieval, and, if necessary -- Like, if there's  
19 a big organism that they can't retrieve, they will cut the cable  
20 around that organism to leave the cable and the organism in  
21 place, so it suffers no harm.  
22  
23 Then the sectioned cable will be retrieved aboard a separate  
24 vessel, a barge, and this barge will have on it a specialized  
25 funnel that will remove any remaining attached specimens from  
26 the cable. There will be a marine biologist onboard that will  
27 identify and document all species.  
28  
29 Selected species will be transferred to the research vessel's  
30 controlled aquatic storage facility and then to a research  
31 facility. There, scientists and grad students will study the  
32 taxonomy, growth, behavior, genetics, and anything else of  
33 scientific interest of these deepwater organisms.  
34  
35 These are the vessels. The one in the bottom-right is the  
36 survey vessel that will operate the ROV, and the ROV is shown on  
37 the bottom-left. Then the barge is top-center, and so these  
38 vessels will be operating off the northwest and west coast of  
39 Puerto Rico, and you may see them out there.  
40  
41 These are cable recovery stats, and you get an idea, in  
42 particular, of how long these cables are in nautical miles, and  
43 that's the far-right column. They range from forty-one to 172  
44 nautical miles. That's a lot of cable, and a lot of metal.  
45 Right here, they've got nine of them, I think, and I don't know  
46 if this is all nine or ten, and there's something like that, but  
47 this is certainly most of them.  
48

1 Note the start and end depths. They are very deep, in general,  
2 and that's in feet, and so it's a little shallower than you  
3 might think, relative to the continental shelf, but these are  
4 pretty much deepwater cables.

5  
6 The timeline on this, and the reason that we are certainly being  
7 supportive of getting this EFP issued, is they propose to start  
8 the benthic surveys in December of 2017, now, or January of  
9 2018, somewhere in there. Obviously, they need this permit to  
10 go forward.

11  
12 They will actually conduct cable retrieval and specimen  
13 collection operations starting in January or February of 2018,  
14 and they estimate their total retrieval time for all nine cables  
15 is 429 days, and so NOAA is currently evaluating this  
16 application, and we will publish it in the Federal Register  
17 requesting comments, and, if granted, this EFP would be valid  
18 from the date of issuance through April of 2019, which hopefully  
19 will be adequate time to get all of these cables recovered.

20  
21 Unless you have questions or concerns, this is the exempted  
22 fishing permit that has been proposed, and keep in mind that all  
23 exempted fishing permits need to be brought before the council.

24  
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thanks, Bill. Miguel.

26  
27 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You don't have to vote on anything, but just take  
28 note that that happened.

29  
30 **ROY CRABTREE:** You can make a recommendation to approve or  
31 disapprove it, if you want to.

32  
33 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Based on your presentation -- I personally don't  
34 have to read the whole thing. You have it there, and it's a  
35 good thing for the environment, and so the council can take note  
36 and move to approve it or support the approval of the permit.

37  
38 **TONY BLANCHARD:** So moved.

39  
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Second.

41  
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any further discussion? Damaris.

43  
44 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Could we have the detailed request from them  
45 to analyze it?

46  
47 **BILL ARNOLD:** Yes, you may.

48

1 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** You do have a presentation here from -  
2 - Joshua Morel is here, and we do have four or five slides, if  
3 you want to see them and ask specific questions of them. This  
4 has been also -- Jose Rivera from the NOAA Habitat Conservation  
5 group and Daniel Wagner, from the deep coral group in  
6 Headquarters, have all been part of the development of the  
7 project, in terms of the information that is going to be  
8 gathered through this project, and it's going to be  
9 unbelievable.

10  
11 I mean, it gives the opportunity of identifying new species and,  
12 I mean, we know when the cables were put down, and so, assuming  
13 that the coral has grown on that since the beginning, then you  
14 will know something about age, but there will be age  
15 determinations. The history of the water at that depth and what  
16 has happened will also be recorded there, and so they do have a  
17 couple of slides available.

18  
19 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Graciela, will this be shared with local  
20 universities, or they will go somewhere else?

21  
22 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** I would defer to Joshua, if he can  
23 come up and -- I don't know the specific details, but I know  
24 that we were actually talking about maybe having something like  
25 a live presence while they are running the ROV and that kind of  
26 thing, and so --

27  
28 **JOSHUA MOREL:** Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Josh  
29 Morel, and I am the marine biologist in Clean Ocean Initiative.  
30 Basically -- Actually, Bill Arnold said most of the things that  
31 I am also going to say, but, just to go a little bit further and  
32 let you know those things that were in the presentation, we --  
33 Since 2015, we did a proposal towards the Southeast Deepwater  
34 Coral Initiative for a grant proposal, and it was with Daniel  
35 Wagner.

36  
37 We have been talking to him recently also, and he also has told  
38 us that there is funding for 2018, and we're just waiting right  
39 now on what that funding can actually go to, and that's part of  
40 the concerns too, that we wanted to also inform you that we're  
41 working together with them, because one of the things that also  
42 Graciela mentioned is one thing that we had discussed with them,  
43 and it's to upgrade some of our equipment to better --

44  
45 We have high-definition videography on the ROV itself, so we can  
46 collect a lot of really good data, but even upgrading to newer  
47 versions, 4K and others, like the NOAA ships have, or even, as  
48 we were discussing, some other ships that have come here in

1 Puerto Rico. Then we can get better quality images of these  
2 specimens as we're doing the transects of the corals, of the  
3 cables itself.

4  
5 Basically, these are the two main vessels that I'm going to be  
6 working with, and these are the ones that are going to do the  
7 surveys, and you can see the Eli, which should be arriving here  
8 in Puerto Rico, and the ROV, which is the Super Mohawk 19, if  
9 you want to search for it.

10  
11 It would have grappling capabilities, and, of course, it will  
12 need to hold the cable and cut it in certain points, including  
13 also if we need to do any type of -- If we need to move corals  
14 out of the cable and transplant them. Then we can also do that.  
15 It won't have, at the moment, any other capabilities for let's  
16 say if you want to collect one and take it to the surface in the  
17 ROV, and we don't have that capability right now on our ROV, but  
18 it's something that can also be considered maybe in the future  
19 with these grant monies that we can receive.

20  
21 The Eli will also have, attached to this, side-scan sonar, and  
22 so not only will we be doing videography, but we'll also be  
23 doing mapping of the surrounding waters and close to where the  
24 proximity of the cable corridor, and so we'll also be doing  
25 mappings in the areas where we don't have really good data yet  
26 of how the flooring is and including -- The version that's going  
27 to be connected, because we're going to have two tethers, one  
28 for deeper waters and one for shallower waters.

29  
30 That's when we're doing the surveys, and we'll be able to reach,  
31 if I'm not mistaken, up to 8,000 feet of water, but I think the  
32 maximum of twelve nautical miles, which is the survey area  
33 mostly, is up to 6,000 feet, but, still, it's a lot of really  
34 good data down there that a lot of people don't know about,  
35 especially us in the science community.

36  
37 Other things that we've been talking about a lot is what  
38 information we can actually bring to the scientists, including  
39 not only ourselves and local scientists, but NOAA and the  
40 Department of Natural Resources and other agencies, academia,  
41 that can actually benefit from all this information, including  
42 the one that also Graciela had mentioned.

43  
44 We know when these cables were laid, and a lot of the  
45 information on deepwater corals is you don't know how long does  
46 it take them for the growth, and this is the perfect opportunity  
47 to also learn how long does it take for a lot of them to grow.  
48 You can find a lot of information within themselves, from the

1 timeline, to see different changes in them as they gather their  
2 own data and taxonomy and a whole bunch of stuff that you can  
3 actually learn from them.

4  
5 Basically, what we only would need is this permit, because we  
6 already have, for the nine nautical miles in Puerto Rico, we  
7 already have the permit from the Department of Natural  
8 Resources, but we don't have further than that.

9  
10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel.

11  
12 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The local universities, will they have a chance  
13 to -- For example, if somebody wants to work to collect for a  
14 master's degree, or even a PhD degree, and you have 419 days  
15 around, and can they have a chance to apply and incorporate into  
16 their master's degrees the --

17  
18 **JOSHUA MOREL:** We are totally pro with that. We actually want  
19 to share this information with local academia, too. It doesn't  
20 have to be local. It could also be from outside sources too,  
21 but we mainly -- We were first in Mayaguez, and the first thing  
22 we saw was the University of Mayaguez that has PhD studies and  
23 different professors that are already interested.

24  
25 We have moved out of Ponce, but that doesn't mean that we can't  
26 use other universities. Mayaguez is still interested, and  
27 Humacao is certainly interested too, and even the University of  
28 Aguadilla is also interested, UPR Aguadilla.

29  
30 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I believe, even in the USVI, the University of  
31 Virgin Islands -- In the University of Virgin Islands, there  
32 might be maybe a student or two who also would like to  
33 participate, and so we should spread the word.

34  
35 **JOSHUA MOREL:** Yes, it will be for open academia, including  
36 that, if we do get to do even -- If we have a lot of samples  
37 that we can work with, we have also the funding to create like a  
38 small center to start doing the studies, and they can do them  
39 right there, so we don't have to take them far away, and they  
40 will be in a protected area.

41  
42 We even have funding to purchase some kind of tanks that we  
43 already talked to a company called Aqua Logic, which is based  
44 off of California, which also did all of their systems for the  
45 Monterrey Bay Aquarium, and so they've got all the experience to  
46 do deepwater tanks. We already have a whole bunch of sets of  
47 different types of tanks that we can actually use, and we  
48 already have quotes for them.

1  
2 Also, if we are able to do this, we're talking to a couple of --  
3 Including Wagner, and he told us that it will also help out with  
4 NOAA deep-sea coral research and it will help accomplish some of  
5 his missions for this same year, with all the information that  
6 we can be able to gather there, including if some of that  
7 funding actually goes towards some equipment that could help out  
8 even further, for example devices that can actually be attached  
9 to that ROV. Any questions?

10  
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any more questions?

12  
13 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Not a question, but a comment. Personally, I  
14 believe this is a win-win situation. They are going to remove  
15 the darned things anyway, and this is an excellent opportunity  
16 for this area's students and professors to take the opportunity  
17 here to study organisms that the council needs to be studied.  
18 The marine science department here and the university and  
19 Florida and the people from California can all benefit from  
20 this, and so it will be nice if the council can endorse it.

21  
22 **JOSHUA MOREL:** I have been in contact with -- Basically, the  
23 first time that I tried to look for information, and the one who  
24 really started to communicate with me and was able also to  
25 gather and give a lot of information was Monterrey Bay Aquarium,  
26 with their expertise with deepwater systems.

27  
28 I have also actually contacted and have been able to talk to  
29 Stephen Cairns from the Smithsonian, and he has great knowledge  
30 too and a lot of information of these animals, and he's also  
31 really interested in this program if it gets to go ahead.

32  
33 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** One last comment. We also talked  
34 about the fact that they have been helped by a number of fishers  
35 from the area who remember when the cables were set down, and  
36 that historical information has also been documented.

37  
38 The other matching win-win situation would be that these are  
39 probably also areas that the fishers know, for some specific  
40 reason, and it would be interesting to match what they know  
41 about the species that could be around a seamount or something  
42 like that and what they see in the video that is going to be  
43 recorded, and so it's just really exciting to have a project  
44 like this going on.

45  
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Damaris.

47  
48 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** The cables would be substituted by satellite

1 information and communication or new cables would be installed?  
2  
3 **JOSHUA MOREL:** Can you repeat that?  
4  
5 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** You are removing cables.  
6  
7 **JOSHUA MOREL:** Yes.  
8  
9 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Old cables.  
10  
11 **JOSHUA MOREL:** These are old coaxial, basically the old  
12 telephone lines, and not the new fiber optic cables. These  
13 cables basically have already served their purpose, and, after  
14 that, they were abandoned on the bottom of the ocean. Right  
15 now, they fall under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and they  
16 have been abandoned there for many years. A lot of them, the  
17 older ones, for example the telegraph cables, usually will start  
18 to actually disintegrate. We have been able to identify cables  
19 even from the 1860s.  
20  
21 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Okay, and so they were already substituted a  
22 long time ago?  
23  
24 **JOSHUA MOREL:** Yes, but we're basically just working with newer  
25 cables. Older cables like that, we won't touch. That would  
26 also fall under cultural status too, which --  
27  
28 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Any more? Roy.  
29  
30 **ROY CRABTREE:** Basically, from this, you recycle this cable, and  
31 that's how you make money, and is that right?  
32  
33 **JOSHUA MOREL:** That's correct, yes.  
34  
35 **ROY CRABTREE:** All of the corals are just sort of being donated  
36 to a research program?  
37  
38 **JOSHUA MOREL:** In effect, yes.  
39  
40 **ROY CRABTREE:** Okay.  
41  
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Anything further? Okay. Thank you. Before  
43 we are done, I want to put something on the record here. I know  
44 that Dr. Appeldoorn isn't here, but I do want to commend the SSC  
45 for all the hard work that they did.  
46  
47 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You have a motion on the table. You have to vote  
48 on it first.



1  
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Which motion?  
3  
4 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The one that he made.  
5  
6 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** That's right. Okay. There was a first and  
7 second, and so, all in favor, say aye; any nays; any  
8 abstentions. Roy Crabtree abstains.  
9  
10 **ROY CRABTREE:** It's just, otherwise, I would be voting to make a  
11 recommendation to me as to what I should do, and so I abstain.  
12  
13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** **That would be six yes and one abstain, and**  
14 **the motion carries.**  
15  
16 Now, in continuation about the SSC members, I want to commend  
17 all those guys for their hard work, and I know it was very  
18 difficult, and they worked real hard. I was there for all three  
19 meetings, five days each, and, sitting in a room with all those  
20 PhDs was mindboggling, to say the least, and I think I told  
21 everybody that my PhD is a public high diploma, and so most of  
22 those equations and formulas and modeling was way over my head,  
23 above my paygrade, but it was very interesting, and I think we  
24 got to this point, and I think it was a lot of lessons learned  
25 there, but I want to commend those guys for all their hard work.  
26 Miguel.  
27  
28 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The last bit of business is that one idea that  
29 Bonnie added to the discussion that we started yesterday morning  
30 is to ask the local governments what is the status of your  
31 fisheries statistics program and if you have any -- If you are  
32 in need of any assistance to continue the program.  
33  
34 They collect fisheries statistics, and we pay \$5,000 for  
35 somebody to enter the data in Puerto Rico, and so far, he hasn't  
36 received anything, and so we are going to pull that money out  
37 unless you have some other needs for assistance to continue the  
38 statistics program, and that's okay, but, right now, one of the  
39 issues they are having is we want to validate the information  
40 that the Center receives.  
41  
42 There is some problems floating around, and there was also --  
43 This is something that we discussed with Ruth, but the  
44 possibility of hiring somebody in the Virgin Islands that is  
45 familiar with the fishers and the way that the fishers operate  
46 in the Virgin Islands to collect this type of information.  
47  
48 We had some money available, and the other thing is whether you

1 have the capacity or not to collect the information of exports  
2 of the spiny lobster. If that becomes a successful pilot  
3 project, we need to capture that information, and we want to  
4 make sure that the lobster exported from this area are legal,  
5 and so probably it's something just to take note and discuss it  
6 between here and next time, but those monies are available, and  
7 we have to rethink, Damaris, the money that you receive for the  
8 spiny lobster project with the fishers, because, even before  
9 Maria and Irma, they were not sending the information that they  
10 promised to send. That's it.

11  
12 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Jocelyn.

13  
14 **UPDATE ON QUEEN CONCH LITIGATION**

15  
16 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thank you. I just wanted to give you a  
17 brief update on the queen conch litigation. As you know, in the  
18 summer of 2016, two environmental groups filed an action  
19 challenging the agency's, the National Marine Fisheries  
20 Service's, decision that listing of queen conch as either  
21 threatened or endangered wasn't warranted.

22  
23 Since that time, now the plaintiffs have filed their initial  
24 motion for summary judgment, and the case is to be fully briefed  
25 by the end of January of 2018, and so, after that, the judge  
26 will have the briefs and be able to decide the action on the  
27 merits.

28  
29 **MIGUEL ROLON:** So there is still a possibility that it will be  
30 listed?

31  
32 **ROY CRABTREE:** If we lose, then the judge would remand the  
33 decision back to the agency, and we would have to redo it.

34  
35 **MIGUEL ROLON:** So it's not an automatic acceptance, but it's  
36 just that you have to rework it, redo it?

37  
38 **ROY CRABTREE:** Jocelyn, go ahead, but I think it would depend on  
39 the specifics of why we lost.

40  
41 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** That's right. It would depend on the  
42 judge's ruling on what grounds, and so, if they said that you  
43 needed additional reasoning, the agency could provide additional  
44 reasoning and come up with the same decision. If they said the  
45 reasoning was flawed, they would have to address that and  
46 reevaluate the decision, and so it really depends on what  
47 grounds the judge rules in the case. Of course, if the judge  
48 affirms the decision, then it would stand.

1  
2 **ROY CRABTREE:** So it's not over until it's over, I guess.  
3  
4 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The reason I ask you is because we are going to  
5 have an international queen conch meeting with WECAFC and about  
6 twenty countries, and one of the questions that they keep asking  
7 me, thinking that I am the czar of the queen conch in the U.S.,  
8 is whether the U.S. is going to approve this or not.  
9  
10 They are really worried, because, as you know, we are the  
11 number-one market for the queen conch, although the Chinese are  
12 coming to buy anything that moves in the water, but they asked  
13 me whether we would have something to say at the meeting, and my  
14 answer to them will be no, until we have this process finished.  
15  
16 **ROY CRABTREE:** When is the meeting?  
17  
18 **MIGUEL ROLON:** It will be probably in April of 2018. It will be  
19 difficult to have anything.  
20  
21 **ROY CRABTREE:** My guess is it won't be resolved by then, and so  
22 I think you can tell them that the government has made a final  
23 action on it, which is not warranted, but it is subject and  
24 being reviewed by the courts, and no one can really say when  
25 that will be resolved.  
26  
27 **MIGUEL ROLON:** We will have a U.S. delegation, and so probably  
28 we will -- If we put it on the agenda, which it's difficult not  
29 to put it, because we are going to talk about the queen conch,  
30 I'm sure that whomever attends from the U.S. side will be able  
31 to provide that.  
32  
33 **ROY CRABTREE:** This isn't unusual. We get litigation over  
34 listing decisions quite often.  
35  
36 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** The case will be fully briefed by January,  
37 and, thereafter, the court would likely have a hearing on it.  
38 Then, after that point in time, it would provide its decision,  
39 and so it could be a number of months after the January briefing  
40 is done.  
41  
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Anything further? Hearing none, the 161<sup>st</sup>  
43 Caribbean Fishery Management Council Meeting is hereby  
44 adjourned. I want you all to enjoy your holidays, and I hope  
45 Santa brings you all the gifts you wanted.  
46  
47 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 13, 2017.)