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PAGE 33: Motion to nominate Dr. Michelle Scharer as a member of the SSC. The motion carried on page 33.

PAGE 76: Motion that the council requests staff begins work on an amendment to the island-based FMPs that would allow for the use of the deep-water snapper buoy gear with no more than twenty-five hooks per line. The motion carried on page 78.

PAGE 81: Motion that the council request staff to begin work on an amendment to each of the IBFMPs to consider whether gill and trammel nets or any other applicable gear should be authorized gears when fishing for managed species. The motion carried on page 86.

PAGE 138: Motion that the council request the SSC to coordinate with the Science Center to provide a constant ABC for spiny lobster for each island group based on SEDAR 57 and based on the first three years of the ABC projection from 2021 to 2023. It is the council intent to request an interim assessment to be conducted in 2023 to set catch levels for 2024 and beyond. The motion carried on page 140.

PAGE 151: Motion to instruct the staff prepare an options paper for the yellowtail recreational fishery of St. Croix that would be considered at the spring meeting of the CFMC meeting 2021. The motion carried on page 151.

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**CARIBBEAN FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**170<sup>TH</sup> REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Webinar**

AUGUST 11-12, 2020

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Tuesday morning, August 11, 2020, and was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Marcos Hanke.

**CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

**MARCOS HANKE:** Today is August 11, and it's 9:02 a.m., and we're going to start the meeting. Natalia, can you start with the roll call first?

**NATALIA PERDOMO:** Yes. First, I have Graciela Garcia-Moliner.

**GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Graciela Garcia-Moliner, council staff. Good morning.

**NATALIA PERDOMO:** Liajay Rivera.

**LIAJAY RIVERA:** Liajay Rivera, council staff. Buenos dias.

**NATALIA PERDOMO:** Miguel Rolon.

**MIGUEL ROLON:** Miguel Rolon, council staff, present.

**NATALIA PERDOMO:** Jack McGovern.

**JACK MCGOVERN:** Jack McGovern, NOAA Fisheries. Good afternoon.

**NATALIA PERDOMO:** Roy Crabtree.

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

**NATALIA PERDOMO:** Alida Ortiz.

**ALIDA ORTIZ:** Alida Ortiz, Outreach and Education Advisory Panel. Buenos dias.

**NATALIA PERDOMO:** Bill Cordero.

**BILL CORDERO:** Bill Cordero, language interpreter extraordinaire. Good morning.

**NATALIA PERDOMO:** Carlos Farchette.

1  
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Carlos Farchette, council member, present.  
3  
4 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Carlos Velazquez.  
5  
6 **CARLOS VELAZQUEZ:** Good morning. Carlos Velazquez, commercial  
7 fishermen, President of the Fishermen's Incorporation in  
8 Naguabo.  
9  
10 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Chelsea. Christina Olan. Damaris Delgado.  
11  
12 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Damaris Delgado, Puerto Rico DNER, Good  
13 morning.  
14  
15 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Edward Schuster.  
16  
17 **EDWARD SCHUSTER:** Edward Schuster. Good morning. DAP Chair.  
18  
19 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Thank you. Jocelyn D'Ambrosio.  
20  
21 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Jocelyn D'Ambrosio, NOAA Office of General  
22 Counsel.  
23  
24 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Jorge Torez. Julian Magras.  
25  
26 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras, DAP Chair, St. Thomas/St. John.  
27 Good morning.  
28  
29 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Loren Remsberg.  
30  
31 **LOREN REMSBERG:** Loren Remsberg, NOAA Office of General Counsel.  
32 Good morning.  
33  
34 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Manny Antonaras.  
35  
36 **MANNY ANTONARAS:** Good morning. Manny Antonaras, NOAA Office of  
37 Law Enforcement.  
38  
39 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Marcos Hanke.  
40  
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Marcos Hanke, present.  
42  
43 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** María de los Irizarry.  
44  
45 **MARIA DE LOS IRIZARRY:** Good morning. María de los Irizarry,  
46 council staff.  
47  
48 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Maria Lopez.

1  
2 **MARIA LOPEZ:** Good morning. Maria Lopez, NOAA Fisheries.  
3

4 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Matthew Wailea.  
5

6 **MATTHEW WAILEA:** Good morning. Matt Wailea, NOAA Office of Law  
7 Enforcement.  
8

9 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Michelle Scharer.  
10

11 **MICHELLE SCHARER:** Buenos dias. Michelle Scharer, independent  
12 contractor.  
13

14 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Morgan Corey. Nelson Crespo.  
15

16 **NELSON CRESPO:** Good morning, everyone. Nelson Crespo, DAP  
17 Chair, Puerto Rico.  
18

19 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Nelson Earhart.  
20

21 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Nelson Ehrhardt, University of Miami and  
22 independent contractor. Good morning.  
23

24 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Nicole Angeli.  
25

26 **NICOLE ANGELI:** Nicole Angeli, USVI, Division of Fish and  
27 Wildlife, here.  
28

29 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Orian Tzadik.  
30

31 **ORIAN TZADIK:** Orian Tzadik, the Pew Charitable Trusts.  
32

33 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Ricardo Lopez.  
34

35 **RICARDO LOPEZ:** Ricardo Lopez, Puerto Rico DNER Fisheries  
36 Research Lab.  
37

38 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Richard Appeldoorn.  
39

40 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Rich Appeldoorn, SSC Chair.  
41

42 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Robert Copeland.  
43

44 **ROBERT COPELAND:** Lieutenant Robert Copeland, U.S. Coast Guard,  
45 District 7, present.  
46

47 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Sarah Stephenson.  
48

1 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Good morning. Sarah Stephenson, NOAA  
2 Fisheries.  
3  
4 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Shannon Calay.  
5  
6 **SHANNON CALAY:** Good morning. Shannon Calay, NOAA Fisheries,  
7 Miami.  
8  
9 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Vanessa Ramirez.  
10  
11 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Good morning. Vanessa Ramirez, council  
12 member, commercial fisherman, Puerto Rico.  
13  
14 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** I have a Caller 2, but I don't know if it's  
15 somebody that already stated their name, if Caller Number 2 can  
16 say their name.  
17  
18 **MIGUEL BORGES:** It's maybe myself. This is Miguel Borges, NOAA  
19 Office of Law Enforcement.  
20  
21 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Thank you. That's it.  
22  
23 **IRIS OLIVERAS:** Excuse me. Iris Oliveras, council staff.  
24  
25 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Good morning. Tony Blanchard, CFMC, Vice  
26 Chair.  
27  
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Natalia. I want to recognize that  
29 Tony Blanchard is together with Julian Magras in St. Thomas, and  
30 thank you for very for both of you to connect that way, which  
31 last time was very efficient, and, like I mentioned, on this  
32 170<sup>th</sup> CFMC virtual meeting, again, it's 9:08 a.m.  
33  
34 The meeting rules for participation are you have to state your  
35 name every time you participate, that you ask for participation.  
36 Use this chat to ask for your turn, turn to speak, and use the  
37 little emoji with the hand up. All votes are going to be made  
38 by roll call, and state your full name and yes or no or abstain.  
39  
40 Public comments will have five minutes on the end of the meeting  
41 for participation, and the meeting will be recorded at all  
42 times, and simultaneous translation is available, like we stated  
43 at the beginning of this meeting. The next item on the agenda  
44 is the swearing-in of new council members.  
45  
46 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, before you go into that, the roll call is  
47 when you are going to submit something to the Secretary, but, in  
48 this case, you may have a motion, and, if there is no

1 opposition, then you can declare the motion approved. That way,  
2 you will save some time. For the swearing-in, we have you and  
3 Dr. Roy Crabtree, and I believe that you received your  
4 documents, and so you may read it for the record.

5  
6 **SWEARING-IN OF NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
7

8 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, I have it here. Thank you, again, for the  
9 opportunity to serve on the council. I, Marcos Hanke, as a duly  
10 appointed member of the regional fishery management council  
11 established under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and  
12 Management Act, hereby promise to conserve and manage the living  
13 marine resources of the United States of America by carrying out  
14 the business of the council for the greatest overall benefit of  
15 the nation.

16  
17 I recognize my responsibility to serve as a knowledgeable and  
18 experienced trustee of the nation's fisheries marine resources,  
19 being careful to balance competing private or regional interests  
20 and always aware and protective of the public interest in those  
21 resources. I commit myself to uphold the provisions, standards,  
22 and requirements in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation  
23 and Management Act and other applicable law.

24  
25 I shall conduct myself at all times according to the rules of  
26 the conduct prescribed by the Secretary of Commerce. This oath  
27 is freely given and without mental reservation or purpose of  
28 evasion. That's it, Miguel.

29  
30 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Welcome back, Mr. Marcos Hanke, for another  
31 three-year term. If this were in-person, there would be  
32 applause for you, but I believe Roy may have something to say.

33  
34 **ROY CRABTREE:** Congratulations, Marcos, and it's great to have  
35 you back on the council, and I appreciate your willingness to  
36 serve for so many terms. I think this is the first time we have  
37 ever sworn in a council member virtually, or at least for me it  
38 is, and so hopefully we'll see you in-person next time.

39  
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Roy. Thank you to all, and I hope to  
41 do my job as a council member and, like always, I will be  
42 considering all the opinions and all the input and all the  
43 information provided to us to the best of my expertise and  
44 capabilities to support the sustainable fisheries for the  
45 nation, and for our region, especially. Thank you.

46  
47 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Mr. Chairman, just for the record, we were joined  
48 by Yvonne Sadovy, Diana Martino, and Laura --.



1  
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Now, Miguel, the Election of  
3 Officers.

4  
5 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The gentleman from the Coast Guard, can you take  
6 the chair of the meeting for this part of the election of  
7 officers? Because this is a virtual meeting -- Usually, when we  
8 have a meeting like this, for election of officers, the Coast  
9 Guard chairs the meeting, because council members will be  
10 involved in the election of officers, but, at this time, we can  
11 open the floor for election of officers. Any volunteers?

12  
13 **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**  
14

15 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I move to nominate Marcos Hanke as Chair and  
16 Tony Blanchard as Vice Chair.

17  
18 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Second.

19  
20 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Any other candidate for Chair or Vice Chair?  
21 **Hearing none, I believe that Mr. Marcos Hanke and Mr. Tony**  
22 **Blanchard will be with us for Chair and Vice Chair for another**  
23 **one-year term.** Mr. Chairman, you are back in the saddle, and,  
24 Mr. Vice Chair, you are also back in the saddle, and the staff  
25 is here to help you any way we can, and so go ahead with the  
26 rest of the meeting, please.

27  
28 Tony, while we wait for Marcos to fix his audio problem, can you  
29 take the agenda and the next item? The next item on the agenda  
30 is Adoption of the Agenda.

31  
32 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**  
33

34 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Okay. We'll forward to the Adoption of Agenda.  
35 I believe we're going to have to do this by vote.

36  
37 **MIGUEL ROLON:** At this time, we will open the agenda for any  
38 changes or comments or additions.

39  
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Can you hear me?

41  
42 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Yes, and Tony has put the agenda on the screen,  
43 and so we are in that process now, and so go ahead.

44  
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Because I didn't hear anything of what happened  
46 with the election of officers, which part of the agenda are we  
47 in now? I just reconnected.  
48

1 **MIGUEL ROLON:** We are not in the adoption of the agenda itself,  
2 and I have to announce that David Ortiz joined us. For the  
3 record, David Ortiz is present from the Pew Charitable Trusts.  
4  
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** We will go to Adoption of the Agenda.  
6  
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Marcos, your voice is breaking up, but I move  
8 to adopt the agenda as written.  
9  
10 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** I have a couple of annotated things in  
11 our agenda, and so we will have a presentation from Kim Iverson  
12 from the South Atlantic on Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment  
13 29, an overview of best fishing practices. I think that that  
14 should be under the section on gears.  
15  
16 We do have the -- I didn't see Sennai Habtes on the list of  
17 participants, but we do have someone to be considered for the  
18 TAP position, and so I don't know where you want to put that in  
19 the agenda. Do you want to do it under the Ecosystem-Based  
20 Technical Advisory Panel Report, or do you want to do it under  
21 another section?  
22  
23 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Other Business.  
24  
25 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** So, under Other Business,  
26 consideration of a TAP member.  
27  
28 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Other Business is before or after the public  
29 comment section?  
30  
31 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Miguel, there wasn't an Other Business  
32 section, and so maybe we should put it right before the public  
33 comment period or right after the public comment period.  
34  
35 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Yes, and this is the time to do it. Just ask  
36 Marcos.  
37  
38 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Okay, and the last thing that I have  
39 in my notes is that we have a request from Rene Esteves from Sea  
40 Grant to talk about -- The other business would be the  
41 consideration of a new TAP member to fulfill the vacancy.  
42  
43 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Then the other one is Rene Esteves, Graciela?  
44  
45 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Yes, and he wants to present to the  
46 council on the safety of commercial fisher divers.  
47  
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** That's all, Graciela?

1  
2 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** So that would be during the public  
3 comment period or under other business, and so public comment  
4 period -- I think that's where we can put it.  
5

6 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Yes, put it in the public comment period, Rene  
7 Esteves' presentation.  
8

9 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Perfect. I don't know if Alida is  
10 going to cover this, but there is a set of workshops that  
11 CARICOOS has put forth for commercial fishers, and so, if she's  
12 not covering that under the Outreach and Education Advisory  
13 Panel --  
14

15 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Graciela, it will be in the Outreach and  
16 Education Panel, and so you may help Alida if something is  
17 missing from the CARICOOS workshops.  
18

19 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Okay, so, Mr. Chair and Miguel, three  
20 other things that I have under -- I put them on the annotated  
21 agenda under Other Business for the second day, and it would be  
22 compatible regulations for St. Croix for lobster, specifically  
23 speaking of traps, and so I don't know if you want to cover that  
24 in the next day or treat it under the gear section today.  
25

26 **MIGUEL ROLON:** It probably should be in Other Business on the  
27 next day.  
28

29 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Okay, and to address the generation  
30 gap in commercial fisheries.  
31

32 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The generation gap could be done today, also.  
33

34 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** So in Other Business today.  
35

36 **MIGUEL ROLON:** That will be covered by Alida Ortiz, but, since  
37 tomorrow is only a half-day, it's better to advance as much as  
38 we can this afternoon.  
39

40 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Okay, and I believe now that this is  
41 really my last thing, and that would be the consideration of the  
42 Executive Order 13921.  
43

44 **MIGUEL ROLON:** That's for tomorrow's Other Business.  
45

46 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Perfect.  
47

48 **MIGUEL ROLON:** It's the Executive Order for the Seafood Industry

1 of the U.S. It has a long title, but, anyway, it's the  
2 Executive Order for the Seafood Industry of the U.S.

3  
4 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Miguel, if I may, Marcos just sent me  
5 a text message that he's having problems listening to what we're  
6 saying.

7  
8 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos will probably have to leave and come back  
9 again.

10  
11 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** I believe that's all I have in my  
12 notes.

13  
14 **MIGUEL ROLON:** We need a motion to approve the agenda as  
15 amended.

16  
17 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I move to accept the agenda as amended.

18  
19 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Second.

20  
21 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thank you, Tony. Can you run the meeting? Can  
22 you just say any opposition and then the motion carries?

23  
24 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Any opposition or refusals? Hearing none, the  
25 motion carries.

26  
27 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thank you. The next thing in the agenda, Mr.  
28 Vice Chair, is the Consideration of the 169<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting  
29 Verbatim Transcription.

30  
31 **CONSIDERATION OF 169<sup>TH</sup> COUNCIL MEETING VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION**

32  
33 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Okay. We're moving forward to the  
34 transcriptions. Any changes? Any opposition to the  
35 transcriptions?

36  
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I move to accept the verbatim minutes as  
38 written, the 169<sup>th</sup> verbatim minutes.

39  
40 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Do we have a second?

41  
42 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Second.

43  
44 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Any opposition? Any refusals? Hearing none,  
45 the motion carries.

46  
47 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

1 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Okay. Marcos is trying to get back using his  
2 phone. The next item in the agenda, Mr. Vice Chair, is the  
3 Executive Director's Report. I have a couple of topics to  
4 discuss with you.

5  
6 The first one, Natalia, if you could please share the screen  
7 with the photograph. As you all know, and I sent it to  
8 everybody, but Dr. Roy Crabtree is retiring this year, on  
9 December 31, 2020. We wanted to take a few minutes to recognize  
10 Dr. Crabtree.

11  
12 I met Dr. Crabtree a long time ago, when he came as a scientist  
13 to give us a detailed explanation of why the council must  
14 consider acceptable biological catch and overfishing definitions  
15 and everything that he explained to the council, and he probably  
16 doesn't even remember that, but that's the first time.

17  
18 He explained the very complex formulas and process in a way that  
19 everybody understood it, and I was able to understand it, and,  
20 since that time, we have crossed paths through the years, and  
21 Dr. Joe Kimmel never thought that the person that he was  
22 supervising was going to become his boss in a few years, and  
23 then Dr. Roy Crabtree became the Regional Administrator for the  
24 Southeast Regional Office.

25  
26 I could spend the whole morning talking about Dr. Roy Crabtree,  
27 but let's say that he is, aside from a good scientist, an  
28 excellent scientist, he's a musician, and he has his own group,  
29 and he knows the fisheries, because he was a charter boat  
30 operator for many years, taking people out to the flats to fish,  
31 and he has been able to manage to be patient with the three  
32 councils, and he's the only Regional Administrator with three  
33 councils to manage to work with.

34  
35 In our case, Dr. Roy Crabtree was instrumental, for the last  
36 several years, to help us in our development of management  
37 plans. He created the three branches, and one of them is the  
38 Caribbean Branch, and he has been adding staff members to the  
39 council to help Graciela and myself, and mostly Graciela, and  
40 she's our technical person, to develop the management plans and  
41 everything.

42  
43 Bill Arnold, he hired Bill Arnold, and, as you all know, Bill  
44 helped us a lot with our management plans and everything that  
45 the council has to do to move forward under the Magnuson Act.  
46 He hired Maria Lopez and Sarah Stephenson, and they are working  
47 with us now, and, of course, Jack McGovern, his right hand, is  
48 in charge of that branch, and I believe that, if it wasn't

1 because of that branch, we wouldn't be able to move the way that  
2 we needed today.

3  
4 Diana and went to the office yesterday, and we sent this FedEx,  
5 and this is a reef in a bottle that we give to people that we  
6 believe deserve it, and Roy Crabtree is probably one of the best  
7 persons to deserve this award from the council, or not an award,  
8 but a recognition of all the work that he has done with us.

9  
10 For that, we are very grateful, and, at this time, a round of  
11 applause, virtual round of applause, to Dr. Roy Crabtree, and,  
12 if he wants to say something, please do so. If anybody else  
13 wants to say something, but, Roy.

14  
15 **ROY CRABTREE:** Thank you, Miguel. I appreciate those kind  
16 words, and I have been very fortunate to have the career that  
17 I've had. I think I have been coming to Caribbean Council  
18 meetings since the -- Well, I think I went to my first one back  
19 in the late 1990s, and so it's been a long time, and I have  
20 gotten to know a lot of great people and made some good friends.

21  
22 I think we have made a great deal of progress in the Caribbean,  
23 and I am confident that you all will continue to make great  
24 strides next year, and you have a very strong branch with Maria  
25 and Sarah, and I know Jack is committed to continuing to  
26 emphasize work in the Caribbean and get things done.

27  
28 I do intend to be with you for our December meeting. I wish we  
29 could have an in-person meeting later this year, but I think  
30 that's unlikely to occur, but it's been a real privilege getting  
31 to know all of you and working with you, and I wish all of you  
32 the best and great things in your futures, and so thank you,  
33 Miguel.

34  
35 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Tony wants to say something.

36  
37 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Good morning, Roy. Congrats on your  
38 retirement. Now, seeing that you're a musician, you will have a  
39 lot of time to play some music and have Tony Iarocci as your  
40 back-up singer, but I know we've butted heads through the years,  
41 and I think we've come to a place where we could agree to  
42 disagree, but congrats on your retirement, and have a good one.

43  
44 **ROY CRABTREE:** Thank you, Tony, and I look forward to you next  
45 year booking me some gigs at the Frenchman's Reef, and I will  
46 come down.

47  
48 **TONY BLANCHARD:** There you go.

1  
2 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Miguel, if I may, I would like to say something,  
3 also.

4  
5 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Go ahead.  
6

7 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Congratulations, Roy, on your retirement. It's  
8 been a pleasure working with you over the last fifteen-and-a-  
9 half years, and I know we started off butting heads and not in a  
10 good area, but I think that we are leaving in a good area right  
11 now, and, you know, you've been there, and you listened to our  
12 concerns and our complaints, and we were able to always find a  
13 middle ground to work with the fishers, and I am really  
14 appreciative for that, and I look forward for us to continue  
15 being friends. Enjoy your retirement and do all the fun things  
16 that you want to do. Thanks.  
17

18 **ROY CRABTREE:** Thanks, Julian, and I do want to say that I'm  
19 really proud of the St. Thomas Fishermen's Association and how  
20 that organization has grown and matured and is still going  
21 strong, and so I think you guys should be proud of all you have  
22 achieved.  
23

24 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Thank you.  
25

26 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thank you to all, and I have in the chat many  
27 congratulations, and so you can pass your words directly to Dr.  
28 Roy Crabtree later.  
29

30 The other thing that I have is that, first, I would like to  
31 welcome Nikita Charles. Nikita will be the liaison officer  
32 between the Department of Planning and Natural Resources and the  
33 council and the fishers in the St. Croix area, and so Dr. Angeli  
34 gave us the notes, and Nikita will be the liaison officer, and  
35 we really would like to welcome her to the council family.  
36

37 The other thing I have is that the five-year strategic plan has  
38 been modified, the way that we approach it, and Dr. Duval is now  
39 a member of the Mid-Atlantic Council, and that's why she is not  
40 with us at this meeting, but she will be at the DAP meeting in  
41 August, August 24, 25, 26, and 27 of this year.  
42

43 The five-year strategic plan survey was stopped in order for us  
44 to comply with the Paperwork Reduction Act, and we discussed the  
45 ways to continue the work with Jocelyn D'Ambrosio, the NOAA  
46 legal counsel, and Michelle Duval and myself, and, happily, we  
47 came up with a strategy that will call for having meetings with  
48 the DAPs, and the council itself may have a one-day meeting to

1 go over all the topics that will be included in the strategic  
2 plan.

3  
4 We also discussed it with the three chairs of the DAPs, and  
5 that's why it is in the agenda for the next meeting of the DAPs,  
6 and we will also join efforts with the Fishery Advisory  
7 Committees of the U.S. Virgin Islands and in Puerto Rico, and we  
8 will continue with the work until the end of this year, and, by  
9 2021, Dr. Duval may present to the council, hopefully in person,  
10 and, if not, then virtually, the draft five-year strategic plan  
11 for you to consider. Mr. Chairman, Marcos, this will relieve  
12 some time for the agenda, and you can use it as you please.

13  
14 The other two things that I have is that, as you know, the CFMC  
15 is working with NOAA Fisheries and the International Fishery  
16 Affairs and Seafood Inspection Office in Washington on the work  
17 for the working groups of the queen conch spawning aggregation  
18 and other projects through the years that the CFMC has  
19 collaborated with WECAFC, the Western Central Atlantic Fishery  
20 Commission, the Caribbean Regional Fishery Mechanism and the  
21 OSPESCA.

22  
23 Those two organizations encompass almost all of the states,  
24 countries, that belong to the Western Central Atlantic  
25 Commission area, and they go from Brazil to Bermuda, and, as  
26 part of those efforts, we have two projects that -- By the way,  
27 we saved a lot of money in the first half of 2021, because, as  
28 you know, we don't travel, and so that money will be also used  
29 for outreach and education and international projects like this.

30  
31 We also received \$50,000 from the Regional Office, or not the  
32 Regional Office, but the Office of Protected Resources, to help  
33 us to secure some funding for the spawning aggregation working  
34 group for next year and all these other working groups that we  
35 have with WECAFC.

36  
37 At this time, we present to you that we are going to finish the  
38 three videos that were put together by the company that were  
39 presented to you some time ago, and these videos are for  
40 promoting the management of fishing areas, or fishing seasons,  
41 for the protection of those species that aggregate to spawn, and  
42 we have a video that was examined by professionals, and they  
43 gave us the go-ahead.

44  
45 They were well-done and well-conceived, and they follow what the  
46 WECAFC and the rest of the international groups and the United  
47 States are after, which is the promotion of best practices for  
48 the protection of these aggregating species, especially the



1 Nassau grouper that, as you know, is part of the important  
2 species protected by the United States.

3  
4 Also, we have other species, like snapper grouper and those  
5 species that aggregate, like mutton snapper, and we prepared a  
6 management plan that is for the management of these species, and  
7 we will have our next meeting on November 9 and 10 of this year  
8 for the spawning aggregation working group.

9  
10 The other one is the queen conch. As you know, the council has  
11 been working since the 1980s on the promotion of Pan-Caribbean  
12 management of the species, or, actually, since the beginning of  
13 the council, and one of the key species is the queen conch. As  
14 you will see tomorrow, the queen conch has changed three times  
15 their name for the genus.

16  
17 We were lucky also to have Dr. Nelson Ehrhardt work with us in  
18 the preparation of first a manual for the queen conch, but now  
19 we have three models for the -- The three models are to treat  
20 scientists from the management areas of the Caribbean Sea the  
21 best practices for collecting and analyzing the data and doing  
22 surveys at-sea and in a way that will allow them to assess the  
23 stocks of each country, and also to comply with the requirements  
24 of the FAO.

25  
26 Dr. Nelson Ehrhardt had a long, long career, and he retired from  
27 the University of Miami, and he was working with stock  
28 assessments, and he spent ten years of his life working with the  
29 FAO, and he hasn't stopped working, and he called me one day and  
30 said, Miguel, we need to do this, and we need to continue the  
31 work that we started, and he prepared the first model.

32  
33 I asked Dr. Ehrhardt to give us a presentation of these models,  
34 and we have the funding to cover these projects from the monies  
35 that we have saved and from the monies that we are receiving  
36 from NOAA Fisheries. At this time, I would like for Dr. Nelson  
37 Ehrhardt to address the group and give us a brief presentation  
38 of what these models are. Dr. Nelson Ehrhardt, please. You  
39 have the floor.

#### 40 41 **QUEEN CONCH MODEL PRESENTATION**

42  
43 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Thank you, Miguel, and good morning. Thank  
44 you so much for the opportunity of expressing some ideas that we  
45 are trying to develop, in terms of training those people that  
46 are responsible to report to CITES and to our working groups, in  
47 terms of how to estimate a catch quota for conch.

1 In the working group, we have discussed, for a long time  
2 already, that the CITES doesn't have sustainability criteria  
3 officially in their regulations, and, up until now, the problem  
4 is that the CITES is actually leaving it up to the parties on  
5 how they define these criteria.

6  
7 Obviously, we have a problem with this, in terms of how then we  
8 estimate catch quotas that are really in place for, first of  
9 all, framing the sustainability criteria and, secondly, that  
10 it's useful for the defining of the non-detrimental findings for  
11 the species.

12  
13 Here, in the first slide, I just wrote very compressed, in a  
14 summarized way, which of the main points that we are addressing  
15 in the working group that will lead into the criteria that we  
16 all need to agree, so that we, in the meetings, can discuss  
17 matters on quota definitions under the same frame of thoughts  
18 and concepts, et cetera.

19  
20 Basically, the definition of the quota, in this particular case,  
21 is a population biomass, which is what is in red there, and this  
22 is a standing stock estimate, and, as you can see in the formula  
23 on how we estimate, or we should estimate, the population  
24 biomass, it's based on an average density of the stock, the  
25 habitat range, and an average individual weight, and all of  
26 these terms are to be estimated from surveys.

27  
28 In the region, we have plenty of surveys all around the place,  
29 and, when we review these results, we can see immediately that  
30 every survey will have its own design and different statistical  
31 assumptions, et cetera, and we thought, in our conversations  
32 both in the working group as well as with Miguel, that perhaps  
33 it's an opportunity right now to try to standardize and  
34 harmonize all the procedures, so that all the countries are  
35 aware of the ways that they should develop their surveys, why  
36 the surveys will have a continuity, and we have great  
37 discontinuity in the surveys, by the way, and, therefore, have  
38 some sort of a frame that everyone can refer to when they are  
39 trying to estimate this population biomass.

40  
41 This is the easy part, because the real critical part is the  
42 fishing mortality reference point that we need to have, and the  
43 reason of the difficulty here is what is at the bottom of the  
44 slide, the fundamental issues on how to link the catch to  
45 reproductive population density and how to obtain then the  
46 information that is statistically unbiased to do this.

47  
48 The reason then is as follows. If these animals require a

1 minimum density to encounter and have a successful mating rate,  
2 then what will be the amount of catch that we can retrieve from  
3 the stock and still allow these animals to have sufficient  
4 density, population density, as to encounter each other and then  
5 to secure recruitment for the future.

6  
7 This fishing mortality rate, obviously, we can set these  
8 mortalities, and some people are using 8 percent, et cetera,  
9 but, indeed, what should be this value, such that the quota that  
10 we generate with this fishing mortality rate will leave in the  
11 ocean, will leave in the place, enough population density, and  
12 not biomass, but population density.

13  
14 This brings all sorts of statistical problems, in the sense that  
15 we need to assess not the whole queen conch stocks, but the  
16 amount of animals that are mature and that they are mating at a  
17 given time in a given place, and this brings then the very  
18 difficult issue that queen conch should be assessed by fishing  
19 banks and not by the stock, and, obviously, all these things  
20 will have an implication on the assumptions on how you design  
21 the survey.

22  
23 The training modules that we are developing right now  
24 concentrate on concepts on these non-detrimental findings, the  
25 assumption on the statistical procedures that are needed to  
26 estimate these non-detrimental findings, and then the protocols  
27 in how we carry this out, and then, in these modules, we have a  
28 frame where we ask what is the problem, why there is a need to  
29 solve the problem, and how to resolve the problem. In the how  
30 are all the methodologies and all the basic assumptions that we  
31 need to comply with to have unbiased estimators.

32  
33 These are the three modules that we are proposing here, and it's  
34 an integrated training concept. The Training Module 1 has been  
35 already completed, and this is how to estimate the landings and  
36 the fishing effort, both from artisanal fisheries in the region,  
37 the small-scale fisheries, as well as the big industrial  
38 fisheries.

39  
40 Each one of these fisheries will have complexities, and the  
41 module already has a document, which is more than sixty pages,  
42 where we have developed new statistical ideas on how to estimate  
43 conversion factors without the need of investing any more money  
44 on this, as well as surveys to estimate landings on the  
45 artisanal fisheries and how to provide estimates of fishing  
46 effort in the industrial fisheries that are all operating in the  
47 offshore banks, in the Nicaragua and Honduras areas, et cetera.

1 Then this particular Module 1 was completed in July of this  
2 year, and it estimates the fraction of the density that was  
3 actually retrieved from the stock, and this information will  
4 feed into the Training Module 3 that you have there, and we will  
5 estimate -- We will develop a new formula to estimate these  
6 annual quotas based on the information of the given density that  
7 has been retrieved from the stocks, coming from Module 1.

8  
9 Very importantly, we are, right now, developing a Training  
10 Module 2, where we have a huge amount of experience and time at-  
11 sea on how things can go very wrong when you are trying to  
12 assess population density for these particular species.

13  
14 We have a real problem that, in most of the countries in the  
15 shallow areas of the conch stock distribution sites, where there  
16 is a very significant level of exploitation, it has created an  
17 artificial stratification of the stocks, and we know very little  
18 about what is going on in the deeper regions of the conch  
19 distribution.

20  
21 New technologies are available, which are really inexpensive,  
22 that can be established, and we have already implemented some of  
23 these technologies in some of the countries in deeper waters,  
24 and we have had success on this, and it requires lots of  
25 calibrations, et cetera, and we hope to establish a well-  
26 developed set of rules on how to use these technologies, so we  
27 can avoid deepwater diving and, obviously, saving the money,  
28 because of the time that is required by diving rather than using  
29 technologies.

30  
31 The proposed training is for distance training, and the idea is  
32 to have these modules on the website of the council. The FAO is  
33 very much interested in translating these documents to the  
34 French language, so we will have them in English, Spanish, and  
35 French, and then addressing this training through let us say  
36 several months or a year or so, by an organized way, where, by  
37 long-distance training, we could truly install a standardization  
38 procedure on how countries should do all this work.

39  
40 In the working groups, and especially in the scientific and  
41 statistical and technical supporting group for the conch working  
42 group, we have been discussing on how we can integrate all this  
43 data and what will be then the final outcome on the  
44 recommendations on how countries can report to the CITES what  
45 are the non-detrimental findings, because, up until now, each  
46 country is in fact reporting their what is supposed to be non-  
47 detrimental findings, in terms of the catch quotas to the CITES,  
48 but the statistics and science behind the quotas dimension is

1 still to be studied. That is what I have for today, and I thank  
2 you again for the opportunity to present.

3  
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Nelson. That was a great  
5 presentation, and I hope that everybody is able to hear me, and  
6 I am back, after some technical issues. Miguel, can you  
7 continue with the Executive Director's Report?

8  
9 **MIGUEL ROLON:** That's it, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank  
10 Dr. Ehrhardt, and the data are suggested here, but just to let  
11 you know that we are going to embark on these models, and we  
12 will report back to you in December and also provide you copies  
13 of the models. That's all I have, Mr. Chairman, at this time.

14  
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Miguel.

16  
17 **MIGUEL ROLON:** If you have any questions for Dr. Ehrhardt, this  
18 is the time.

19  
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, and this is what I was going to ask, if  
21 there is any questions or comments about the presentation.

22  
23 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** If I may, Mr. Chair.

24  
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead.

26  
27 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Nelson, hi. Thank you for the  
28 presentation. What's the deep water -- What do you consider  
29 deep water? What is the depth, and, secondly, what are the  
30 technologies that are being used for harvesting conch from that  
31 deeper water? Thanks.

32  
33 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Thank you for the question. Here, the  
34 standard is what is below ten meters and what is in shallower  
35 than ten meters, because, if it's shallower than ten meters,  
36 usually those are the artisanal fisheries. For deepwater, we  
37 are thinking in terms of the sixty to 130 feet, and that is  
38 basically what Nicaragua and Honduras are practicing so  
39 dangerously.

40  
41 What we have developed for some of the deepwater surveys are  
42 vehicles that you tow with cameras and lasers and a transducer,  
43 and the transducer will give you the position of the device that  
44 we tow, and the high-resolution cameras that collect the data,  
45 obviously, is attached to this vehicle.

46  
47 There are several problems associated with a huge number of  
48 empty shells that are left on the bottom, and this, by itself,

1 is a very interesting question. In some of the calibrations  
2 that have been carried out with divers and the video recordings,  
3 there is pretty strong statistical evidence that the estimates  
4 of the live conch and dead conch can be discriminated with from  
5 the cameras, and so this will improve not only the quality of  
6 the survey, in the sense that you can repeat the counting of the  
7 animals several times and obtain a variance for it, but also  
8 have a pretty good record of the type of bottom and what is left  
9 on the bottom, given the thousands and thousands of empty shells  
10 that we see in San Juan Bay. I hope that I answered your  
11 question.

12  
13 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Thank you. The issue that we're  
14 having, and someone is presenting, on the safety of divers,  
15 because, here, we also have that some problem of deepwater  
16 diving, especially with the EEZ closed west of Puerto Rico, and  
17 so there are a number of issues that we have also to deal with  
18 in the region, and so thank you very much.

19  
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. Anybody else that wants to  
21 make a comment? Hearing none, I just want to say thank you  
22 again to Nelson Ehrhardt. That was a great presentation, like  
23 always, and I want to express the gratitude of him to being  
24 available for this, and I can testify how much the whole region  
25 of the Caribbean, all the islands and the countries that  
26 participate in this effort and in this fishery, respect Dr.  
27 Ehrhardt. Thank you very much for being available to support  
28 this effort.

29  
30 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Thank you, Marcos.

31  
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** The next item on the agenda is we have a break,  
33 which we are very early in the process here, and I have a  
34 question to the next presenter, the Scientific and Statistical  
35 Committee, and, Richard, do you want to make a break now and  
36 start, or are you prepared to start now?

37  
38 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I'm prepared to start now, if you want.

39  
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Let's do it. Go ahead.

41  
42 **SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE (SSC) REPORT**

43  
44 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Thank you, everybody. This is the report  
45 of the SSC, and what we've been active on, and you've seen this  
46 slide before, is our ecosystem conceptual model, and so we're  
47 plodding through that, and we've made really good progress.

1 Recall that the model has eight sub-models, and these sub-models  
2 have a varying number of components, anywhere from five in the  
3 habitat component to sixteen in the socioeconomic and cultural  
4 drivers component.

5  
6 This produces over 64,000 potential connections between the  
7 various components, and this is why it's taking a while to go  
8 through this, and what we have focused on to date is looking at  
9 the connections within each of the sub-models.

10  
11 The issues we addressed at the last meeting was to, first of  
12 all, finish making the component connections within the sub-  
13 models, and so that's particularly looking at the competing uses  
14 of resources sub-model, which is the second-largest sub-model,  
15 and so that took us quite a bit of time, and then we had to  
16 revisit all the sub-models, to look at some remaining issues.

17  
18 Some of these were making sure that we had appropriate  
19 definitions for the components, did we want to add, delete, or  
20 move any of those components around, and we had put in some  
21 zeroes, or placeholders, in some of the boxes in the matrix that  
22 we had to go back and decide what we wanted to do with that.  
23 One of the issues leading to that was the question of either  
24 non-linear or variable responses between components, and I will  
25 give some examples of that later on.

26  
27 Then there is -- Obviously, we need to do the connections  
28 between the sub-models, and we had a homework assignment that we  
29 set up in the last meeting to try to move that forward, and I  
30 will give a brief background on that as well.

31  
32 This is just one example, and this is the marine ecosystem  
33 components model, and this was done back in May, and so it's one  
34 of the ones that was pretty much in shape when we met last time.  
35 In this diagram, the blue arrows represent positive  
36 correlations, and that is to say, if you increase one thing, you  
37 will cause an increase in another thing, and the red, or  
38 brownish, arrows are negative interactions, and so, if you  
39 increase one thing, you will cause a negative response in the  
40 other component.

41  
42 One of the things that I mentioned was having proper definitions  
43 for components, and so probably the poster-child, or most easily  
44 understandable one, was highly migratory species, and this is in  
45 there because highly migratory species is one of the things that  
46 NMFS and the councils have to deal with.

47  
48 However, that category, as defined by National Marine Fisheries

1 Service, is -- At the moment, it consists of truly highly-  
2 migratory species, like the tunas, and things that don't move  
3 around very much, like nurse sharks and rays, and so we had to  
4 decide whether we're going with that larger definition or we  
5 needed something more ecologically intact, and we decided we  
6 wanted something more ecologically intact, and so, here, those  
7 species that don't move around much, like nurse sharks, would  
8 not be included in the highly migratory species component  
9 definition, and it's just the species that are really moving,  
10 like the tunas, and so this fine-tuning of definitions is one of  
11 the things that we had to do.

12  
13 For each one of these diagrams, there is a matrix where this  
14 information is filled in, and this is just the example for the  
15 one from ecosystem components, where you can see where we think  
16 there are connections, whether they're positive or negative, and  
17 the red color just indicates edits that we had made from a  
18 previous version.

19  
20 A more complicated one, and the most complicated one, actually,  
21 is the socioeconomic and cultural drivers sub-model, and this is  
22 a picture of that from an earlier meeting, and there were some  
23 questions here about the nature of interactions, and so I will  
24 talk about one, in particular, and that's going to be imports  
25 and exports.

26  
27 Imports and exports. For example, will affect market demand,  
28 but how they affect market demand depends on whether you are  
29 importing or exporting. Imports will lower market demand for  
30 fishery products, whereas exports creates a new market for those  
31 products, and so you could either have a positive or a negative  
32 relationship, and we had discussions of whether we wanted to  
33 split out imports and exports into separate components in this  
34 sub-model, and then we realized, when we did that, there is also  
35 some non-linearities in there, and we were advised by some of  
36 the people who really do modeling that much more important than  
37 the direction of the interaction is the strength of the  
38 interaction.

39  
40 One of the things we did was, when we had these non-linear  
41 relationships, where responses could actually be positive or  
42 negative, depending on the situation, we just entered an  
43 absolute value, rather than a positive or negative, to make sure  
44 we captured the magnitude of those interactions. This is just  
45 the matrix that results from that sub-model connections that you  
46 just saw. Again, it's fairly complicated, and it took us a  
47 while to go through all the rows of this.



1 We went through all the sub-models and cleaned those up, and we  
2 think we're in pretty good shape, subject to the constraint of  
3 we haven't connected them together, and we may find that, when  
4 we start connecting things, we will identify more problems.

5  
6 This was the full conceptual model as it looked in 2019, and you  
7 can see, at this time, we had already talked about making  
8 connections, and you can see arrows that go from small boxes, or  
9 components, of one sub-model to the components of another. Some  
10 other ones just go to the heading of a particular sub-model, and  
11 like, in fishing, you can see several arrows coming in and out  
12 of the fishing heading, but it still remains to be seen how  
13 those would be linked into the specific components, and so we  
14 were already thinking ahead at that time, but this was not a  
15 comprehensive view of that, and so we need to really kind of  
16 look at how we're going to do that next.

17  
18 This is the full conceptual model matrix, and, across the  
19 diagonal, you will see the matrices for each sub-model, and that  
20 is to say the connections within each sub-model, and so, where  
21 you see this kind of peachy color, that's where there is an  
22 interaction being identified, and I know you can't read the  
23 numbers in there, but that's not the point.

24  
25 The green areas indicate connections that were made in that  
26 previous diagram, and you can see, as I said, that there is  
27 potentially over 64,000 connections here, and we have looked at  
28 just a few of them, and this is where we're going to be going  
29 next, and we have come up with a way we think that we can both  
30 focus and speed up this process and get our thinking really in  
31 line, so that, when we meet again, we can rapidly go through  
32 this in something other than a box-by-box-64,000-connection  
33 mode.

34  
35 We came up with a homework assignment, and that is to identify  
36 the priority connections between components within each pair of  
37 sub-models, and remember there are eight sub-models, and so it's  
38 a fair number of pairs, and we're asking each member to identify  
39 the three-most important connections, their direction, and their  
40 strength, and these connections, and I will give some examples,  
41 but they could be -- You could use one component that connects  
42 three times to another model, or three different components to  
43 connect to three different components of another model, or to  
44 one component in another model, and there's a lot of flexibility  
45 about what you think the three most important ones are.

46  
47 This is a way to start and to focus the SSC as it starts to  
48 evaluate all these potential component-to-component connections.

1 The individual results will be compiled and reviewed at the next  
2 SSC meeting, and then those results, and that is to say after  
3 that meeting where we discuss these things, will be presented to  
4 the council and its EBFM TAP as an interim result, so that  
5 people can start looking at this while we're still struggling  
6 through the rest of it, but we wanted to have an interim product  
7 that people can start using.

8  
9 In addition to the TAP, we think the results should also be made  
10 available to other interested user groups, such as the Lenfest  
11 project and the Science Center's ecosystem status report working  
12 group.

13  
14 What does this look like? This is the form we're actually  
15 asking each SSC member to fill out. Again, along the diagonal  
16 are the inter sub-model connections, and so we're not dealing  
17 with those, and each one of these boxes, if you will, going  
18 across has three rows, and those are the three connections that  
19 we're asking each member of the committee to identify, and so we  
20 want to have what's the driver component from one sub-model,  
21 what's the response component in another sub-model, is that  
22 direction positive or negative or absolute value, and what is  
23 the strength of that, high, medium, or low. We're going to get  
24 this filled out by each committee member, and then those results  
25 will be summarized and brought back to the committee, and then  
26 we will discuss those further.

27  
28 The reason for that is because committee members have  
29 differential expertise, and certainly we expect our economists  
30 and sociologists to have a greater perspective on how things  
31 might move through say the socioeconomics box rather than some  
32 of the biologists, and, in the same way, the biologists have  
33 perhaps a better way of thinking of how things connect in the  
34 ecosystem components or the habitat than the economists would.  
35 We'll talk about these and be able to get everybody's  
36 perspective on that, but we'll clearly be focused on that when  
37 we do that.

38  
39 To give an example, and this is really an arbitrary example, and  
40 please don't put any weight into it but you might say the three  
41 most important component connections, from the socioeconomic and  
42 cultural drivers sub-model affecting the fishing sub-model,  
43 could be seafood imports and exports affecting commercial  
44 fishing catch, market demand affecting commercial fishing catch,  
45 and tourism affecting recreational fishing catch.

46  
47 In this case, two of the driver components affect the same  
48 target component, and the picture of this is -- What we're

1 saying is that here are all the components within each sub-  
2 model, and we're saying, okay, seafood imports and exports is  
3 going to be targeting commercial fishing catch, and market  
4 demand will target commercial catch, and tourism will affect  
5 recreational fishing catch.

6  
7 To put that graphically, the red ovals indicate the driving  
8 components in the socioeconomic and cultural drivers model, and  
9 the blue ovals indicate the targets in the fishing sub-model,  
10 and this is -- What we're asking the SSC to do is conceptually  
11 visualize these connections, and I would point out right now,  
12 since this is an arbitrary selection, that something like  
13 seafood imports and exports, which here we have it saying it's  
14 going to affect commercial fishing, actually probably would not  
15 connect directly to commercial fishing. Seafood imports and  
16 exports probably would go through market demand, and then market  
17 demand would affect commercial fishing, and so it's a fairly  
18 complex way we have to view about how these connections run.

19  
20 In that matrix that I showed that we have to fill out, we would  
21 have connections for things that would look like this. The  
22 seafood imports and exports affecting commercial fishing, that  
23 gets a zero, because it could go positive or negative, as I  
24 explained before, and so zero indicates an absolute value entry,  
25 and then the strength, and, in this case, we said it's medium,  
26 whereas market demand has a positive effect on commercial  
27 fishing, and that strength is very high, and tourism has a high  
28 impact, positive impact, on recreational fishing, and so that's  
29 the kind of thing that we're asking the SSC members to do.  
30 That's the presentation, and, if there's questions, I will try  
31 to answer them.

32  
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Richard. We're open for questions. I  
34 would like to make a question. Can you go back to the previous  
35 slide, please, just to clarify? Thank you. Once you talk about  
36 the absolute direction, the one you put the zero there, it means  
37 that it could go either way with a strength of medium, or there  
38 is a differentiation, or a possible differentiation, of one way  
39 being high and one way being medium?

40  
41 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Some of these components are very complex  
42 in what's embedded in their title, and certainly seafood imports  
43 and exports, things like market demand, are complex, and it's  
44 difficult, without doing a whole huge model, to tease these  
45 things out, and so we decided that it would be easier, at this  
46 point, to kind of just deal with the complexity as we have it  
47 and not make things so complex that they are not really useful.

1 That means we're going to retain a lot of these kind of  
2 questions that you're bringing up, and so what we're saying,  
3 first of all, is that absolute value could go either way,  
4 depending on the particular situation that you're talking about,  
5 but the strength is going to be, okay, generally -- Yes, you  
6 will have things that are probably lower connections to things  
7 that are higher connections, but we would say, and, again, this  
8 is just a made-up example, that -- In this example, we're  
9 saying, okay, it's a medium strength of connection, on average.

10  
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay.

12  
13 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Does that answer your question?

14  
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, it answered it, but I just want to make sure  
16 that every council member understands what it means, because  
17 it's important. Thank you very much, Richard.

18  
19 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** These things are really highly complex, and  
20 I think anybody who is in the business understands that, and so  
21 trying to simplify it at this stage, with something that's  
22 already a very complex conceptual model, is perhaps going too  
23 far at this stage.

24  
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** I agree, and I think it's a great way to solve  
26 the problem and to be practical on the design, and so thank you  
27 very much. Any other questions?

28  
29 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, you have Tony asking for a turn to speak.

30  
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Tony.

32  
33 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Good morning, Rich. How are you doing?

34  
35 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Good morning, Tony. I'm doing good.

36  
37 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Can you bring it back to the full 2019 -- Okay.  
38 Now, sitting here watching this, it looks like a ball of  
39 confusion, for lack of a different description, and I think  
40 sometimes we overthink certain things, and we make it more  
41 complicated than it needs to be, and I will give you a prime  
42 example.

43  
44 I think like we all agree that whatever happens from the  
45 shoreline and the shore ends up in the water, and I think, at  
46 the local government, which I know we can't force them to do  
47 anything, but the way I see it is the local government -- I want  
48 to give you a prime example.

1  
2 In the waste management agency, if the waste management agency  
3 was to uphold to all of their guidelines, then a lot of this  
4 problem, or some of this problem, would be eliminated, and I am  
5 not picking on them, per se, because all the agencies, I  
6 believe, if they stand up to their commitment and their  
7 guidelines that they're supposed to stay with and enforce, a lot  
8 of this complication, or a lot of this problem, what we see as a  
9 problem, would be eliminated.

10  
11 I think, in order for this to even consider working, it needs to  
12 start from the shore to the ocean, because, no matter how much  
13 regulation you put on the user groups, it will not fix the  
14 problem if the problem is not addressed properly, and I think  
15 the only way you could address that properly is by having the  
16 local government, the territorial governments, do their part and  
17 enforce their own regulations that they have set. So that's  
18 just my take on it, but I think sometimes we overthink, and we  
19 take on other people's responsibility, when it's really their  
20 responsibility to take care of that problem.

21  
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Tony. Richard.

23  
24 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Tony, it just may be the first time that I  
25 totally, fully agree with everything you said and second it to  
26 whatever degree I can.

27  
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Richard. We have the comment on the  
29 chat that Vanessa Ramirez agrees with Tony too, and I want to  
30 take the opportunity to agree with Tony too, and is there  
31 anybody else that wants to make a comment? Hearing none, thank  
32 you very much, Richard, for your presentation.

33  
34 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, I asked Graciela to move a couple of  
35 things, because Dr. Sennai has to go back to teach, and so,  
36 Graciela, can you tell us about the SSC membership and all that,  
37 and also with the TAP?

38  
39 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** We have a vacancy, a recent vacancy,  
40 on the SSC, and Joe Kimmel tended his resignation a week ago or  
41 so, and so we are in search of an SSC member, and we were  
42 thinking of people with background in stock assessment, and so  
43 we are telling the council members and the people who are in the  
44 council meeting to be aware that there is a search for an SSC  
45 member to fulfill that vacancy.

46  
47 We also have the vacancy of Bill Arnold in the TAP, and so, for  
48 that one, we have someone from the Virgin Islands who is willing

1 and able to participate in the TAP, and I don't know if you want  
2 me to go on into specifically the person that we have and tell  
3 you about it, or do you want to wait for Sennai to talk about  
4 him?

5  
6 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Either of the two, but just do it, and then the  
7 council can vote yea or nay for appointing that person to the  
8 TAP.

9  
10 **SENNAI HABTES:** Graciela, I'm on, if you want me to talk about  
11 the vacancy and the member.

12  
13 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Thank you, Sennai. Yes, please.

14  
15 **ECOSYSTEM TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL MEMBER DISCUSSION**

16  
17 **SENNAI HABTES:** I think a person can talk about the reality here  
18 in the Virgin Islands, and it's a little difficult, given the  
19 universities status and rebuilding since the hurricanes, as well  
20 as a lot of the members in the fishing community and the  
21 Department of Planning and Natural Resources, and the inability  
22 to participate, due to the many things already on their plate.

23  
24 I was able to get conformation from Dr. Edwin Cruz-Rivera at  
25 UVI, and he is able and willing to participate as a member on  
26 the TAP, to fill Bill Arnold's seat. A little bit about Dr.  
27 Rivera is he is a marine ecologist, and his research focused on  
28 plant herbivore and predator-prey interactions, and with an  
29 emphasis on the feeding behavior, chemical ecology, and  
30 nutrition of marine invertebrates. His major focus is marine  
31 ecological and evolutionary processes at various levels of  
32 organization, and he has studied organisms ranging from  
33 microalgae to fishes.

34  
35 He has used a variety of techniques in the field and the lab to  
36 include natural history observations and field surveys,  
37 manipulative experiments on feeding behavior and fitness,  
38 quantification of prey and nutritional and chemical and  
39 structural properties, molecular barcoding and biogenetic  
40 techniques, ethograms and taxonomy and morphology.

41  
42 He has worked in a variety of diverse ecosystems, ranging from  
43 the Caribbean and North Atlantic to Chesapeake Bay and the  
44 Mediterranean Sea, the tropical Pacific, south Australia, the  
45 Red Sea, brackish lakes in Egypt and in the South African  
46 intertidal area.

47  
48 His background is he received his bachelor's from the University

1 of Puerto Rico Mayaguez in 1990 and a PhD in marine science from  
2 the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill under his  
3 advisory, Mark Hay.

4  
5 I think Edwin will bring a variety of expertise and information  
6 to the TAP, and he is presently at the University of the Virgin  
7 Islands, on the St. Thomas campus, and he has a big interest,  
8 and I would say his major interest, in joining the TAP is his  
9 interest in connecting with the fisheries community to help in  
10 outreach towards some of the new research that he is conducting  
11 on the ecosystem effects and impacts on fisheries resources  
12 associated with an influx of sargassum in recent years.

13  
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Sennai. For the council members,  
15 would anybody like to make a motion to nominate the person  
16 described, Edwin.

17  
18 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Edwin Cruz-Rivera.

19  
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** As a TAP member.

21  
22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I move to accept the nominee as a TAP member.

23  
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second?

25  
26 **NICOLE ANGELI:** I second the motion.

27  
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. All in favor; any  
29 opposition; any abstentions.

30  
31 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I would like to abstain from the vote, because  
32 I need a little more information, and so I will abstain from the  
33 vote.

34  
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Tony. I have your abstention  
36 recorded, and, Natalia, you are the one making the notes, and --

37  
38 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, don't worry about it. We will take a  
39 note here, and so you have one abstention, and then you had no  
40 opposition from the rest.

41  
42 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Welcome, Dr. Edwin Rivera, as a new  
43 TAP member. We will keep going. Graciela, did you have  
44 something else to address?

45  
46 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** No, and just the SSC membership, and  
47 so that one is open, and it depends on what the council -- What  
48 direction the council is following, and so, if you're going in

1 the direction of doing more work with ecosystem-based  
2 approaches, it's one thing.

3  
4 If we're thinking more in terms of the ABC control rule and  
5 tiers and stock assessment, then that would be the person, and  
6 so it really will depend. We are open to receive names of  
7 people to be part of the SSC, and I don't know if Richard has  
8 any other comments regarding membership on the SSC as it stands  
9 right now.

10  
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Richard.

12  
13 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Well, I had mentioned to Graciela that,  
14 given the area of expertise that Joe Kimmel represented, which  
15 was a mix of biology and management expertise, from all his  
16 years in Puerto Rico and at National Marine Fisheries, that  
17 someone with some similar cross between the biology and  
18 management applications might be good, and I suggested that  
19 somebody like Michelle Scharer would be a good person for that,  
20 but, as she pointed out, that depends on where the council would  
21 like to see expertise added to the SSC.

22  
23 One of the things that I had this debate with Joe about with his  
24 retiring is he was feeling a little lost in the current  
25 discussions on ecosystem components, and I made the point that  
26 this really varies, and the SSC, at this point, is working on  
27 this, but, before that, it was working on tier rules, and,  
28 before that, it was working on what the application of those  
29 tier rules would be, and so whatever we're doing varies  
30 dramatically.

31  
32 Before, we had a lot of demand for biological expertise. Right  
33 now, we're really glad that we have sociologists and economists  
34 on, because they're really driving a lot of the discussion for  
35 the ecosystem component work that we've been doing lately, and  
36 so the expertise of an individual will vary depending on what's  
37 in front of the SSC at any given time, but it really tends to be  
38 fairly varied and fairly dynamic.

39  
40 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, I believe that, if the council wants, we  
41 can go ahead and substitute Dr. Joe Kimmel with somebody with  
42 similar qualifications, as Richard mentioned, and the issue  
43 about stock assessment is because you, several months ago,  
44 mentioned, as a council, that we were lacking the true stock  
45 assessment people. However, that's not really a big issue  
46 nowadays, and we can always get the stock assessment that we  
47 need and ask questions to Adyan and others in the Southeast  
48 Fisheries Science Center about this.



1  
2 At this time, you will have a couple of other meetings of the  
3 SSC between here and the middle of 2021 that you should have  
4 that position filled, and my proposal is -- I talked to  
5 Graciela, and I trust Richard's judgement on this, but Dr.  
6 Michelle Scharer is willing and able to participate, and she is  
7 well known by many of you, and, actually, Mr. Chairman, you have  
8 worked with her in different capacities, collaborating with the  
9 project that she has been working on for several years with  
10 Nassau grouper and other species, and I propose that the council  
11 consider her for filling that vacancy today.

12  
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** I want to make a comment on that. I have good  
14 communication with Michelle, and, besides her extensive  
15 knowledge of multiple things that address the council concerns,  
16 she is very open to take the time to explain and to have made  
17 that connection with the fishermen and with the people, once she  
18 is approached, and I think she will be an excellent member of  
19 the SSC, and that's my position. I would like to hear the rest  
20 of the council members and if they have anybody else or what  
21 they think, but I am strongly suggesting to include or to  
22 consider Michelle Scharer as an SSC member.

23  
24 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, you have Richard Appeldoorn and Tony that  
25 want to speak.

26  
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Richard.

28  
29 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I just wanted to comment about what Miguel  
30 had mentioned about having stock assessment expertise on the  
31 SSC, and recall that you added Jason Cope to the committee, and  
32 he is really good in that area, and he's one of the top people,  
33 and, also, Doug, when he was brought on, also has experience  
34 with the other council, the Gulf Council, and he also has a lot  
35 of experience in that area, and so, to some degree, we have got  
36 that capacity within the SSC, and, as Miguel also mentioned, we  
37 have had no problem in communicating with people like Shannon  
38 and Adyan to help fill in places where we have questions, and so  
39 I guess, if the council feels that's sufficient expertise, then  
40 that's where I was going with my recommendation.

41  
42 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Richard. Tony.

43  
44 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I say we move to put Michelle Scharer on the  
45 SSC.

46  
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Second.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** We have a motion from Tony Blanchard to nominate  
2 Michelle Scharer as an SSC member, and it's seconded by Carlos  
3 Farchette. **Any opposition? Any abstain? Hearing none,**  
4 **Graciela and Miguel, we will have to do the due process to**  
5 **inform Dr. Scharer of this new determination.**  
6

7 **MIGUEL ROLON:** We will send a letter to both, but Graciela wants  
8 to say something before.  
9

10 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Mr. Chair, I believe Michelle is  
11 online, but the other thing that Michelle has that will  
12 contribute greatly to the SSC is that she has a really close  
13 relationship with the U.S. Virgin Islands and the work that is  
14 being done in the MCD and Grammanik Bank, et cetera, and so it  
15 will bring that additional missing information that we have  
16 directly to the SSC, and so thank you.  
17

18 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thank you, Graciela. It's already been approved,  
19 and so we can move on. We will send letters to Edwin Rivera and  
20 Michelle Scharer both, informing them of their appointments to  
21 the TAP and the SSC, respectively.  
22

23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Thank you, Miguel. I would ask Michelle  
24 if she wants to make any comment.  
25

26 **MICHELLE SCHARER:** Good morning. Thank you very much. For me,  
27 it's an honor to be nominated. I will have to think it over,  
28 and, right now, I'm driving, and so I can't really express all  
29 the thoughts that are going through my head, but I will  
30 definitely consider it. Thank you.  
31

32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Michelle. We will move on  
33 then, and I think it's time for a break, Miguel, or is there  
34 anything quick that you guys want to address?  
35

36 **MIGUEL ROLON:** It's 10:35, and you are way ahead of the agenda,  
37 and so you can have a ten-minute break now and then come back  
38 and decide what you're going to do with the rest of the agenda.  
39 You can move up some of the items that you have, and you have  
40 the authority to do that, as we published in the Federal  
41 Register, and so you can have the ten-minute break now and then  
42 continue with the agenda.  
43

44 **MARCOS HANKE:** Let's do the ten-minute break, and we will be  
45 back at 10:45.  
46

47 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Thank you.  
48

1 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

2  
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** We are back. The next item on the agenda is --  
4 Go ahead, Miguel.

5  
6 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Before we continue, we have a note from Ricardo  
7 Lopez that Damaris Delgado was called for an urgent meeting with  
8 the Secretary, and so she will join us whenever that is  
9 finished. In the meantime, Ricardo and Danielle are here to  
10 take notes for her.

11  
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. Graciela, you mentioned  
13 that we maybe could move some presentations, or will we keep  
14 with the same items on the agenda the way it is?

15  
16 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** You will have a brief report from  
17 Sennai Habtes on the EBFM TAP first and then then Southeast  
18 Fisheries Science Center update.

19  
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** Let's proceed then with the Ecosystem-Based  
21 Fishery Management Technical Advisory Panel Report and Sennai  
22 Habtes.

23  
24 **ECOSYSTEM-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL**  
25 **REPORT**  
26

27 **SENNAI HABTES:** Good morning, everyone. First, I would like to  
28 say thank you for approving Edwin Cruz-Rivera to sit on the TAP.  
29 As I said, I think his experience and background will help, and  
30 I'm glad that we got the vacancy filled. Second up, I want to  
31 say that this will be just a brief report, and I expect that  
32 we'll have more for you in the meeting later this year.

33  
34 At present, in terms of our ecosystem-based modeling advisory  
35 work, we are waiting for the ECM, for the ecosystem model, from  
36 the SSC, and we will work with them to use it to inform and  
37 include it with all of the other work that we're trying to  
38 coordinate related to ecosystem-based fisheries modeling within  
39 the U.S. Caribbean.

40  
41 As we get the outcomes from their testing and building of the  
42 model, we will provide the council with an understanding of the  
43 ECM and how it can be incorporated into the work with the TAP  
44 and the development of the fishery ecosystem plans for the  
45 different regions within the U.S. Caribbean.

46  
47 I would like to say that we listened to a lot of the members on  
48 the DAP and their request for more understanding and

1 involvement, and, so, coming up, and the dates have been posted  
2 for those DAP meetings, going on for the St. Thomas/St. John,  
3 St. Croix, and Puerto Rico regions later this month, and  
4 Graciela will be giving a short presentation in those on a lot  
5 of the ecosystem issues, and I will make myself present at all  
6 the DAP meetings and available to answer any questions and to  
7 coordinate ways in which more information from the TAP on our  
8 ecosystem-based fisheries model can be provided to the DAPs and  
9 so that we can get information from them, from their  
10 communities, to inform our advisory panel work towards the  
11 council.

12  
13 A large part of the work that we're doing is to coordinate a lot  
14 of the ongoing ecosystem-based fishery modeling work in the  
15 territory, and that includes the work from the Lenfest grant  
16 that is being done, and the SSC and the ecosystem modeling work  
17 that's being done, as well as some of the work across the  
18 different universities, such as the SEAMAP program and the  
19 ecosystems-based modeling work that will be done with UVI as  
20 part of its newly-funded five-year grant.

21  
22 Then, last, but not least, I would like to remind the council  
23 and other members that we presented a set of goals and  
24 objectives that are to guide the EBFM Technical Advisory Panel,  
25 and we would like some input back from you guys, if possible,  
26 and I think there are a lot of things that have questions as to  
27 how we can proceed, in terms of informing the council, and so we  
28 want to make sure that we are able to record your questions and  
29 concerns and directions regarding these objectives and goals  
30 that we have presented.

31  
32 Then, finally, the staff has been working on a charter, which  
33 will incorporate these goals and objectives that inform how the  
34 TAP will operate, and we are -- The CFMC administration is  
35 working on that, in conjunction with the members of the TAP, and  
36 we hope, once we've received input from the DAP and the council  
37 on those goals and objectives, that we can complete that and  
38 present it to you at the later meeting.

39  
40 Finally, as always, we are just continuing the ongoing  
41 literature review, which is compiling a lot of the spread-out  
42 data across the region that can be used for ecosystems-based  
43 fisheries management, and one of the things that we hope will  
44 come out of the fisheries ecosystems plans and the EBFM plans  
45 will be incorporating all of that knowledge and data into a  
46 repository with descriptions in the plans, and so that's pretty  
47 much all I have, and I would be happy to answer any questions,  
48 and I'm sure we'll have more for you in the later-year meeting.

1  
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Sennai. A question to Graciela. Do  
3 you have the goals and objectives slide, in case the council  
4 members want to talk about that right now?

5  
6 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Yes, and you saw it at the last  
7 council meeting, and we sent them around. Do you want me to --  
8 We can bring them up on the screen, and I don't know if Natalia  
9 has them from the last time.

10  
11 **MIGUEL ROLON:** But we already discussed that.

12  
13 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Yes, and the main thing is if you see  
14 anything in those that we presented last time, and we sent them  
15 to you, to please contact us and let us have your feedback,  
16 because this is an ongoing process.

17  
18 Right now, we are comparing the goals and objectives from the  
19 different efforts that Sennai just mentioned, to see where the  
20 interactions -- Where these efforts connect, so that we don't  
21 duplicate effort, and to see where each of those efforts is  
22 heading and how they can feed into the fishery ecosystem plan  
23 and the council process, and so we are working on that, and  
24 we're just requesting, as we did with the island-based FMP goals  
25 and objectives, that the council members look at them and take  
26 them into consideration and comment on them in the ongoing  
27 process.

28  
29 For the next council meeting, we should have an update for you,  
30 and so, if we have received any comments on those, we will be  
31 presenting those to you.

32  
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay.

34  
35 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Graciela, please resend, to every council member,  
36 that document, so they will be able to review it again and send  
37 us their comments.

38  
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel, for that.

40  
41 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Perfect. Will do.

42  
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any questions for Sennai? Hearing none, the next  
44 item on the agenda is the Southeast Fisheries Science Center  
45 Update.

46  
47 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Okay. We are having a little bit of a  
48 technical issue. Give me a second, and I'm going to make Kevin

1 McCarthy the presenter.

2  
3 **SOUTHEAST FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER UPDATE**  
4

5 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Okay. Thank you to the council for giving the  
6 Science Center this opportunity to bring you up to speed on some  
7 of the work that we've been doing in the region. I have a  
8 couple of disclaimers.  
9

10 First of all, I see you're well ahead of schedule, but that's  
11 okay. I will get you back on schedule, because we can make this  
12 as long as need be, and, also, although I am the presenter, I  
13 am, in no way, shape, or form, the person who is heading up all  
14 of these projects. I am involved in a number of them, but these  
15 other names that you see here are folks that have provided me  
16 with information about their projects, including slides, and,  
17 anybody from the Science Center who is listening in, if you see  
18 a slide or a picture or some text that looks familiar to you,  
19 that's because I have taken it and added it to this  
20 presentation.  
21

22 The other thing that I would say is I'm going to be very quickly  
23 going over an awful lot of information. I am happy to take  
24 questions at the end, and I will put in the disclaimer that I am  
25 no expert on all of these projects, because, as I say, I'm not  
26 involved in every one of them, and so, if I misrepresent  
27 something, or misstate something, that's on me. That is my  
28 fault and not the fault of the people who are doing the work.  
29

30 With that being said, let's go ahead and get started, and so  
31 this just gives you a little taste of the resources that the  
32 Science Center is putting into the Caribbean these days, here is  
33 a list of names of the folks who are at the Science Center who  
34 are involved in Caribbean research.  
35

36 This list I don't claim is to be comprehensive, and I think it's  
37 pretty close to including everyone, but I may have missed some  
38 folks, and, if I have, I apologize. This also represents people  
39 from throughout the Science Center, and so the Science Center is  
40 not just the Miami Lab. There is a lab in Galveston, and  
41 there's a lab in Louisiana, and there's a lab in Mississippi,  
42 and there's a lab in the Panhandle of Florida, and there's a lab  
43 in North Carolina, and folks on this are at all of those places,  
44 and so there are a lot of labs and a lot of personnel, both  
45 federal employees as well as contractors, who are involved in  
46 U.S. Caribbean work.  
47

48 What types of data are we collecting, and why are we collecting

1 them? As many of you are aware, data have been collected in the  
2 U.S. Caribbean for a long time. We've got a long time series of  
3 landings, and a long time series of size composition data, and  
4 there have been other projects going on throughout the last many  
5 decades, but there have been a number of really recent events  
6 that have refocused and sort of directed our efforts in the  
7 Caribbean in recent years.

8  
9 One of them was SEDAR 46, and this was a data-limited stock  
10 assessment where we looked at six species, two species from each  
11 of the island groups, and so two in Puerto Rico, two in St.  
12 Thomas/St. John, and two others in St. Croix.

13  
14 We learned a number of things in going through this process, one  
15 of which is it became very clear that we have, for some species,  
16 and not all species, but for some species, we are lacking life  
17 history data, and so this is particularly true, and I hope you  
18 can see my cursor here, but this is particularly true of the  
19 parrotfish and triggerfish, and we're also, in some cases, and  
20 not for every species, but for some, we're missing landings  
21 data, and we don't have very much.

22  
23 For things like hogfish, we don't have a long time series of  
24 landings information, because hogfish, for some of the islands,  
25 were never on the reporting forms. In addition, for all of the  
26 species in the Virgin Islands, and for spiny lobster in both the  
27 Virgin Islands and in Puerto Rico, we don't have -- We don't  
28 have recreational landings. We have got some recreational  
29 landings in Puerto Rico for a number of years, but we're no  
30 longer collecting those data. Following the hurricanes, that  
31 program essentially ceased, and they never collected landings  
32 information for spiny lobster or for conch.

33  
34 We also, for a number of species, are lacking some size  
35 composition data, and we've got a lot of size composition data  
36 for some species, and not much for others, and so that became  
37 very clear in the SEDAR 46 effort.

38  
39 SEDAR 57 also was a big success, as you all have seen and  
40 reviewed, and, for the spiny lobster assessment, one of the  
41 things we realized is that we need to know more about gear  
42 selectivity, and I'll talk about that a little bit more later  
43 on.

44  
45 We also were lacking a catch per unit effort time series, and so  
46 that would have been a very nice additional piece of information  
47 to include in spiny lobster, and so that's another area that we  
48 need more information.

1  
2 Another initiative, begun by you, the council, that has  
3 refocused our attention and where we want to put some resources  
4 has been ecosystem-based fishery management, and so that has got  
5 us thinking about ways to collect the kind of data that would  
6 inform that initiative.

7  
8 We have also had, as you well know, natural disasters and  
9 pandemics, hurricanes and COVID-19, and that has resulted in,  
10 particularly for the social science group, a lot of work in the  
11 U.S. Caribbean.

12  
13 I am going to start with the stuff that I know best, which is  
14 data collection in support of stock assessments, and so we've  
15 got a number of kinds of data, kinds of information rather, that  
16 we're concerned with in a stock assessment, and there is status  
17 determination criteria, all the MSY and the OY and that sort of  
18 thing, are they overfished, is there overfishing going on,  
19 providing catch advice. If it is overfished, we're concerned  
20 about a recovery plan. That is all under the law right now,  
21 under Magnuson-Stevens. We need that kind of information.

22  
23 As you all know, in the Caribbean, we're now island-based  
24 management, and nearly all of the ACLs that we have on the books  
25 right now are from recent landings history alone, except for  
26 spiny lobster, which we now have a stock assessment, which can  
27 provide updated information on what ACLs should be, and so we're  
28 really in the business now of trying to move -- To collect  
29 enough information to move species out of those landings history  
30 alone, that Tier 4 in the tiered control rule, move it out of  
31 just the landings history as the only information we have and at  
32 least into a data-limited stock assessment.

33  
34 In the case of some of the stocks, we may be able to move them  
35 into maybe a data-moderate kind of assessment, but that is where  
36 our efforts are, in terms of getting data for stock assessments.  
37 Let's get out of this landings history tier and into a stock  
38 assessment tier.

39  
40 We need landings, and we need size composition, and this is just  
41 a slide to illustrate that, and this happens to be spiny  
42 lobster. Spiny lobster is one of those where we've got a long  
43 landings history, and we've got a lot of size composition  
44 information, and we don't have recreational landings. We don't  
45 have recreational size composition, and so that's a hole in the  
46 data, but we have a lot of commercial information.

47  
48 We at the Science Center hired a consultant in Puerto Rico to



1 collect the information that would be required to design a  
2 survey, a survey of commercial landings and size composition,  
3 and so we completed seventeen months of sampling, and this work  
4 actually began before the hurricane, I think about a month, or  
5 maybe three weeks, before the hurricane, and then, of course, as  
6 we all know, life was not the same after that, and so we had a  
7 long pause and then began again the following August and got  
8 seventeen continuous months of sampling.

9  
10 We now have additional funding to really dig into those data and  
11 do some more statistical analyses, and we also have some money  
12 for additional sampling, so that we can fine-tune that survey.  
13 Where were we lacking information, and let's get some sampling  
14 in there to help us better design the survey.

15  
16 What this will allow us to do, when we have these numbers, when  
17 we have estimates of landings, is to make direct comparisons to  
18 the work that DRNA is already doing with their landings  
19 corrections and the sampling that they've already got going on,  
20 and I have to point out that DRNA was great, and there was lots  
21 of support, and it was very much a collaboration with them in  
22 getting this work done.

23  
24 We're beginning a similar program in the Virgin Islands, and I  
25 think we would already be underway, except for COVID-19. The  
26 money is in place, and this is to design a port sampling survey.  
27 Again, we want to get landings and size composition data within  
28 a statistically-designed survey, and we want to include  
29 commercial vessels and recreational vessels, including the for-  
30 hire sector, because that's an area that hasn't been sampled on  
31 a consistent basis in the Virgin Islands.

32  
33 The initial work, once we're able to get people in the field,  
34 and this is all through DPNR, and their staff is running this,  
35 the port sampling, completely. We're going to supply some of  
36 the -- At the Science Center, we'll be supplying some of the  
37 statistical analyses side of the picture, and so the initial  
38 work will focus on identifying usage patterns, where are the  
39 landing sites, when are people coming and going, where are they  
40 coming and going, which boat ramps, when should we sample, that  
41 kind of thing, and so that's the initial step, and then, once we  
42 have figured that out, we'll run a pilot survey.

43  
44 Some of this work was done several years ago, but we need to  
45 update that information, and we've got several years of funding  
46 to do this, to design this survey, and so we've got that kind of  
47 work going on in both Puerto Rico and soon in the Virgin  
48 Islands. Soon we hope, COVID notwithstanding, we'll have it

1 going in the Virgin Islands.

2  
3 We also noticed that we were lacking, in some cases, life  
4 history data, and so, for life history data, we're looking at  
5 things like how big do the animals get, how big do they get at  
6 certain ages, what is the size distribution of males versus  
7 females? Are females bigger or are males bigger?

8  
9 We want to know things like natural mortality, and we want to  
10 know things like how big do they get before they become  
11 reproductively viable, when they start to produce eggs, how many  
12 eggs they produce at different sizes, and, if they are released,  
13 if they're caught and then released, how many of those things  
14 are surviving after they are being discarded?

15  
16 To get at some of that, we're partnering with DRNA, the life  
17 history lab there, and they're the experts in the region, and so  
18 we're going to analyze their existing data and identify future  
19 sampling needs, and so they are sitting on a whole bunch of  
20 data, and what we want to do is be able to get at things like  
21 what is the size at maturity, what's the conversion between  
22 total length and fork length, but the main thing we want to get  
23 at, that will help DRNA in the future, is where should they  
24 prioritize their sampling?

25  
26 If they've already got enough triggerfish to have a robust  
27 sample, then maybe they don't need to sample a bunch more  
28 triggerfish and they can direct their time and effort at some  
29 other species, and that's just an example. That is how we're  
30 going to partner with them, so that we can utilize the limited  
31 resources that everybody has more efficiently.

32  
33 We have also identified some species that just don't have any  
34 information at all, or there are cases where we don't have any  
35 of the big animals, or we don't have any of the small animals,  
36 and so we're going to start another project, again once we can  
37 get people in the field, to target those size classes of animals  
38 where we're really lacking information, and so we particularly  
39 want to look at parrotfish and triggerfish, and so this is on  
40 hold. We've got the money, but we're just on hold until we can  
41 get people in the field.

42  
43 Another project that is ongoing, and this is Kate Overly, who is  
44 at the Panama City Laboratory, and she has partnered with  
45 Virginia Shervette and Will Patterson, and Virginia, of course,  
46 is in South Carolina, and Will is at the University of Florida,  
47 and they've been looking at age and growth of some of the  
48 deepwater snappers, in particular queen snapper, and this photo

1 here is an otolith, and you use that to age the fish, sort of  
2 like the rings on a tree.

3  
4 They have been collecting these data -- Well, Kate hasn't, but  
5 there are samples from as far back as 2005, and they're ongoing  
6 in their sample collection, and they've got over 600 samples in  
7 the U.S. Caribbean, and they've got a method I think that came  
8 out of Will's lab, but maybe Virginia as well, where they can  
9 validate the accuracy of the age estimation that they're getting  
10 from reading the otoliths, and they are looking at validating  
11 that age composition.

12  
13 They will have size distributions in the U.S. Caribbean, but  
14 they're also doing this work in the Gulf of Mexico, and they  
15 want to get some estimates of longevity and some growth function  
16 data and estimates of natural mortality.

17  
18 Another area that we're actively pursuing some research projects  
19 is with the idea of gear selectivity, and this came up in the  
20 spiny lobster assessment, and the idea is what does the gear  
21 catch, and what does it tell us about the size of the animals in  
22 the wild, and so are we catching absolutely everything above a  
23 certain size, this sort of asymptotic or logistic kind of curve,  
24 where, once they reach a certain size, the gear catches  
25 everything that's out there, and that's what we're seeing, or is  
26 it more of this dome-shaped kind of selectivity, where there is  
27 a range of sizes that the gear catches or the fishermen choose  
28 to bring into market, and so the idea of a plate-sized fish.  
29 Are there other larger animals out there that we're just not  
30 seeing in the catch that comes to the dock?

31  
32 In order to get at that, we've got a number of gear selectivity  
33 studies, again partnering with DPNR in the Virgin Islands to do  
34 these kind of gear selectivity studies. The DFW scientists will  
35 use traps specifically to target lobster size composition, and  
36 this will be done across all of the islands in the Virgin  
37 Islands.

38  
39 While DFW scientists get the size composition from animals  
40 caught in traps, we're also partnering with Park Service  
41 personnel and the University of the Virgin Islands scientists to  
42 do a parallel study using divers, and so we'll have divers go  
43 out and collect and measure lobsters from both shallow and deep  
44 sites, as deep as 150 feet, and that will allow us to compare  
45 the size composition that the divers are seeing in the wild, in  
46 the field, versus what the DFW scientists are seeing that are  
47 coming up in traps, and so do we see big lobsters, either deep  
48 or shallow, that are not showing up in the traps, and therefore

1 not showing up in the landings? Then we can get at the kind of  
2 selectivity that is actually occurring.

3  
4 We've got a similar study that will be happening in Puerto Rico,  
5 and we've got the money for this. Again, we're kind of on hold,  
6 because of COVID, and this will focus on trap selectivity in the  
7 lobster fishery specifically, but they will collect size  
8 composition data from additional species, and so, if they see  
9 some other species in the traps, they're going to measure those  
10 too, and it won't just be limited to lobster, but the primary  
11 focus is lobster.

12  
13 We've got -- I don't expect you to pay any attention to these  
14 numbers, but this is just to remind me that there has been other  
15 work. In this case, this was Ron Hill and Jennifer Doerr, and  
16 they're both at the Galveston Laboratory of the Science Center,  
17 although Ron has since moved on to Panama City.

18  
19 They looked at the kinds of species that were being caught in  
20 fish traps versus lobster traps, and are a lot of lobster caught  
21 in fish traps as well as in lobster traps? There have been  
22 other kinds of gear selectivity studies that have been ongoing,  
23 and, in this case, sort of species composition within a  
24 particular gear.

25  
26 There are a number of fishery-independent surveys that are  
27 ongoing, and these surveys are trying to get at things like  
28 abundance and size composition and also collect samples for life  
29 history studies, and so, again, Ron and Jennifer have done an  
30 awful lot of conch work, primarily in the Virgin Islands, St.  
31 John and St. Croix, and they've done some acoustic tracking of  
32 conch, what sort of habitat is conch using, where are they  
33 moving, when are they moving, and they have looked at sort of  
34 population growth, recruitment, mortality, those kinds of  
35 issues, through mark-and-recapture studies.

36  
37 In St. Croix, they were looking at sort of density studies, how  
38 many conch are out there, and in what habitats, and they've also  
39 looked at environmental contaminants in the Salt River in St.  
40 Croix, and so they're looking at ecological effects, how is this  
41 impacting the environment, as well as any human health effects,  
42 and they have published a few papers on those.

43  
44 Another fishery-independent study that's been going on for a  
45 while is a reef fish survey using divers, and Laura Jay Grove at  
46 the Miami Lab is heading up those efforts, and this is part of  
47 the National Coral Reef Monitoring Program, and so it's a  
48 fishery-independent scuba survey, and they use a stratified

1 random sample design looking at hard bottom and coral habitats.

2  
3 They are limited to a hundred feet or shallower, and so they're  
4 getting size composition of all the species that they're seeing,  
5 and they go out and they survey everything within a fifteen-  
6 meter cylinder, diameter cylinder, and they are getting, again,  
7 size composition, and they're getting abundance and density  
8 within a particular habitat.

9  
10 They are sampling every other year in the Caribbean, and on the  
11 off years I think they're sampling in the Florida Keys, and  
12 they've got funding for 2021, and then to look at ways to best  
13 utilize this in stock assessments, as well as to get at the idea  
14 of how can we better inform those Tier 4 ACL estimates, or ACL  
15 designations, and will this inform that process in any way, and  
16 so they've got some money to do that.

17  
18 In 2019, they sampled over 300 sites in St. Thomas/St. John and  
19 over 300 additional sites in St. Croix, and, also in 2019, they  
20 sampled over 200 sites in Puerto Rico.

21  
22 This was a similar project, but deeper, looking at mesophotic  
23 reefs, and it's the same kind of survey, as I understand it, and  
24 only, here, they are sampling from thirty to sixty meters, and  
25 so over a hundred feet, and the sampling is meant to happen in  
26 2020, and I think they have done some sampling, but I think  
27 right now they're on hiatus, and then sampling again in 2022.

28  
29 They did over fifty sites so far in 2020, which compares to  
30 thirty-eight sites in 2018, and so getting the same kind of data  
31 as in the shallow study. They are getting counts and sizes  
32 within particular habitats, and they are comparing that to the  
33 shallow sampling. How many species are they seeing in their  
34 shallow sampling that they're also seeing in this deeper  
35 sampling?

36  
37 What can they say by the shallow sampling alone? There may be  
38 some species that are very well sampled, if they just stick to  
39 that shallow sampling, where there may be other species that are  
40 also found deeper that would require that additional deep  
41 sampling to fully get a handle on.

42  
43 Then a third project they have going is really to calibrate  
44 their method, which is the cylinders, where they will randomly  
45 select these cylinders within these areas of habitat, and sample  
46 everything within this fifteen-meter cylinder.

47  
48 In the past, a number of studies have used the belt transects,

1 where they will swim down a line twenty-five meters and count  
2 and measure fish on -- Well, they really estimate the sizes of  
3 fish two meters on either side of that line as they swim, and so  
4 they want to be able to calibrate those old data into the same  
5 kind of density metrics that they get with their new method, and  
6 so it's really just a way to be able to mine the old datasets  
7 and put them in a common currency.

8  
9 In another fishery-independent survey, and this is in really  
10 deep water in Puerto Rico's deepwater fishery, and this is Kate  
11 Overly, again, in Panama City, along with Andy David, and he's  
12 also in Panama City.

13  
14 What they have done, over the course of a two-year project -- I  
15 am not sure if they are going to be able to finish up fall of  
16 2020. I am not clear on that, but they're using a camera system  
17 as well as hook-and-line to get size composition, which they can  
18 divert to weights, and they will -- Because they're going to  
19 collect some samples with the hook-and-line for age and growth  
20 and reproductive studies, and this is where she's getting many  
21 of her samples for the otolith study that I mentioned earlier.

22  
23 They will look at habitat utilization of queen snapper from  
24 their video data, as well as their hook-and-line fishing, and  
25 they have provided us with some video. This is at 280 meters,  
26 which is about 919 feet, at one of their stations off the west  
27 coast of Puerto Rico, and so it's always kind of fun to look at  
28 fish, and especially it's interesting knowing that they're over  
29 900 feet deep here.

30  
31 Another study, again with Kate and Andy, but also with a couple  
32 of other folks, Ryan Caillouet, who is at the Mississippi Lab,  
33 and Steve Smith, who is at the Miami Lab. This is sort of a  
34 continuation of the project I mentioned, and, again, they're  
35 using video and hook-and-line to sample the deep snapper grouper  
36 complex in Puerto Rico.

37  
38 Here, they are focusing on the 100 to 650-meter depth range with  
39 stereo-video, and so that allows them to get size estimates of  
40 the fish. They will get size and abundance data, and they will  
41 also use hook-and-line gear to collect the biological samples.  
42 Once they pull the video out of the water, they will drop the  
43 hook-and-line down to catch some fish for otoliths and other  
44 biological samples, and they will be able to get relative  
45 abundance and size information for both fished species as well  
46 as species that are not exploited in the fishery, and this is  
47 all centered on the west coast of Puerto Rico.

1 Another study that Miami staff are working on is we're working  
2 with a consulting firm in Puerto Rico to look at recruitment of  
3 lobsters to the fishery, and this is a direct -- This is coming  
4 directly out of an initiative that the Puerto Rico lobster  
5 fishers began themselves. They wanted to collect better data,  
6 and they wanted to get data that would better inform stock  
7 assessments, and so they began that program, and, out of that,  
8 we developed this program, and so this is a cooperative research  
9 program.

10  
11 The data collection will include Puerto Rico fishers that will  
12 be involved in the project to take scientists out in the field  
13 to collect this lobster size composition data, and so this  
14 hasn't begun yet. Again, everything is on hold because of  
15 COVID-19, but we have the consulting firm, and we have the  
16 money. We'll be in contact with fishers, and there are certain  
17 requirements that have to be met so that the fisher's boat can  
18 be insured to be able to take the scientists out on the water,  
19 but our goal is to quantify those lobsters that are smaller than  
20 legal harvest size.

21  
22 The idea is to get at constructing an index of recruitment, and  
23 so, rather than looking at larvae coming in, where between a  
24 larval lobster settling out and then growing up to be caught in  
25 the fishery, there are a number of years going on, and there's a  
26 lot of stuff that can happen, and we're interested in those  
27 sizes that are just below legal size, and so, the next time they  
28 molt, they will be large enough to be caught in the fishery,  
29 legally. Those are the ones that we're targeting, and that's  
30 where we want to build an index of recruitment, on data from  
31 lobsters of that size.

32  
33 Another survey that's gone on for a number of years is the  
34 larval fish survey, and this involves a lot of different species  
35 and a lot of different laboratories and a lot of different  
36 people. They're out on the big NOAA ships, and they are  
37 sampling in this area in the Virgin Islands, down including the  
38 British Virgin Islands, down to Saba Bank and beyond, and also  
39 eastern Puerto Rico.

40  
41 What they're interested in is using larval fish as a tool to  
42 study the ecosystem, and so they want to identify nursery areas.  
43 They want to look at things like how are the different  
44 populations connected and where are the recruits potentially  
45 coming from, and all of this would feed into stock assessments.  
46 The project has gone on since 2007, and there was a little bit  
47 of a break in sampling from 2011 to 2015, and then it continued  
48 in 2015 to 2018, and a cruise was planned this past spring, but

1 that has been put on hold, because of, again -- Everything is on  
2 hold, as we all know, because of COVID, and, again, it's multi-  
3 agency, and it involves the University of the Virgin Islands,  
4 DPNR, the University of Miami, and NOAA staff as well.

5  
6 They are using these plankton nets to collect the larvae, and  
7 they're collecting a whole array of physical oceanographic data,  
8 like information on currents and temperature and salinity and  
9 those sorts of thing, and they are also recording sargassum  
10 events. They are interested in a number of different families,  
11 wrasses, parrotfish, snapper, dolphinfish, tuna, reef fish, as  
12 well as the pelagic fish.

13  
14 They have done nine surveys and collected oceanographic data  
15 during those cruises as well as the plankton tows. These data  
16 have been provided both to you all, the council, as well as the  
17 University of the Virgin Islands, DPNR, to NOAA, to other  
18 academic partners, and that has resulted in a number of  
19 scientific publications, and the results of these surveys have  
20 also been presented at both national and international  
21 conferences.

22  
23 Again, the other initiative, begun by the council, that has  
24 focused our energies a bit has been EBFM work, and so, at the  
25 Miami Lab, Mandy Karnauskas has hired a contractor, and she is  
26 looking at producing an ecosystem status report, and this  
27 involves identifying a suite of indicators, and those can  
28 provide an overview of the current state of the ecosystem, and  
29 this can also provide guidance on whether ecosystem-level  
30 objectives are being met, and so here's a process for the  
31 Caribbean, and some of you may have seen this already, but this  
32 is just sort of a flow chart of where ecosystem status reports  
33 fit into ecosystem-based management.

34  
35 So far in the project, they have completed compiling this list  
36 of fisheries objectives, and they are ongoing in scoring  
37 conceptual models, and then, in the future, it will be to  
38 actually calculate the indicators and put together the status  
39 report. I am grossly oversimplifying this, and so my apologies.  
40 I think Mandy might be on the line, and so, if you've got  
41 questions about this, by all means, please ask, and I will turn  
42 the mic over to her.

43  
44 Some other activities, and, again, this is work by Ron Hill and  
45 Jennifer Doerr that fit in pretty well with ecosystem-level  
46 activities, and they are looking at some things like restoration  
47 of Acroporid hybrids, and there have been two projects there,  
48 and both were in the northern Virgin Islands, and they have also



1 looked at -- I mentioned this earlier, but this queen conch  
2 contaminant study in Salt River Bay, and they have looked at --  
3 They have done some passive acoustic monitoring of spawning  
4 grouper aggregations, looking at the effectiveness of MPAs and  
5 seasonal closures, and that's been in partnership with the  
6 University of Puerto Rico.

7  
8 There has also been a lot of socioeconomic studies, and this is  
9 in Puerto Rico, and this has been driven -- Again, this is sort  
10 of the pandemic and natural-disaster-driven work, and the  
11 National COVID-19 Impact Assessment, and this is an ongoing  
12 project by the social science research group in Miami. They are  
13 collecting data in Puerto Rico that they think they will have  
14 completed by the end of this month, or early September, and they  
15 are trying to get 300 respondents, and these include commercial  
16 fishers, for-hire operators, and others involved in fishing  
17 businesses.

18  
19 They have already had a number of, I think -- Well, quite a few  
20 very brief and very qualitative interviews with some of these  
21 stakeholders, and so they have interviewed eighteen processors,  
22 233 commercial fishers, and eleven charter operators. The  
23 social scientists have asked me to request that the Puerto Rican  
24 for-hire operators please respond to their survey. They would  
25 like to increase this eleven to a much higher number.

26  
27 There were also some surveys completed on the impacts to  
28 fishermen on the Hurricane Maria impact. There is a publication  
29 that is currently available, and it will be coming out in  
30 *Coastal Management* as a peer-reviewed article, and I think  
31 that's in review, or perhaps in press.

32  
33 There's another project involved with the SSRG, the social  
34 science research group, where they're doing a census of  
35 commercial fishers. That's ongoing, and they think that will be  
36 completed in January of 2021.

37  
38 There are similar projects in the U.S. Virgin Islands, again by  
39 the social science group in Miami, and, again, the COVID-19  
40 impact assessment, and also hurricane impact assessment, and  
41 this work has, of course, been completed, and there was a  
42 follow-on in 2019, and those results are currently being drafted  
43 for publication, and so there were two surveys, the initial one  
44 immediately following the hurricanes and then another one last  
45 year.

46  
47 There is also a creel survey, and these data were collected in  
48 2016 and 2017, and that is currently under review as a NOAA tech

1 memo, and they anticipate will be out later in the year.

2  
3 There is other work that Science Center staff is involved with.  
4 One, as I mentioned earlier, in Puerto Rico, there was the MRIP,  
5 or the Marine Recreational Information Program, that had been  
6 sampling recreational fishers for a number of years, and that  
7 came to an end during 2017, and there is now a planning  
8 committee on getting that renewed and restarted, and Science  
9 Center staff are involved in that, in that effort.

10  
11 We also have, ongoing as part of a broader NOAA initiative,  
12 benthic mapping in the Caribbean, and so the NOAA ships will go  
13 down and map the bottom of the ocean around the islands, using a  
14 variety of instruments, and Science Center staff are serving on  
15 planning teams to prioritize where that mapping should happen,  
16 and this mapping is important for designing fishery-independent  
17 surveys like those in Puerto Rico that we saw the video of and  
18 some of the other slides.

19  
20 Science Center staff also serve on SEAMAP-C planning committees,  
21 and so they're working with scientists in the region, in Puerto  
22 Rico and in the Virgin Islands, on planning for how best to  
23 utilize SEAMAP-C monies, and so there's a lot of stuff going on.

24  
25 This is not complete, and what we reviewed is -- I am probably  
26 missing a few folks who are doing work down there, and my  
27 apologies to them, if they ever find out that I forgot them, but  
28 I tried to be as inclusive as possible, and so, again, there are  
29 a number of projects. There is landings and size composition  
30 projects in Puerto Rico and in the Virgin Islands, and there is  
31 life history projects, and there are ecosystem kinds of  
32 projects, and there is gear selectivity projects, and there is  
33 fishery-independent surveys, a number of them. There is  
34 socioeconomic studies, and so there's a lot going on, a lot of  
35 balls in the air, a lot of folks doing work down there, and so  
36 this amount of work -- It was not lost on us that we need to  
37 have a little coordination.

38  
39 I will wrap this up with talking about our strategic planning  
40 initiative, and I know that you all have one as well, and, over  
41 the next several years, our goal is to develop a strategic plan  
42 for data collection in the U.S. Caribbean.

43  
44 Initially, that will involve Science Center staff that are  
45 involved in U.S. Caribbean work, many of the names you saw at  
46 the beginning, and the planning process will continue by  
47 including SERO Regional Office staff, council staff, Puerto Rico  
48 and Virgin Islands scientists, academics in the region,

1 academics who are working in the region, and other stakeholders.

2  
3 I am very interested to learn what all is going on with the  
4 strategic planning that you all have initiated and how that  
5 might tie into what we're doing. We recognize that we don't  
6 operate in a vacuum, and we don't want to operate in a vacuum.  
7 We want everybody involved, so that we can come up with the best  
8 way forward to get the kinds of data that will inform the  
9 management decisions that you all have to make.

10  
11 I probably ran very long, but you guys were way ahead, and so I  
12 don't feel too badly about that, and I'm happy to take any  
13 questions. Again, I am not the lead on many of these studies,  
14 and I'm more familiar with others, but I will try and answer  
15 questions as best I can, and so thank you.

16  
17 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Kevin. That was a great presentation,  
18 and that's a good way to see all the work that has been done in  
19 the Caribbean, and I would like to start the questions as an  
20 example of things that, for me, is very important, like on the  
21 selectivity.

22  
23 You mentioned the national coral reef monitoring, that they do  
24 the transects, and, for sure, some of those overlap with trap  
25 fishing areas, areas where traps are used, and that's a  
26 question, and that can be used to get some selectivity  
27 information out of that? That's the first question.

28  
29 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Yes, absolutely, and so, if you've got divers  
30 in the water, they are going to see -- They may see some sizes  
31 of fish that are not caught by the gear, and so selectivity -- A  
32 lot of things can operate on selectivity, of course, and so  
33 there is not only what is captured by the gear, but there is  
34 what is retained by the fishermen, and so, if they have a  
35 particular size range that gets them a better price, if it's a  
36 commercial fisher, or, if it's a recreational fisher and there's  
37 a minimum size, they're affected by that.

38  
39 They may have a bag limit, and so they may catch them and have  
40 to release them, because they've got too many, and so there may  
41 be some decisions about which sizes to keep based on that, and  
42 so there's a lot going on with what's captured by the gear and  
43 what makes it to the dock, but that's not affecting the divers  
44 in the same way.

45  
46 They are going to see different sizes that maybe you don't see  
47 caught by gear, and so that's one of the reasons why, in the  
48 lobster gear selectivity, we're very interested in having that

1 complementary diver survey, and the reef fish diver survey can  
2 serve a similar purpose, especially because they have got that  
3 deepwater component, where maybe there are bigger fish deeper,  
4 and so, yes, it very much can inform selectivity and what we  
5 know about selectivity.  
6  
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay, and one last question, and I will have a  
8 follow-up on the selectivity later on with you, and I have  
9 another question, but the survey for the charter will be done  
10 via email or telephone?  
11  
12 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** The survey for the charters for which one, the  
13 one with the social scientists?  
14  
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Correct.  
16  
17 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** I am not sure, but what I can do is I can have  
18 them get in touch with you directly, and they can -- I think  
19 that it is -- I honestly don't know, Marcos, and I don't want to  
20 --  
21  
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** No, I don't want to put you on the spot, and  
23 don't worry.  
24  
25 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** They will get in touch with you and figure out  
26 -- I think that they perhaps mailed out surveys, and these are  
27 the return rate, but I'm just guessing at that, and I will have  
28 them get in touch with you, so that you guys can figure that  
29 out.  
30  
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** I am willing to help too, and thank you.  
32  
33 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** They would love to hear that.  
34  
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Does anybody else want to make any questions?  
36  
37 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You have Edward Schuster that has a question.  
38  
39 **EDWARD SCHUSTER:** Hi, Kevin. You mentioned that you're going to  
40 do several dives in St. Croix, and are you -- Do you plan on  
41 incorporating fishermen to do these dives, because, some of the  
42 depths that you're talking about, the fishers won't be -- The  
43 depths that you're going to pick, 150 feet, especially looking  
44 for lobster, I don't think some of the divers are going to  
45 qualify to do this, and so are you going to -- Are you going to  
46 have an outside contractor, because you're going to need the  
47 fishermen's participation, so not to have this kind of pushback  
48 from fishers.

1  
2 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** That project, particularly for the lobsters,  
3 there is -- That diving component of that project is, because  
4 it's that deep dive and it's more technical, and it's not what  
5 most people do, that's going to be with some of the technical  
6 divers from the National Park Service, as well as the University  
7 of the Virgin Islands, and so those are the folks that are going  
8 to be doing that diving.

9  
10 The trap side of things, it's Nicole Angeli's staff, and so  
11 they're going to be doing the trap side of that, and so they are  
12 -- We haven't really worked out all the details, because we're  
13 kind of on hold, because of COVID, but they're going to head up  
14 that trap side of things, and so I think what we're going to  
15 discuss anyway, is what is the effective way to get the fishers  
16 involved in this project, so that we get some buy-in, because I  
17 agree with you completely.

18  
19 We want to do this in a way that everybody knows what's going on  
20 and everybody understands the why we're doing it and how it's  
21 beneficial, and so that diving side is -- You're right that  
22 that's beyond the limits of what most people do, and so that's  
23 going to be these technical divers, but the trap side of things  
24 is something that we'll be working with the staff, the DFW staff  
25 down there, to make sure that fishers are informed, because you  
26 guys -- We're going to need your expertise to say this is a good  
27 place to catch lobster, or that's not a good place to catch  
28 lobster, or, if you want big lobsters, go over here. If you  
29 want a different size, go over there.

30  
31 I want to have input from everybody, and so, yes, this is --  
32 Again, there is no sense really getting started until we see how  
33 the COVID-19 situation is going to pan out, and so we've got  
34 some extensions on the money, so that we have all of next year  
35 to spend it on this project, and so we can't put people out in  
36 the field, and we can't have meetings with fishers until we've  
37 got all that sorted out, so we know what the pandemic is going  
38 to do, and I definitely want to get your input.

39  
40 **EDWARD SCHUSTER:** Right, but this is the question. I mean, you  
41 said you're using DPNR's expertise on the trap side of it. Who  
42 in there, in DFW, has the expertise of setting traps, for  
43 lobster especially? I mean, you have people that have more than  
44 a decade, or two or three, in fishing for lobsters, that should  
45 be utilized to have accurate and correct data.

46  
47 There is places that you go during certain times of the year,  
48 because they have done this for decades, tracking the lobsters

1 of when they move, and so, if DFW goes, and they just randomly  
2 pick spots using -- I know what's going to be said, is using the  
3 CFR, the commercial catch report forms, and that is not -- That  
4 is not what you want to use. You want to use the fishers'  
5 expertise in doing something like this.

6  
7 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Right, and I agree completely. I mean, that  
8 was just a bullet to remind me to acknowledge who is doing which  
9 side of the project, and so we haven't made any decisions about  
10 how the fishers will be involved. We know that we need that  
11 expertise in designing this study, and we know that it's not  
12 good enough to just have the information from the catch forms,  
13 because those areas are too big to be able to say just put the  
14 trap out here in this two-and-a-half-by-two-and-a-half-square-  
15 mile grid.

16  
17 We know that, and we know that we need to have you all more  
18 involved, to get your expertise, but that hasn't been figured  
19 out yet, because we're on hold because of COVID, and so, no, we  
20 absolutely plan on getting you all involved to get the  
21 information about how best to do this.

22  
23 We understand the statistical side of things, but you guys are  
24 the experts in the actual doing it, getting out there and where  
25 do you put the traps and what kinds of traps. You know, there  
26 are lots of different traps used in the fishery, and we want to  
27 make sure that we're getting a representative sample of those  
28 different kinds of traps. There's a lot that we need to talk  
29 about.

30  
31 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, Nicole Angeli would like to answer to  
32 those questions, and that should be followed by Julian and  
33 Graciela.

34  
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead, Nicole.

36  
37 **NICOLE ANGELI:** Thank you. Kevin really just explained what I  
38 was going to say, that we haven't started those conversations  
39 with where and how we'll be doing the studies, but we'll be  
40 working with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, to make  
41 sure that we have a robust sampling design, and we've been very  
42 explicit that that needs to include fisher input, because we  
43 know that the CCRs are not representative, and that's part of  
44 this project and why it's so exciting and we're so grateful and  
45 thankful for the opportunity, and so thank you so much,  
46 everyone.

47  
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Julian.

1  
2 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Just to piggyback on what Ed Schuster had to say  
3 there earlier, and it's something that the fishers have preached  
4 for a very, very long time, but, without the participation of  
5 the fishermen, this study is not going anywhere. It might go  
6 somewhere for you guys, but, when it comes to give a report,  
7 it's going to be an inaccurate report, because, number one,  
8 right now, Fish and Wildlife is not in no position, staff-wise  
9 or equipment-wise, to set traps that the fishers are actually  
10 using, because they don't even know the different types of traps  
11 that fishermen use for fishing for lobster and to target fish.

12  
13 I am very excited to see, Kevin, this presentation, because it's  
14 going to help us to close a lot of the loopholes that are out  
15 there, but you must ensure that the fishers have full  
16 involvement in this project, or else we're going to fight to  
17 shut it down with the reports.

18  
19 The Fishermen's Association for St. Thomas and St. John, in its  
20 group, we have a lot of divers, and we have a lot of trap  
21 fishers, and we have a lot of lobster fishers, everything, and  
22 we are versed in all different areas, and we will be more than  
23 happy to sit down to the table and discuss being part of this  
24 study, and, first, like how everyone else will be paid to be  
25 part of this project, and the fishers would also like to be paid  
26 to be part of this project, since we're the ones that are always  
27 affected with the outcomes. Thank you.

28  
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Julian.

30  
31 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Julian, you're absolutely right that, because  
32 it's a gear selectivity study, if we don't have the gear that is  
33 used in the fishery, it won't matter, and it won't provide us  
34 information, and so we have to be putting out the kinds of traps  
35 that are used in the fishery, and I get it. There are lots of  
36 different designs, but we need to -- That's one of the reasons  
37 why we need to meet with the fishers and figure out those kinds  
38 of details.

39  
40 Which gears are being used, and, I mean, down to the dimensions  
41 and all of the details of the trap itself, and, again, I know  
42 there are lots of different kinds, but we've got to come up with  
43 a suite of the different kinds of traps that are used, and we've  
44 got to know where to put them, so that we're doing this in a way  
45 where we get back meaningful information. Those details are not  
46 lost on us, and we absolutely look forward to working with the  
47 fishers on this project.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Kevin, and thank you, Julian.  
2 Graciela.

3  
4 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Kevin, thank you very much for that  
5 presentation, and thank you to the Science Center for all the  
6 work that you are doing. We are also collaborating, the council  
7 is, through the Coral Reef Conservation Program grant, with the  
8 commercial fishers, and so we have already started going out  
9 with commercial fishers to look at deepwater snapper fish  
10 communities and turning the fishers knowledge into scientific  
11 language.

12  
13 I think that we are all on the same page, and, more importantly,  
14 all this work will serve a lot for the ecosystem-based approach  
15 that we are trying to implement, and so we'll be touch, and we  
16 have been in touch, with most of the PIs that Kevin mentioned,  
17 and we have learned about new ones that we didn't know about,  
18 and so we'll be making sure that all of this information is  
19 included, and I was going to request from the council that this  
20 presentation be also given to the TAP and to the SSC at some  
21 point, because I think it's extremely pertinent. Thank you.

22  
23 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thanks, Graciela. Just a couple of comments on  
24 that, if I may. One, you are absolutely right that everything  
25 that I showed here, the data from those studies, can, in one way  
26 or another, fit into EBFM, and the other thing that I would say  
27 is that you are talking with the fishers and doing deepwater  
28 snapper work and that sort of thing, and that just points right  
29 back to the need for this sort of all-inclusive strategic  
30 planning, when it comes to how do we best collect data in the  
31 region, and making sure that we're doing complementary work  
32 rather than reinventing the wheel every time someone goes out  
33 there, because Researcher A hasn't referred to what Researcher B  
34 is doing, and they end up both spending money to do the same  
35 thing, which isn't always bad, but, in a world of limited  
36 resources, collaboration is going to be the key.

37  
38 That's why we're really pushing forward with this strategic  
39 planning initiative and that, over time, that will involve  
40 scientists in the region and stakeholders and everybody else who  
41 we can get to the table.

42  
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Kevin. We are getting to  
44 lunchtime, and I wanted to just make a comment along the same  
45 lines, attesting that we are moving more to include the  
46 fishermen in the scientific work in many ways.

47  
48 If you guys remember, we presented an initiative made by the



1 lobster fishermen that made a report to the council, and that  
2 report was just the beginning of it, and we have very valuable  
3 information, and I would invite the St. Thomas Fishing  
4 Association to explore a similar initiative that will be helpful  
5 for them to have more accurate information and engage in those  
6 processes a little more effectively and in a very productive  
7 manner, and I'm available to help, with all the materials we  
8 created in Puerto Rico, if it's useful. Thank you to all.  
9 Thank you, Kevin, for your great presentation, and we are ready  
10 for lunch. It's 12:00 sharp. Miguel.

11  
12 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Just for the record, Graciela will coordinate  
13 with the chairs of the DAPs and the SSC to include this  
14 presentation at the next meeting of those two bodies.

15  
16 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. We are ready for lunchtime,  
17 and the lunchtime is -- We will be back at 1:00, and it's 12:00  
18 sharp. Thank you to all, and I will see you guys at 1:00.  
19 Thank you.

20  
21 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on August 11, 2020.)

22  
23 - - -

24  
25 August 11, 2020

26  
27 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

28  
29 - - -

30  
31 The Caribbean Fishery Management Council reconvened via webinar  
32 on Tuesday afternoon, August 11, 2020, and was called to order  
33 at 1:00 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Marcos Hanke.

34  
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Good afternoon, everyone. We're going to restart  
36 the meeting. It's 1:00 p.m. on August 11. This is the 170<sup>th</sup>  
37 CFMC Council Meeting. Vanessa, whenever you have something in  
38 the chat that is important to say, please say it on the record,  
39 for the benefit of everybody and to be part of the record.

40  
41 She has a comment on the previous discussion, after the  
42 presentation of Kevin McCarthy, and she stated to ensure that  
43 the way to contact fishermen for participation comes from  
44 someone that they trust by area. For the fishermen's  
45 association, we will be available to work with you. Thanks.  
46 This is what she said on the chat. The next item on the agenda  
47 is --

1 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** One more comment. I don't know if  
2 Kevin is back, but if you can tell the people at the Science  
3 Center that the DNER has provided us with communication, and to  
4 the general public, so that scientific work can begin following  
5 certain restrictions that they have, and you need a COVID plan,  
6 et cetera, but we already have scientists on the water working  
7 with fishers, thanks to Damaris and the Secretary, that put  
8 together the communication. We wrote a letter, and they are  
9 able to get the boats out in the water and actually be working.  
10 Thank you.

11  
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Graciela. The next item on the  
13 agenda is already covered by Miguel in his ED's Report, and we -  
14 - I am a little lost here. Then the next item will be the five-  
15 year strategic plan, and it was already covered by Miguel Rolon  
16 in the ED Report, and we're going to pass to the gear discussion  
17 of allowable gear types.

18  
19 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Mr. Chair, do you want to begin with  
20 Jocelyn's presentation or Pauco. Is he online?

21  
22 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Let's hear from Jocelyn first, and then we will  
23 follow with Marcos and Pauco, Mr. Font.

24  
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead, Jocelyn.

26  
27 **GEAR DISCUSSION: ALLOWABLE GEAR TYPES**

28  
29 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Okay. Thank you. I was going to give a  
30 brief presentation just on the authorized gears, and I know this  
31 has come up a couple of different times, where folks have been  
32 asking which gears they can use, and so I'm just going to go  
33 over that for one specific area.

34  
35 We're going to look at the gears that can be used when fishing  
36 for the managed reef fish commercially, using longline and hook-  
37 and-line. Then, at the end, we'll also talk about some  
38 prohibited gears and methods and then note the gear and  
39 anchoring restrictions that exist by area.

40  
41 These are just for context, and these are the reef fish species  
42 that would be managed under the Puerto Rico FMP, and then I also  
43 have slides on the reef fish species that would be managed under  
44 the St. Thomas/St. John FMP and the St. Croix FMP, and so that's  
45 the gears that we're talking about when you're fishing for these  
46 species in the hook-and-line fisheries. I have also noted the  
47 species that would be new to management, and so these would be  
48 the managed species if these FMPs are approved by the Secretary,

1 and they are pending before the Secretary right now.

2  
3 The next slide shows St. Thomas and St. John, and then the next  
4 slide shows St. Croix, and so that's just for context, and then,  
5 if you go to the next slide, there is a table in the regulations  
6 that lists the gears that are authorized for the fisheries, and,  
7 right now, the way that the fishery is defined is the Caribbean  
8 Reef Fish FMP fishery, and then they have the different  
9 components of the fishery.

10  
11 For the longline and hook-and-line fishery, those are the gears  
12 that are authorized when fishing for those managed reef fish.  
13 The Fisheries Service is in the process of preparing a proposed  
14 rule to implement the island-based FMPs, and so this table is  
15 going to get updated, and it will look a little bit different.  
16 It will have the Puerto Rico fishery, the St. Thomas/St. John  
17 fishery, and the St. Croix fishery, and then we'll note when  
18 it's fishing for reef fish, and we'll make the appropriate  
19 adjustments.

20  
21 Right now, if you were to look in the table, and I have provided  
22 the citation, it would say the longline and hook-and-line  
23 fishery for the managed reef fish, and so those are the gears  
24 that we're going to be talking about.

25  
26 These have specific definitions for these fisheries, and I have  
27 just provided those on the next slide. First, with longline,  
28 longline is a line that is deployed horizontally, and we have  
29 bottom longlines and pelagic longlines, and we've been speaking  
30 about bottom longlines, and this is the definition in the  
31 regulations.

32  
33 It's a line that is deployed or capable of being deployed to  
34 maintain contact with the ocean bottom, and so that's what is  
35 important there. Something might -- You might think you have a  
36 particular gear, but, if it's capable of maintaining that  
37 contact with the bottom, it actually could be considered a  
38 bottom longline, and that's important, because, as we know, we  
39 have some limits on where bottom longlines can be used, and then  
40 pelagic longlines are in the water column. At the bottom there,  
41 I have just provided citations for where you find those  
42 definitions.

43  
44 On the next slide, we have a definition of hook-and-line, and so  
45 the regulations actually list a number of different types of  
46 gears as hook-and-line, and so, again, on that earlier slide,  
47 the gears that are allowed in this particular fishery are the  
48 longline and hook-and-line, and then hook-and-line is more

1 specifically stated, and so it's automatic reel, bandit gear,  
2 buoy gear, handline, longline, and rod-and-reel.

3  
4 Here, I have put the definition of buoy gear from the  
5 regulations, and, in bold, I have put a number of the specific  
6 requirements for buoy gear. It is pretty specific, as you can  
7 see, and so it has to be fished vertically, and there's a single  
8 drop line descended from a float, no more than ten hooks, and  
9 the weight has a limit, and so it's no more than ten pounds, and  
10 it has to be free-floating and not connected to other gear or  
11 the vessel, and then there's a requirements for the length of  
12 the drop line, and so it's no greater than two-times the depth  
13 of the water being fished, and then there's a limit as to where  
14 the hooks can be placed, and so the hooks attached to the drop  
15 line no more than thirty feet from the weighted terminal end.

16  
17 Those are just the ones that I was kind of highlighting, but,  
18 obviously, if you were reading along, you can see there's  
19 requirements for the type of material that it can be made out  
20 of, and so, when we've been discussing some specific gear  
21 issues, we've been looking at whether it meets the definition of  
22 buoy gear or whether the gear would be on the bottom and can be  
23 considered bottom longline, and those are the ones that we have  
24 primarily been talking about in various conversations we've had,  
25 but, for completeness, I have provided the definition of the  
26 other hook-and-line gears.

27  
28 On the next slide, we have a definition of automatic reel and  
29 bandit gear, and so, for automatic reel, the reel remains  
30 attached to the vessel, and, for bandit gear, the rod-and-reel  
31 remain attached to the vessel. Otherwise, it seems that they  
32 are pretty similar. Then, finally, on the next slide, we have  
33 the remaining hook-and-line gears defined, and so we have  
34 handline and rod-and-reel.

35  
36 The gear table operates to say which gears can be used, and so  
37 we're talking, again, about commercially fishing for the managed  
38 reef fish in the longline and hook-and-line fishery, and so, if  
39 you're not using any of those types of longline or hook-and-line  
40 gear, then that gear would be prohibited, and so, in that  
41 instance, the regulations set forth a specific process, if you  
42 wanted to use a different gear.

43  
44 There is a fisher notification process, where the fisher  
45 notifies the council of the intent to use the gear, and there is  
46 specific requirements for that notice, and then the council will  
47 refer that notice to the Regional Administrator within the  
48 National Marine Fisheries Service that can take action to either

1 allow or prohibit the gear, or, after ninety days, if no action  
2 is taken to prohibit the use of that gear, the fisher can use  
3 that gear.

4  
5 If someone is interested in using a gear that is not one of the  
6 gears that we have just discussed within that specific component  
7 of the fishery, the council could amend the FMP to allow the use  
8 of those gears, or you could amend the definition of the gears,  
9 if you thought of a different definition that more appropriately  
10 meant the way that the gear is being fished in the fishery.

11  
12 On the next page, I am just noting some general prohibitions,  
13 again for completeness, because that gear table -- If the gear  
14 is not listed there, it's prohibited, but that gear table  
15 doesn't change the FMP-specific regulations, and so, if there's  
16 any additional prohibitions, we need to check there, so that we  
17 have some specific prohibitions in the regulations implementing  
18 the FMP. We can't use explosives, and that's for all target  
19 species, and we can't use poisons or drugs or other chemicals  
20 when fishing for reef fish, and we can't use powerheads when  
21 fishing for reef fish, and we can't use gillnets and trammel  
22 nets when fishing for the managed reef fish.

23  
24 Then, finally, we have some area prohibitions, and so these are  
25 the ones that we have talked about before as well, that fishing  
26 with pots, traps, bottom longlines, gillnets, or trammel nets is  
27 not allowed year-round in these specific areas, and we have the  
28 mutton snapper spawning aggregation area, which is defined in  
29 the regulations, some red hind spawning aggregation areas off of  
30 St. Croix and off of Puerto Rico, no Grammanik Bank off of St.  
31 Thomas, and Bajo de Sico off of Puerto Rico.

32  
33 Then we also have anchoring prohibitions by fishing vessels in  
34 Bajo de Sico and the Hind Bank Marine Conservation District, and  
35 so that's just kind of a gear overview, just to inform as  
36 background for some of the discussion on what gears are being  
37 used, and so, when we learn more about the gears that the  
38 fishers are using, we can see if it's authorized right now for  
39 the particular fishery, and, if not, what would need to be done,  
40 either modifying the gear so it fits one of these definitions or  
41 pursuing some of those other processes, if the fisher wants to  
42 notify the council of an intent to use a different gear or if  
43 the council needs to consider any modifications to the table or  
44 the description of gear that's used in the fishery. If anyone  
45 has any questions, I'm happy to answer them.

46  
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for an excellent presentation, Jocelyn.  
48 Go ahead, Miguel.

1  
2 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I propose that you go ahead with the discussion  
3 with Mr. Font, and then we can go back to the options that  
4 Jocelyn just presented to you. That way, you will save time,  
5 rather than going into questions and answers, and so we can have  
6 the question-and-answer after you decide what is it that you  
7 would like to do, and then we can go back to the slide of the  
8 actions that the council can take.

9  
10 **MARCOS HANKE:** I understand. Mr. Font, are you there? For the  
11 rest of the participants, the letter sent by Edwin Font, and we  
12 know him as Pauco, and he's a fisherman that has collaborated  
13 with the council for many years, and it's in English, and it's  
14 available on the internet. Go ahead, Pauco.

15  
16 **EDWIN FONT:** (Mr. Font's comments are in Spanish and were not  
17 transcribed.)

18  
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** If you see the two pink buoys on the top, there  
20 is a small -- This is the drawing made by Pauco, and it was  
21 revised by Nelson Crespo and by Luiz Ramon and myself, and,  
22 basically, it includes all the actual elements of the gear used  
23 by the deepwater snapper.

24  
25 We have the little buoy with the spool or the other line that is  
26 used by the fishermen that is detached from the boat, and it's  
27 connected to a main buoy that goes straight down on the main  
28 line, but some fishermen use sometimes one buoy, but this is the  
29 most used one, that one is expressed on the drawing.

30  
31 The buoy is from twenty-five to sixty inches around, and Pauco  
32 uses mostly the twenty-five-inch, and the little buoy is a small  
33 trap buoy, like a bullet shape, and the line is braided line,  
34 and some fishermen use other line, but mostly braided line,  
35 around 300 pounds, and there is a swivel that connects to the  
36 tackle.

37  
38 If you see it, the line is vertically deployed, and it's  
39 connected to -- The mainline is contacted to the terminal tackle  
40 with a barrel swivel that has a light on it of different colors,  
41 depending on the desire of the fisherman, and, subsequent to  
42 that, there is a sequence of hooks, and a standard in the  
43 fishery is hooks around the Number 9 hook, circle hook, and the  
44 circle hook is the hook used by those fishermen, for many  
45 reasons, but one of them is that the fish get unhooked less on  
46 the way up, and it's the most effective hook to be used.

47  
48 The mainline that connects each individual sequence of hooks is

1 about twenty feet long, and that varies a little bit, and with  
2 between fifteen to twenty hooks. The connection to the mainline  
3 is called, on the west coast of Puerto Rico, that line is --  
4 Pauco used hundred-pound monofilament, and some fishermen use a  
5 little heavier line. Like I said, the mainline, the connected  
6 hooks are around 300 pounds too, and here is something that is  
7 very important and shows the evolution of this gear over time.

8  
9 For your benefit, in the letter sent by Pauco, he described the  
10 historical use of the previous gears that are not used anymore,  
11 and I invite you to read the letter that he sent that is on the  
12 record already, on the internet, but, anyway on the terminal  
13 tackle on the end, we have another 300-pound swivel, and you  
14 have a weaker line that allows for the -- If the weight gets  
15 stuck, it will break, and some fishermen, nowadays a lot of  
16 them, use the line connected on the other end of the weight, and  
17 with a little piece of string or a degradable piece of line to  
18 the top, because it's an extra protection, in case the weights  
19 get stuck, and that weak line breaks away, and the weight  
20 inverts itself and is not free.

21  
22 This is extremely efficient, and be mindful that the fishermen  
23 just -- They are protecting the bottom habitat, but the  
24 intention is to go fishing and not to lose so many hooks and so  
25 many terminal tackle and all the fishes that was connected to  
26 it, and this is very effective on protecting the bottom and  
27 making the gear effective for the fishermen.

28  
29 The weight, it's very common to use steel rods, or construction  
30 bars, attached together and to be a long weight of twelve or  
31 fourteen inches, and twelve inches is what Pauco described in  
32 this drawing, and between eight pounds is what Pauco uses, and  
33 eight to ten pounds is what some other fishermen use, and that  
34 is the description and the drawing that we have in front of you.  
35 Go ahead, Miguel.

36  
37 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, in order to organize the discussion, the  
38 first question to Pauco is how many fishers does he know that  
39 fish this gear, and, second, a question to Jocelyn whether this  
40 gear at this time is allowed with present regulations.

41  
42 Let me repeat again. There are two questions that we should  
43 address to go ahead with the discussion, and the number one  
44 question is how many fishers, Pauco, or anybody on the line,  
45 knows that fish this gear. Number two, the question to Jocelyn  
46 is whether this gear is allowed under the present set of  
47 regulations that she just mentioned before, and then the third  
48 question would be what the council would like to do, and I have

1 here that Nelson Crespo would like to address some part of the  
2 presentation by Mr. Font.  
3  
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. Just to follow-up on your  
5 guidance, Pauco.  
6  
7 **PAUCO FONT:** (Mr. Font's response was in Spanish and was not  
8 transcribed.)  
9  
10 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nelson, did you have a comment?  
11  
12 **NELSON CRESPO:** First, to Miguel's question, I've got to tell  
13 you that we have much more fishermen that use this type of  
14 fishing gear than the ones that are old with the special permit.  
15 Contrary to other fishing gears that crowd along the bottom,  
16 plucking coral fans and getting stuck on the bottom, when we  
17 combine it with the buoys, this gear acts as a spring that lifts  
18 the weight and moves the line to another place, with the current  
19 and with the weights, and that's what we call hopping.  
20  
21 For this reason, this equipment losses due to getting stuck on  
22 the bottom are minimal, and the possible damage to the seabed is  
23 almost zero, and I have seen the pollution since I was a kid,  
24 and I started fishing deepwater snapper since I was twelve years  
25 old, and I have got to tell you that it is the least harmful  
26 fishing gear for the deepwater snapper group.  
27  
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Nelson. The other question, Miguel,  
29 was for Jocelyn, correct?  
30  
31 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You have Vanessa and you have Graciela that want  
32 to ask a question to Pauco.  
33  
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Vanessa, go ahead.  
35  
36 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Thank you, Marcos. First, I want to give  
37 Pauco my support. I have been looking at this since 2016, when  
38 I had the -- We worked together on the MREP, and so I think  
39 that, in these three questions, we have something important.  
40 First, for how many fishermen we have, at least in Cabo Rojo, I  
41 can say that I have twelve of them, but, as Pauco says, I think  
42 that the best person in here that can say that is the one that  
43 works in the lab and gets the statistics of them.  
44  
45 Also, when I use to work with Russell's Fish Market, we have the  
46 line in Rincon and Anasco, and we have like seven or ten  
47 fishermen from that area, and so I think that, as Pauco says, in  
48 the west, this is the one that they are using, all of the



1 fishermen that go for the deep snappers.

2  
3 The second, if this is permitted or not, I think that we have  
4 already seen the presentation of the gears, but, as we already  
5 know, some things that work in the Gulf don't necessarily work  
6 in the Caribbean, and so I suggest that we take the information  
7 and this great presentation and this letter that Pauco made for  
8 us, to be sure that the commercial fishermen are here about the  
9 problem that they are having, and we should analyze it, and, to  
10 the other council members, read the letter and support our  
11 commercial fishermen. Thank you.

12  
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Vanessa. Next is Graciela.

14  
15 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the  
16 things that the staff has been doing has been looking around to  
17 see if we can find information on the description of the gears  
18 that are used in the local fisheries, and, in speaking to the  
19 people who actually conducted some of these surveys back in the  
20 1980s, there hasn't been an update on the description of fishing  
21 gear at least for twenty years.

22  
23 One of the things that would need to be done is to actually have  
24 a description of all the gears that are being used, because,  
25 when they come to the landings, they all could get tangled  
26 together, and everything is reported under line gear or  
27 something like that, and so it's really difficult to document  
28 the changes in the gears and how they make it more efficient and  
29 less damaging to the habitat when we don't have that information  
30 at hand.

31  
32 Having heard from the Science Center earlier today, and having  
33 heard from Pauco and Vanessa on the issues with the gear, I  
34 think it would be timely to be thinking about some research or  
35 some report on the description of these gears from both Puerto  
36 Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Thank you.

37  
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Graciela.

39  
40 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Now is where you need to have the key discussion.  
41 If you look at the regulations that we have now, all this gear  
42 is illegal, because you have more than ten hooks and all that,  
43 and so this is when we need to ask Jocelyn that, if the council  
44 decides to modify the present regulations in any way or form,  
45 first, can we do it, and, second, how long will it take for the  
46 council to make the change?

47  
48 If we have a regulatory framework that allows us to do that,

1 it's kind of easy. If we have to amend the present management  
2 plans, you can do so, but we also will encounter, hopefully, the  
3 approval of the island-based FMPs in 2021, and so my two  
4 questions to Jocelyn, for the sake of the discussion, is, one,  
5 is this gear allowable, and, second, if not, what are the  
6 chances of the council being able to modify the present  
7 regulations to make this a legal gear for this type of fishery?

8  
9 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thanks, Miguel. Would it be possible to  
10 show the gear as well as the eighth slide in the presentation,  
11 which is the definition of buoy gear, so we could see them at  
12 the same time?

13  
14 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** I don't have Jocelyn's presentation. Liajay  
15 was the one who was projecting it.

16  
17 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Liajay or Graciela, can you do it?

18  
19 **LIAJAY RIVERA:** Which slide would it be?

20  
21 **MIGUEL ROLON:** It's the one that Jocelyn presented with the  
22 definitions. Liajay, can you put the drawing next to it?

23  
24 **LIAJAY RIVERA:** I will need a second, because I don't have the  
25 picture right now on hand, but I have it --

26  
27 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** I will send it to you.

28  
29 **LIAJAY RIVERA:** Please do. Thank you.

30  
31 **MIGUEL ROLON:** In the meantime, Mr. Chairman, this is the crux  
32 of the discussion, and there is also the part about anchoring  
33 that we can also discuss in the same way, and so, when we  
34 finish, you will have a clear indication of what we can be done  
35 regarding the gear and what can be done, if anything, regarding  
36 the anchoring in the Grammanik Bank and any other place.

37  
38 The other thing that will be a corollary to this is the  
39 compatible regulations, because, in the case of Puerto Rico, we  
40 have Bajo de Sico with one regulation from the local government  
41 and another one from the federal government, and the fishermen  
42 are always asking when can you fix this, so we have only one  
43 regulation, set of regulations, for Bajo de Sico, and it creates  
44 confusion, and Mr. Font, for example, has been intervened a  
45 couple of times, and other fishers, while they were in the EEZ.

46  
47 **PAUCO FONT:** (Mr. Font's comment was in Spanish and was not  
48 transcribed.)

1  
2 **MIGUEL ROLON:** We would like for Jocelyn to continue her answer  
3 to the question, now that we have both the drawing and the  
4 narrative on the screen.

5  
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead, Jocelyn.

7  
8 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Okay. Thank you. Thank you for putting  
9 those together, and I think this just allows us to see the  
10 regulatory definition of buoy gear and then the gear that is  
11 being used. As Miguel noted, one of the limits for something to  
12 be considered buoy gear is that it can't have more than ten  
13 hooks, and so that would be a limiting factor, and, from the  
14 drawing and the discussion, it seems like fishers are using  
15 between fifteen and twenty hooks, and so that's more than the  
16 number of hooks to be considered buoy gear, and so, on that  
17 alone, it wouldn't meet the definition of buoy gear.

18  
19 There is some other requirements here that I think are met, that  
20 it's a single drop line descended from the float, and the weight  
21 is the correct size, no more than ten pounds, and it looks like  
22 this is not constructed of cable or wire, and then there's the  
23 limit on the length of the line, and so we haven't really heard  
24 much about that, but it says a drop line can't be greater than  
25 two-times the depth of the water being fished, and then the  
26 hooks must be attached to the drop line no more than thirty feet  
27 from the terminal end, and so it looks like the hooks are close  
28 to the terminal end, but those two requirements, the length of  
29 the line and the placement of the hooks, they're getting at  
30 trying to avoid this gear from dragging on the bottom.

31  
32 When we've talked about this gear before, a lot of the  
33 conversation was about whether it was a bottom longline, and I  
34 know Nelson mentioned that the gear doesn't drag on the bottom  
35 and it bounces, and it's important to make sure that the gear  
36 doesn't drag on the bottom, because then it becomes bottom  
37 longline gear, because, on the previous slide, where I had the  
38 definition of bottom longline gear, it says that it's deployed,  
39 or capable of being deployed, to maintain contact with the  
40 bottom, and so we don't want the gear dragging along the bottom.

41  
42 If it's not bottom longline gear, then it might qualify as buoy  
43 gear, but, here, it looks like we have that hook limit that  
44 we're running into, and then, if the fishers could speak to the  
45 length of the line, that would be important to know. Does it  
46 meet that requirement that the line is not greater than two-  
47 times the depth of the water being fished?

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** I will give the opportunity to Edwin and Nelson  
2 to comment on this, but I want to make a comment that is very  
3 important. The gear interaction with the bottom with the bottom  
4 longline pretty much is the hooks and the setting of the  
5 terminal tackle to fish on the bottom.

6  
7 Those hooks, the way it's described on the buoy gear, the  
8 deepwater snapper buoy gear, there is one hook that has  
9 proximity with the bottom, but it's not in direct interaction  
10 with the bottom, and it's not designed for that, and it's closer  
11 to the bottom, but it's not on the bottom, and that's important,  
12 and the amount of line -- I have fished for deepwater snapper  
13 before, a long time ago, and, if it's 1,000 feet, we put a few  
14 feet of line extra, depending on the current, to balance the  
15 gear in the current, but, for sure, it complies with that  
16 requirement that you stated. I would like to hear from Edwin  
17 and Nelson. Edwin, go ahead.

18  
19 **EDWIN FONT:** (Mr. Font's comment was in Spanish and was not  
20 transcribed.)

21  
22 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The other thing that you have to modify, if you  
23 agree, is the number of hooks, and so there are three items in  
24 the present regulation for buoy gear that you have to address,  
25 and so please spend your time addressing this part, because  
26 that's the key to the whole discussion.

27  
28 In essence, you have the depth of the lines, or the length of  
29 the lines, that comply with the depths required. The weight, so  
30 far, Mr. Font's weight is only eight pounds, and so it's okay,  
31 but you have to also ask whether this would be twelve pounds  
32 rather than ten, and then the number of hooks, from ten, if you  
33 look at the drawing on the left, you have fifteen to twenty  
34 hooks, and so you need to also address this part. Thank you,  
35 Marcos.

36  
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. We have Nelson.

38  
39 **NELSON CRESPO:** Regarding the amount of hooks, it's very  
40 important that we are modifying this gear. Since the beginning,  
41 we started using between forty and fifty hooks, and now we are  
42 going down to twenty, and it's very important, that number of  
43 hooks, because the type of fishing we do is only for a few  
44 hours, and we have to fight with the currents and the water  
45 conditions, and sometimes we only have one hour or two hours  
46 during the day to do our work. The rest of the day, we are just  
47 waiting to fish, and that's the importance of the hooks.

1 Thinking about this, if there's one way, and I am asking  
2 Jocelyn, to assign another type of gear on the regulatory  
3 amendment or something that can deal with this issue.

4  
5 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** I think in terms of, if you want to have a  
6 change, you're going to have to change the definition of buoy  
7 gear as it applies in the U.S. Caribbean, and so this gear  
8 definition actually is in the section of the regulations that  
9 defines the gear for the Gulf of Mexico, the South Atlantic, and  
10 the Caribbean.

11  
12 You could say, in the U.S. Caribbean, buoy gear means, and then  
13 change the definition in a way that fits the way the gear is  
14 used, and, right now, it looks like it's just that hook  
15 requirement, or you could define a new gear, and so you could  
16 define deepwater snapper buoy gear, and you could set forth a  
17 definition there. I just would encourage you to consider  
18 putting in some of these specifics that make sure that it's not  
19 used as a bottom longline, because that was motivating the  
20 requirements here.

21  
22 Then Miguel had asked about process, if the council wanted to go  
23 the amendment route, and so we're in the position now where we  
24 have island-based FMPs that the council has submitted for  
25 approval by the Secretary of Commerce. Those FMPs are before  
26 the Secretary, and the decision needs to be made in September,  
27 by the end of September, and so, at that point in time, those  
28 FMPs likely will be approved, but they haven't been yet, and so,  
29 if they are approved, we could amend the definitions in the  
30 island-based FMPs.

31  
32 We probably don't want to begin a process to try to amend the  
33 regulations that are implementing the Reef Fish FMP, because we  
34 have less than eight weeks, probably, where those are going to  
35 be in place, and, again, we don't know if the plans are going to  
36 be approved, but, if they are, then then would replace the Reef  
37 Fish FMP, and so, in terms of the process for that amendment,  
38 there is different types of amendments that the council would  
39 pursue, and this would be just a regular plan amendment to  
40 redefine the gears for the fishery, and, again, you could modify  
41 that definition of buoy gear, or you could come up with another  
42 type of gear and name for it and define it that way.

43  
44 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Mr. Chairman, you have Maria Lopez and Richard  
45 Appeldoorn waiting for a turn to speak.

46  
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Maria.

1 **MARIA LOPEZ:** I just have a question regarding if this gear is  
2 also used in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and, if it is, and if they  
3 are interested in also making these changes, because now, as  
4 Jocelyn mentioned, this is going to be an amendment to the  
5 island-based FMPs, and we need to decide if this is something  
6 that would apply to them as well. Thank you.

7  
8 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos or Julian or Tony?

9  
10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We would definitely want to jump on that  
11 bandwagon for our St. Croix FMP, and that's the same gear that  
12 the St. Croix fishers use for deepwater snapper, queen snapper  
13 and silk snapper. The only difference there is that we use a  
14 single twenty-five-inch or sixty-inch buoy, but we use twenty-  
15 two hooks, or twenty hooks, and it's the same type of gear.  
16 It's bouncing on the bottom, and it doesn't drag, because they  
17 don't want it to snag and lose their gear, and so they don't  
18 allow it to drag, and so we would like to amend the FMP whenever  
19 it's signed, so that we can get it to be compatible to what the  
20 fishers use presently, in our FMP also.

21  
22 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, you have Julian and then Richard.

23  
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian.

25  
26 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Good afternoon. I agree with what Carlos  
27 Farchette just said and the recommendation from the fishers of  
28 Puerto Rico, and I think it's a great opportunity, and, from  
29 listening to the lawyer, I think the best way to go about it is  
30 to create a new name for this type of fishing, to make it a lot  
31 easier, and then just add in the basic requirements and  
32 language, and that would be the way to go.

33  
34 I see this as being a more practical way for the deepwater  
35 fishers, even though we have very few here in St. Thomas, but  
36 it's a fishery that is exploitable, and so I think it's a great  
37 idea for us to move forward with this.

38  
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Julian.

40  
41 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You have Dr. Richard Appeldoorn.

42  
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Richard.

44  
45 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Thank you. I am a little concerned about  
46 the weight bouncing along the bottom and how this fits into your  
47 definitions relative to prohibitions on bottom fishing. That is  
48 targeting that you don't want to catch fish on the bottom, and

1 maybe that's okay, if the regulations are trying to protect  
2 habitat, and I don't know how this fits in, but I think it's a  
3 question that, when you define it, and you have prohibitions on  
4 the use of bottom gear, whether this would fit in or not fit in,  
5 and so I think you have to work that into your definition.

6  
7 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, if I may.

8  
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead, Miguel.

10  
11 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Okay. The easiest way to do this is just to  
12 change the number of hooks, because you won't surprise anybody  
13 with a new name. The buoy gear is already -- It went through  
14 the whole process of being defined and everything, and, if you  
15 look at the drawing that you have here, the only change that you  
16 need is the number of hooks, and so it will be easier to make  
17 the amendment, and you, from the record, will be amending the  
18 three island-based FMPs at the same time, simultaneously, and  
19 this is important that, when you finish today, you allow the  
20 people -- That you will know what it -- Then I have Jocelyn has  
21 asked for a turn to speak.

22  
23 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thank you. If the fishers were using ten  
24 hooks or fewer, then it would be buoy gear, and that would be an  
25 authorized gear. If there's a need to use more hooks, and  
26 that's what the council would like to pursue, then it could  
27 amend the definitions.

28  
29 To Richard's point, the last slide, the thirteenth slide, notes  
30 the areas where fishing with pots, traps, bottom longlines,  
31 gillnets or trammel nets, is prohibited, and we can look at the  
32 reasons for putting those in place, but I think that's a good  
33 point, that, if those were to protect the bottom, the council  
34 should consider that any gear that bounces off the bottom could  
35 have similar impacts and whether you would want to expand the  
36 types of gears that can't be used in that area.

37  
38 You could say that -- If you were calling this like a deepwater  
39 snapper buoy gear, you could add that to the list of gear that  
40 you might limit in those areas, if that was something that the  
41 record supported.

42  
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Jocelyn. It's a low-  
44 footprint gear compared to others, and that was the point that  
45 Pauco and Nelson brought to the table, but I agree with the  
46 observation of Richard, which is very important. Maria del Mar.

47  
48 **MARIA LOPEZ:** I just wanted to make a comment. Like, if the

1 fishers make a decision to change the number of hooks, then that  
2 would also have to be considered like in terms of enforcement,  
3 if there are differences between the regulations in territorial  
4 waters and federal waters, and so that's just something to keep  
5 in mind, and that's something that we can definitely explore  
6 when we pursue that amendment, if that's what the council would  
7 like to do.

8  
9 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You have Graciela, Marcos.

10  
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Graciela, go ahead.

12  
13 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** From Kevin's presentation earlier  
14 today, you saw a video of the silk snapper muddy and sandy  
15 bottom type of place, and so we are deploying video cameras in  
16 and around the areas of the silk and the queen snappers over the  
17 next year or so, and it will be recorded for Puerto Rico and St.  
18 Thomas and St. Croix, working with the local fishers and their  
19 gear.

20  
21 That information on the habitats where they are fished and the  
22 actual way that it is being fished, because that was part of  
23 what Kevin presented today, is part of the information that is  
24 being gathered, in terms of the fishing gears, and the final  
25 thing is that there are slight differences in the way that these  
26 gears are fished among the islands, and that's part of the  
27 reason why the need for the documentation that we're going to be  
28 hopefully doing in the near future. Thank you.

29  
30 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You have Jocelyn, Marcos.

31  
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Jocelyn, go ahead.

33  
34 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thank you. One final question about the  
35 gear is, for buoy gear, it has to be not connected to other gear  
36 or the vessel, and so it has to be free floating, and I don't  
37 know if it's ever connected to the vessel, and I know there is  
38 the reel there, and the definition of "automatic reel" would be  
39 a reel that remains attached to the vessel when in use and from  
40 which a line is paid out, and I don't know if they are ever used  
41 with buoy gear and if that would be an appropriate  
42 interpretation of the definition of automatic reel, but  
43 automatic reel is an authorized gear in the fishery, and so  
44 that's something else to consider, and it's sort of a factual  
45 question for persons, if they think it would be appropriate to  
46 consider a reel and the buoy attached to the vessel as automatic  
47 reel.



1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, Jocelyn, and, on that, that reel that you  
2 see on the drawing is the spool that goes to the electric reel  
3 on the moment of retrieval. The reel itself, the electric reel,  
4 obviously doesn't go in the water, and this gear is designed to  
5 be detached from the boat. What Pauco was explaining before,  
6 is, if they are dropping, and the weight gets to the bottom, and  
7 they have a very aggressive bite in that moment, they will  
8 operate the gear -- They could operate the gear from the boat in  
9 that moment on very special occasions, but the gear is designed  
10 to be released on the water and detached from the boat.

11  
12 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, the point that Jocelyn is bringing is  
13 that, if you are going to change the island-based definition of  
14 this, you have two avenues. One is you leave the buoy gear as-  
15 is and change the number of hooks, and then you need to add  
16 another gear definition, and, as Nelson is proposing, call it  
17 fishing gear for deepwater, and then you define the possibility  
18 of having this line attached to any equipment on the boat.

19  
20 The question to Pauco and Nelson is do you have this gear  
21 attached to your boat by any means, in any form, aside from  
22 using the buoy? That's to Nelson and Pauco.

23  
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead, Nelson.

25  
26 **NELSON CRESPO:** How Marcos said, and the only moment when that  
27 gear is connected to the buoy is when we lift it up, and it's  
28 only special moments that, if we feel the fish biting at the  
29 moment the weight hits the bottom, we put it up right away,  
30 because we don't know the -- 99 percent of the time, that gear  
31 is drifting in the water alone.

32  
33 **MIGUEL ROLON:** That qualifies for a retrieval of the buoy and  
34 not the actual fishing from the buoy, doesn't it, Nelson?

35  
36 **NELSON CRESPO:** Yes.

37  
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** That's correct, Miguel. Pauco and then Carlos.

39  
40 **PAUCO FONT:** (Mr. Font's comment was in Spanish and was not  
41 transcribed.)

42  
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Marcos, you have Carlos and then Roy Crabtree.

44  
45 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I agree with what Nelson was saying. Over on  
46 St. Croix, the fishermen don't keep that line tied to the boat  
47 or to the electric reel. They do the same thing. They pick it  
48 up and hook it on and reel it up and deploy. They deploy about

1 three or four of those buoys, and so, by the time they deploy  
2 the fourth one, they go back to the first one and start pulling.  
3 The only people that use electric gear and it bounces off the  
4 bottom at 1,800 feet are those fishermen that are fishing for  
5 swordfish. I also believe that all we really need to do is just  
6 change the amount of hooks in the amendment, and ten hooks is  
7 just too little.

8  
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. I have a question for Jocelyn. I am in  
10 agreement with --

11  
12 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, a point of order. You have to let Roy  
13 Crabtree talk first.

14  
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. I didn't see it in the chat.  
16 Roy.

17  
18 **ROY CRABTREE:** Well, I just was going to say that, assuming that  
19 you want to change the number of hooks to some higher number,  
20 you could do that, but the problem I see that you have is a  
21 timing one. I mean, this gear is not currently legal, and so  
22 they really need to be fishing with ten hooks or less in order  
23 to be legal, and my guess is, to do a plan amendment and change  
24 this, you're looking at next summer before it would be  
25 effective, and so that's just the reality, because you're going  
26 to have to get the island plans implemented, and then staff will  
27 have to prepare a plan amendment, and I'm not really sure that  
28 you would be able to vote that up until next spring some time,  
29 and then it has to go through a rulemaking and public comment  
30 and all, and so I don't have an opinion one way or another about  
31 the gear, but it does seem that it's going to take a good while  
32 to change this.

33  
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Roy. I have a question for Jocelyn.  
35 On the slide that you have with the possibilities of how to  
36 address this, I saw the fisher notification, and to include on  
37 the island-based FMPs as part of our development of the  
38 authorized gears under the island-based FMPs.

39  
40 My question is, is it possible to look for the inclusion of the  
41 island-based FMPs of that gear, and, in the meantime, each  
42 individual fisherman that desires to submit the fisher  
43 notification, those two processes together, with the intention  
44 of allowing -- I mean, to do this faster for the fishermen, to  
45 be able to comply and to follow with a process that is quicker.

46  
47 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thank you, Marcos. On the presentation,  
48 that's Slide 11, if you could move to that. Yes, there is a

1 process where the fishers can notify the council of the intent  
2 to use a gear that's not listed on the gear table, and so the  
3 table lists longline and hook-and-line, and then we follow all  
4 those definitions to get to buoy gear, and, because it has more  
5 hooks than the definition of buoy gear, it's not considered buoy  
6 gear, and so the fishers could individually notify the council  
7 that they would like to use this gear, and there is a specific  
8 process set forth in the regulations, and, after ninety days,  
9 that individual could use the gear, unless action has been taken  
10 to prohibit it.

11  
12 That could also spark a process to have NMFS amend the  
13 regulations to allow the use of the gear, and so you could  
14 pursue that immediately, and the fishers could submit those  
15 notices, and then those individuals might be able to use the  
16 gear sooner, and we could also be pursuing an amendment process  
17 simultaneously.

18  
19 The other thing is Roy is correct that, if it's not an  
20 authorized gear, then it's unlawful fishing, and so, to remedy  
21 that, you would need to reduce the number of hooks they are  
22 using to ten for it to be considered a lawful buoy gear.  
23 Otherwise, there are other gears that the persons could use, and  
24 they could use automatic reel attached to the vessel, or some of  
25 the other hook-and-line gear, but, as it's drawn out, it's  
26 unlawful gear.

27  
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** I understand. Let me see if I understand. If  
29 Edwin Font, which was the original fisherman that requested  
30 this, sent the -- If he notified the council about his intent of  
31 using this gear, and if we as a council requested for this gear  
32 to be included in the island-based FMPs, it's two parallel  
33 processes running.

34  
35 In the meantime, Pauco, Edwin Font, receives his letter, or the  
36 determination, after the ninety days and so on, like you  
37 explained, and he will need, before that time, that  
38 authorization, to use ten hooks on the buoy until the answer  
39 arrives, and do I understand correctly?

40  
41 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Yes, that's correct.

42  
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. I would like to hear from Pauco and  
44 from Nelson, and you guys are the experts on this, and what I  
45 just stated is what I recommend to do, and I want to hear from  
46 you guys.

47  
48 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, you have Roy before that wants to speak

1 again.

2  
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Roy Crabtree, go ahead.

4  
5 **ROY CRABTREE:** Well, I didn't have anything more.

6  
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Roy.

8  
9 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The other thing that I was going to mention to  
10 you is that you have to be careful what you put on the record,  
11 because, right now, the gear has been illegal since the get-go,  
12 and this is not something that was invented yesterday.  
13 Actually, by Pauco's testimony here, over 90 percent of all the  
14 deepwater snappers and groupers that you get are caught with  
15 this gear.

16  
17 I believe that what the council should do is to start the  
18 process of amending the process of the three-island-based FMPs,  
19 and it will take some time, as has been stated before, and that  
20 the staff will need to start working on this. From the council  
21 point of view, we need to instruct the staff to go ahead and  
22 modify what is needed to be modified.

23  
24 The only thing that we need to do is to increase the number of  
25 hooks for this gear, and then so be it, and you have to tell us  
26 how many hooks you would like to have here from the drawing that  
27 you have. On the gear that you have here, on the drawing, you  
28 have fifteen to twenty hooks, and so, if that's the top, then  
29 you can say that the council would move forward to amend the  
30 three island-based FMPs to include twenty-five hooks, or no more  
31 than twenty-five hooks, per buoy.

32  
33 Then you have to also reaffirm that the weight at the bottom is  
34 ten pounds or less, and you don't have to say anything else.  
35 Then the buoy gear will be modified accordingly, but you have to  
36 decide this today via a motion of some sort.

37  
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nelson.

39  
40 **NELSON CRESPO:** I totally agree with Miguel. This gear was  
41 being used before all the regulations started, and I agree with  
42 Miguel that no more than twenty-five hooks, and that's more than  
43 enough, and it's safer for all the parts, from the environmental  
44 and from the fishermen, and so, regarding the request for an  
45 option for fishers to use other gears, well, if we have to do  
46 it, we are going through that, because we don't want to be out  
47 of business.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Miguel, you need a motion from any of the council  
2 members?

3  
4 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Yes, from the council members.

5  
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead, Pauco.

7  
8 **EDWIN FONT:** (Mr. Font's comments were in Spanish and were not  
9 transcribed.)

10  
11 **MIGUEL ROLON:** What the council is trying to do here with the  
12 discussion and everything that we heard is to speed up the  
13 process, and, from Roy Crabtree and Maria del Mar and others, it  
14 will take an amendment to the island-based FMPs that will be in  
15 place hopefully for the first half of 2021, next year, and then  
16 Jocelyn suggested that, for the fishers, for the time being,  
17 that the fishers should use ten hooks per gear, if this is what  
18 you're going to use.

19  
20 I know that people go around thinking that I'm going to do this,  
21 and I'm going to keep using twenty-five, and, if I see somebody  
22 approaching the boat, I will detach it to the bottom and say I'm  
23 not using the gear and use a new one.

24  
25 A new definition for gear is like reinventing the wheel, and so,  
26 Mr. Chairman, we need to hear from the rest of the council  
27 members and see if you have a motion to keep the discussion and  
28 then close the discussion at 2:30, or you can close it later,  
29 because you have ample time.

30  
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Miguel, this has been for the fishermen of Puerto  
32 Rico, and we are ready to discuss fishermen of the other  
33 regions, and the USVI is an important issue. I'm speaking for  
34 myself, and I am not really clear on the timing, and this  
35 question is for Jocelyn. Jocelyn, I am willing to make a motion  
36 to move this forward, but I am not really clear which is the  
37 most efficient way to address this, and can you guide me on  
38 this? Is it like Miguel said, to just change it to ten hooks,  
39 and that can be done by a motion today, or we have to -- Would  
40 it be better to include it in the island-based FMPs or a new  
41 gear, or what is the most efficient way to address this, which  
42 is the intention of the council?

43  
44 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thanks, Marcos. I think you could ask  
45 staff to begin work on an amendment that would address this gear  
46 issue, to evaluate authorizing the gear that's been presented  
47 here, and then you could allow staff to think about which way is  
48 the best way forward, whether it would be an amendment to

1 increase the number of hooks in the definition of buoy gear, as  
2 it applies in the Caribbean, or whether we want to define a new  
3 gear.

4  
5 One of the things a new gear definition might allow you to do,  
6 for example, would be to account for the fact that sometimes  
7 this gear might be attached to the vessel, and sometimes it's  
8 free floating, and so, rather than maybe prescribing the  
9 pathway, the motion could say something like the council  
10 requests staff to begin work on an amendment to the island-based  
11 FMPs to evaluate ways for the gear that's been presented at this  
12 meeting to be authorized in the fishery.

13  
14 I think, in that amendment, you would want to evaluate the  
15 effect of that gear change, and so, if you're allowing for a  
16 number more hooks, how that might affect bycatch and things of  
17 that nature, and so I think you would want to be able to have  
18 that amendment process that would give that full effects  
19 analysis.

20  
21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So moved.

22  
23 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, Carlos Farchette made a motion, and so  
24 probably what we should do is to allow Jocelyn to just dictate  
25 that to the Natalia, and then you will see it, and you can  
26 modify the language accordingly.

27  
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. This is what my request was.

29  
30 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Are we ready with the whiteboard? There you go.  
31 Jocelyn, can you just dictate slowly to Natalia the possible  
32 language that can be put in the motion?

33  
34 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Yes.

35  
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I will make a motion for the -- I make a  
37 motion to have staff amend the buoy gear definition for each  
38 island-based FMP by adding no more than twenty hooks per strand  
39 of buoy gear.

40  
41 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Carlos, let Natalia get the -- Can you say that  
42 to Natalia slowly, please?

43  
44 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** This is what Jocelyn wrote in the chat.

45  
46 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Yes, and does that agree with the intent of your  
47 motion, Carlos?

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes, except I don't know if we want to put  
2 the maximum number of hooks that would be allowed, or that could  
3 come later.  
4  
5 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You can do it now if you wish to, and that will  
6 give an indication to the staff of how to proceed.  
7  
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I was saying to change the definition of the  
9 hooks to more than twenty-five hooks per strand. I don't know  
10 where in there you might want to slip that in.  
11  
12 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You could have it after "gear".  
13  
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** After "gear". Right.  
15  
16 **MIGUEL ROLON:** After "gear", with no more than twenty-five hooks  
17 per line.  
18  
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Right.  
20  
21 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Then, Natalia, the "as presented" and say the  
22 motion was by Carlos, and we need a second.  
23  
24 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Second.  
25  
26 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Second by Tony Blanchard.  
27  
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** The motion was made by Carlos Farchette and  
29 seconded by Tony Blanchard. **The motion reads: The council**  
30 **requests that staff begin work on an amendment to the island-**  
31 **based FMPs that would allow for the use of the deepwater snapper**  
32 **buoy gear with no more than twenty-five hooks per line.**  
33  
34 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Mr. Chair, you have Roy Crabtree who  
35 wants to speak.  
36  
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Roy.  
38  
39 **ROY CRABTREE:** Thanks, Marcos. It seems to me, and, Jocelyn,  
40 help me out here, but there seems to me that there are some  
41 other issues with some of the lists of authorized gears that we  
42 probably ought to try to address. As I recall, there was an  
43 issue with gillnets not being prohibited for some of the new  
44 pelagics, but they are prohibited for others, and I'm wondering  
45 if this would be a good place to review some of these other  
46 discrepancies and try to straighten it all out in this  
47 amendment.  
48

1 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Roy, can we do that in a second motion, so this  
2 one will not lose the impact?  
3  
4 **ROY CRABTREE:** Yes, that would be fine.  
5  
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Roy.  
7  
8 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Because I had that in my list of topics after we  
9 discuss this one. Then, during the discussion, Mr. Chairman,  
10 Graciela just pointed out that, after this meeting, probably we  
11 need to send a bulletin to all fishers about the purse seine  
12 gear limitation, as to the number of hooks, but, right now, we  
13 need to have any further discussion and a final vote.  
14  
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** If there is no more discussion, let's vote on the  
16 motion that I just read.  
17  
18 **MIGUEL ROLON:** This should be a roll call.  
19  
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** A roll call? Carlos Farchette.  
21  
22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.  
23  
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Tony Blanchard.  
25  
26 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Yes.  
27  
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Vanessa Ramirez.  
29  
30 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Yes.  
31  
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Damaris.  
33  
34 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Yes.  
35  
36 **MARCOS HANKE:** Roy Crabtree.  
37  
38 **ROY CRABTREE:** Yes.  
39  
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nicole Angeli.  
41  
42 **NICOLE ANGELI:** Yes.  
43  
44 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. All in favor, and the motion carries.  
45  
46 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Mr. Chairman, I'm glad that was Roy that brought  
47 it up, but I have a list here of other topics related to gear,  
48 and the nets is the next one, and so probably we should allow



1 Roy to restate what he said about the nets, and he can start the  
2 discussion.

3  
4 **ROY CRABTREE:** Well, Jocelyn and Maria can explain it better  
5 than me, but, as I understand it, we have added some new species  
6 in, and so some of the issues we have with gillnets and other  
7 gears may not be consistent, and so what I would suggest we do  
8 in this amendment is review some of those and add some options  
9 in there make changes to other types of gears, as might be  
10 required, and I would say that Jocelyn and Maria can explain it  
11 better.

12  
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Maria, can you explain a little more detail?

14  
15 **MARIA LOPEZ:** Jocelyn is going to explain it from the legal  
16 perspective, and I am going to be available to provide  
17 additional comment. Jocelyn, if you may.

18  
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you.

20  
21 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thank you. The regulations right now are -  
22 - They are implemented in the Reef Fish FMP, and they are going  
23 to be included in the regulations implementing the island-based  
24 FMPs, and this was in the island-based FMPs, and they were  
25 carried over, and they prohibit the use of gillnets and trammel  
26 nets when fishing for the managed reef fish, and we confirmed at  
27 the meeting that the council intended that prohibition to be the  
28 reef fish as they would be managed under the island-based FMPs,  
29 and so the new species that were added.

30  
31 Then there's also the prohibition on the use of gillnets and  
32 trammel nets when fishing for spiny lobster, but there is no  
33 specific prohibition on the use of those gears, the gillnet and  
34 the trammel nets, when fishing for the pelagic species. That  
35 gear table that we've been speaking about lists a pelagic non-  
36 FMP fishery, and it indicates that gillnets are an authorized  
37 gear there, and so, if the council wanted to prohibit those  
38 gears when used to fish for pelagics, it could do this in a gear  
39 amendment.

40  
41 There are, of course, the area restrictions that were in the  
42 presentation, and so fishing with gillnets, irrespective of the  
43 target, is prohibited year-round in some of those specific  
44 areas, including Bajo de Sico and the Grammanik Bank and the red  
45 hind spawning aggregation areas and the mutton spawning  
46 aggregation areas, but, if the council wanted to prohibit it  
47 more broadly, then it could consider doing that when fishing for  
48 all of the managed pelagic species.

1  
2 One other factual question is, in these gear tables, we're  
3 trying to note the gears that are used in the fishery, and so a  
4 question that we could explore, in putting together that  
5 amendment, is whether gillnets and trammel nets are used to fish  
6 for the pelagic species that the council is now managing, and  
7 there are different pelagic species managed in the different  
8 island-based FMPs.

9  
10 For St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix, I think it's just dolphin  
11 and wahoo, and, for Puerto Rico, it's dolphin and wahoo and then  
12 some mackerels and tunas as well, and barracuda, I believe,  
13 also.

14  
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Jocelyn. That was my question, on the  
16 pelagics at least, of the species that we manage, dolphin and  
17 wahoo, cero mackerel, king mackerel, blackfin tuna, little  
18 tunny, and is there anything else that I'm missing?

19  
20 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Give me a second, and I can pull up the  
21 FMP.

22  
23 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, in the meantime, while she looks for the  
24 species, what we need to do at this time is to hear what the  
25 council would like to proceed with with the issue of the nets  
26 and the other species, and perhaps what we need to do is to  
27 instruct the staff to look at this in detail for the three  
28 island-based FMPs, because, in some cases, one regulation may  
29 not apply to another area. Then, by the December meeting, or  
30 whenever applicable, you will be able to have more information.

31  
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** I understand that, and the reason I made the  
33 question is exactly to create a situation in which the council  
34 could participate efficiently, knowing the species that we are  
35 talking about, or the fishery that we are talking about, and I'm  
36 going to give an opportunity for the rest of the council to  
37 speak, and I am going to end with my comments. From the Virgin  
38 Islands, Carlos, or anybody from the Virgin Islands, do you have  
39 something to say about this?

40  
41 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes, I do.

42  
43 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Mr. Chairman, a point of order, again. You have  
44 Sarah Stephenson who asked for a turn to speak before Carlos.

45  
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. I'm sorry. I'm having trouble seeing my  
47 chat. Thank you for the help, Miguel. Sarah Stephenson.

1 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I just wanted to read you the list of pelagic  
2 species for Puerto Rico. It's tripletail, dolphin, pompano  
3 dolphin, little tunny, blackfin tuna, king mackerel, cero  
4 mackerel, wahoo, and great barracuda. For both St. Thomas and  
5 St. John and St. Croix, the only pelagic species are dolphin and  
6 wahoo. Thank you.  
7  
8 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Sarah. That was very  
9 helpful. Carlos.  
10  
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Actually, I don't have much discussion, and  
12 I'm just ready with a motion, but I will let somebody else talk  
13 if they have some discussion, or should I make the motion and  
14 then we discuss?  
15  
16 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Well, you can have the motion now and discuss it,  
17 if we follow Roberts Rules, and so go ahead and make your  
18 motion, and then you will have the discussion.  
19  
20 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. I move to request staff to begin work  
21 on prohibiting the use of gill and trammel nets for all managed  
22 species in each IBFMP.  
23  
24 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Second.  
25  
26 **MIGUEL ROLON:** So Carlos and Tony.  
27  
28 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Then I have a question. Can I go ahead and  
29 ask the question?  
30  
31 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Yes, but let's allow Marcos to read it and ask  
32 for the discussion.  
33  
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** The motion reads to request staff to begin work  
35 on prohibiting the use of gill and trammel nets for all managed  
36 species in each IBFMP.  
37  
38 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Then, Marcos, you have Carlos, Edwin Font,  
39 Graciela, and Maria Lopez.  
40  
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead, Carlos.  
42  
43 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I just wanted to figure out how, for the St.  
44 Croix FMP, how we can include the tunas and mackerels and all  
45 that stuff, and so basically any coastal pelagic or HMS species.  
46  
47 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, Maria wants to modify the motion, and so  
48 perhaps we should allow her to speak first, with the permission

1 of the other speakers.  
2  
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Maria.  
4  
5 **MARIA LOPEZ:** I just wanted to suggest additional text, or  
6 different text, for the motion, maybe for some clarity, if  
7 possible. I would like to say that the council requests staff  
8 to begin work on an amendment to each of the island-based FMPs  
9 to consider whether gillnets and trammel nets should be  
10 authorized gears when fishing for managed pelagic species. Then  
11 you can delete the rest of the --  
12  
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos Farchette, you are the owner of the  
14 motion. Do you agree with the change in the language?  
15  
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Absolutely.  
17  
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Tony Blanchard, do you agree with the change in  
19 the language?  
20  
21 **MARIA LOPEZ:** I apologize, but, thinking about it a little bit  
22 more, maybe we should make it more broad, because, if there are  
23 other gears that we need to devise, or maybe you can add  
24 something else to this motion to request the council look into  
25 other gears, to make it clear, because, during the conversation,  
26 I think it was Graciela that was mentioning something about  
27 revising the gears that are traditionally used in all the  
28 fisheries, and that we haven't done that in a long time, and so  
29 maybe the council is interested in adding something like that as  
30 well.  
31  
32 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You can add "or any applicable gears", plus the  
33 nets, and so any other applicable gears, and that would satisfy  
34 what Graciela and Maria are talking about.  
35  
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Applicable or allowable?  
37  
38 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Applicable. Anyway, Maria is -- Is this  
39 acceptable, or would you like to modify it?  
40  
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos.  
42  
43 **MARIA LOPEZ:** Excuse me, but I want to clarify that we should be  
44 able to do all of this in the same amendment. It's two motions,  
45 but it's two related actions, and so we should be able to  
46 address all of this in the same amendment.  
47  
48 **MIGUEL ROLON:** That's fine, because that's the mechanics of

1 doing it, and so the important part is that the intent of the  
2 council is in these two motions. Then, Mr. Chair, I don't know  
3 if you see the chat, but we can continue with the other people  
4 who wanted to speak.

5  
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** We have Edwin Font in the queue.

7  
8 **EDWIN FONT:** (Mr. Font's comments were in Spanish and were not  
9 transcribed.)

10  
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Next is Tony Blanchard.

12  
13 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I think this should be even a little wider than  
14 just including the pelagic species. I think we should include  
15 the reef fish and the lobsters as well.

16  
17 **MIGUEL ROLON:** If you do that, just drop pelagics, and, if you  
18 say "species" after "managed", it will include everything, but I  
19 believe the intent, the original intent, was to address the  
20 pelagics, but, if the council wishes to do so, you can drop the  
21 "pelagics".

22  
23 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I move to drop the pelagic.

24  
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I have a question.

26  
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead, Carlos.

28  
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I thought that, in the EEZ, gill and trammel  
30 nets are already prohibited for the harvest of reef fish. Can  
31 somebody clarify that for me?

32  
33 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Carlos, that's true, but, if you would follow the  
34 discussion, and we don't have that much time, but, if you took  
35 out "pelagics", it incorporates everything, and then the staff  
36 will look at everything that has to be done. For example,  
37 Graciela told me that you have to make an inventory of the way  
38 that we operate to fish for this species, and so, if you follow  
39 Tony's idea and drop "pelagics", then that would include all the  
40 possible species you can think of.

41  
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Right, which my original had that for all  
43 species. Okay.

44  
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Do you agree with the change in the motion,  
46 Carlos?

47  
48 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes, and I agree with Maria's changes and

1 **Blanchard's changes.**

2  
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Miguel, I am going to put it for a  
4 vote if there is no further discussion. Let me see in the chat  
5 here. There is nobody else.

6  
7 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Edward Schuster has a question.

8  
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead, Ed.

10  
11 **EDWARD SCHUSTER:** There is certain types of fisheries that has  
12 been used here, and it has always been a problem with the  
13 definition of a gillnet. For example, the fishers that set a  
14 net to catch flyingfish, and there is another method where they  
15 use to catch the ocean gar, and, if these fishers, during the  
16 dolphin season, the mahi-mahi season, are caught with this type  
17 of gear onboard, would they be penalized, although it's a net  
18 that's used for catching flyingfish and ocean gar?

19  
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for the question. This is a question  
21 for Jocelyn, and it's just a comment, either the ocean gar and  
22 the flyingfish and the gear are baitfish gear, or not designed  
23 to catch bigger pelagics, like mahi. Go ahead, Jocelyn.

24  
25 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thank you. This would be something that we  
26 could explore, in terms of how the prohibition works. When  
27 gillnets and trammel nets were listed as a prohibited gear when  
28 fishing for reef fish in the spiny lobster, there was a note  
29 that it was for those species and this didn't effect when  
30 fishing for non-managed species, and so for some of those  
31 baitfish, but the regulations also say that, if you have a  
32 gillnet and trammel net onboard, and a reef fish, then that will  
33 be evidence of a violation.

34  
35 You can still use it to catch -- You can still currently use  
36 those gears to catch those baitfish, but, if you also have a  
37 reef fish onboard, they will assume, perhaps, that you were  
38 using that gear to fish for the reef fish, and that will be a  
39 violation, and so it does give some leeway to use the gear to  
40 fish for the non-managed species, but you have to be careful of  
41 what else you're catching, because of the presumption that  
42 possession of the gear, plus the managed reef fish, in my  
43 example, is a violation.

44  
45 That's a long way of saying that, in any amendment, we could  
46 talk about the consequences of that, given how the gear is used,  
47 but, for enforcement purposes, you probably would want to have a  
48 similar language that says, if you were going with a

1 prohibition, that gillnets and trammel nets can't be used to  
2 fish for pelagic species and possession of that gear plus the  
3 pelagic species is evidence of a violation, which would mean, in  
4 your example, if you were fishing for the baitfish with the  
5 gear, that's allowed, but, if you also caught a dolphin and kept  
6 it, and you were boarded, enforcement could say that's a  
7 violation, and so there is some leeway to allow the use of the  
8 gear for non-managed species, but the enforcement concerns shape  
9 the regulations.

10  
11 **EDWARD SCHUSTER:** Okay, and so isn't there any way that we could  
12 put into the language, because I could understand if you catch  
13 one fish, or say, for example, maybe one to five fish is an  
14 incidental, but, if you have anything exceeding five, or  
15 whatever number we pick, and I just chose five off the top of my  
16 head, because, if you have like twenty or twenty-five fish, or  
17 even ten fish, then it's no longer an incidental.

18  
19 I mean, if you have one fish that may, for whatever crazy  
20 reason, and I don't know, if it was just being nosy and wanted  
21 to swim up to the net or whatever and get caught, and it's a  
22 targeted species, and I think it should have an incidental  
23 leeway someplace, if the fish can't be relieved safely.

24  
25 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, if I may, all you're doing in this motion  
26 is to look at all those issues, and so we need to allow the  
27 staff to work on these issues and bring it to the table the next  
28 time that you meet, or whenever is appropriate, and, on these  
29 comments, Eddie and the others, it will be part of the record,  
30 so they can make a note and look into this matter, but, right  
31 now, we are not intending to have the regulations written in one  
32 motion at this time, but I believe what Eddie said is very  
33 important, that we consider that the staff look at the gear and  
34 the species and the areas that it will apply. Mr. Chairman, we  
35 have Carlos and then Maria Lopez asking for a turn to speak.

36  
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos.

38  
39 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** That point that Schuster brought up was a  
40 good one, and so I think that, somewhere in the future, we are  
41 going to come up -- I think that we're going to come up with a  
42 forage fish management plan, and we'll have to take a look at  
43 those next that are going to be allowed to harvest that, because  
44 the mesh size is kind of small, and I would assume that, if  
45 you're going to fish for mahi or tuna or wahoo, or any of the  
46 big pelagics, it's going to have to be a pretty big net.

47  
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Carlos. I agree with you also on the

1 length of the net, the size of the mesh, and how high the net  
2 is, and everything is different for those species. We have  
3 somebody else in the queue, which is Maria Lopez.

4  
5 **MARIA LOPEZ:** I just wanted to add that, so that when we begin  
6 work with this amendment, as requested by the council, we will  
7 be requesting your input, council members, and, also, if the  
8 council is interested, we can also request information from the  
9 District Advisory Panels, because I believe that the information  
10 -- You are the guys that know what's going on in your waters and  
11 what are the gears that you use and all the descriptions, and  
12 we're definitely looking forward to working with all of you to  
13 do this. I just want to put that on the table, because we will  
14 need that fisher collaboration with you when we start working on  
15 this plan. Thanks.

16  
17 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, I believe that you are ready to vote.

18  
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, and we need to speed up a little bit. We  
20 are ready for voting. **Is there anybody in opposition to the**  
21 **motion? Hearing none, the motion carries.** Is there any other  
22 motions or any other issues on gear? I think there is the  
23 anchoring.

24  
25 **MIGUEL ROLON:** You should move now to either the anchoring issue  
26 or Kim's presentation.

27  
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** How about to do Kim's presentation, which is  
29 going to be refresher in our minds, and something a little  
30 lighter, and we can go back to the anchoring discussion. That's  
31 a suggestion to the council. Are we all in agreement? Any  
32 opposition to doing that?

33  
34 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Well, if you say so, there's no opposition.

35  
36 **MARCOS HANKE:** I would like to see the presentation, Kim's  
37 presentation, about descending devices.

38  
39 **BEST FISHING PRACTICES PRESENTATION**

40  
41 **KIM IVERSON:** I'm here, and I think Christina is here as well.

42  
43 **CHRISTINA WIEGAND:** I am here. I will go ahead and start us  
44 off, if you're all right with that, Kim.

45  
46 **KIM IVERSON:** That sounds good. Thank you.

47  
48 **CHRISTINA WIEGAND:** Excellent. Good afternoon, everyone. I



1 want to thank you for giving us some time to talk about best  
2 fishing practices. Since I don't know many of you, my name is  
3 Christina Wiegand, and I was the staff lead on Snapper Grouper  
4 Amendment 29, which implemented regulations here in the South  
5 Atlantic related to best fishing practices, and so I'm going to  
6 give you just a very brief overview on what is now required in  
7 the South Atlantic and why our council pursued these  
8 regulations.

9  
10 Then I'm going to turn it over to Kim, who is going to give you  
11 all an update on the fantastic outreach efforts related to best  
12 fishing practices that our outreach team has been working on.

13  
14 The South Atlantic Council originally decided to take action on  
15 best fishing practices based on input that they received during  
16 their snapper grouper visioning process, which happened way back  
17 in the early 2010s, and it was a series of stakeholder-driven  
18 meetings to help identify strategies and objectives for managing  
19 the snapper grouper fishery, and, during those meetings,  
20 stakeholders continually expressed concern over released fish  
21 that don't survive, due to bowel hooking, barotrauma, or other  
22 injuries, and so the council really wanted to find an effective  
23 way to improve survivorship of these fish that had to be  
24 released due to size limits or reaching the bag limit or other  
25 regulatory reasons.

26  
27 To that end, descending devices are now required to be onboard  
28 vessels fishing for or possessing species in the snapper grouper  
29 fishery management unit, and this covers all sectors, and so  
30 commercial vessels, for-hire vessels, and private recreational  
31 vessels all have to have descending devices onboard.

32  
33 One of the things that the South Atlantic Council really  
34 struggled with was how they wanted to define a descending  
35 device, and the full definition they came up with is on the  
36 screen, and I know this presentation was provided in your  
37 briefing book, and so, in the interest of time, I'm not going to  
38 go over the entire thing, but I did want to draw your attention  
39 to a few key parts.

40  
41 First, the descending device is required to be attached to a  
42 minimum of sixteen ounces of weight and sixty feet of line, and  
43 then, additionally, the descending device must be readily  
44 available for use while engaged in fishing.

45  
46 The descending device regulation was put in place because  
47 research shows that the use of descending devices is an  
48 effective way to improve the survivorship of released fish, and

1 it decreases release mortality. As for the specifics of the  
2 definition, the sixteen-ounce weight requirement was chosen  
3 because it's easily available, and it's appropriate for most  
4 snapper grouper species, though it was acknowledged that some of  
5 the larger species may require more weight.

6  
7 Additionally, the sixty feet of line was chosen because fifty  
8 feet is the standard minimum depth that you see on commercially-  
9 available descending devices, and so a minimum of sixty feet of  
10 line ensures that a fish can get down to fifty feet, taking into  
11 account the gunnel of a boat.

12  
13 The council, with the definition, they really wanted to allow  
14 for the creation of homemade descending devices while still  
15 finding a way to ensure that the homemade devices were  
16 effective, because they felt that fishermen are innovative, and  
17 they know what's going to work best for their specific vessel  
18 and situation.

19  
20 It was acknowledged that allowing these homemade devices may be  
21 a challenge for law enforcement, which is one of the reasons  
22 we're working on an extensive outreach campaign that Kim is  
23 going to talk about in a minute, but we also worked closely with  
24 our law enforcement representatives, to ensure that the  
25 definition was going to work for them.

26  
27 We also got a lot of feedback from law enforcement that had  
28 experience enforcing similar regulations out on the west coast  
29 of the United States, and they indicated that enforcement hadn't  
30 really been a problem out there, and most fishermen were either  
31 in compliance, and, if they were out of compliance, they  
32 typically didn't have a descending device onboard at all.

33  
34 The next regulation was a requirement for non-offset non-  
35 stainless-steel circle hooks when fishing for snapper grouper  
36 species north of 28 degrees North latitude, which, for us, is  
37 just a little bit south of Cape Canaveral, Florida.  
38 Additionally, the council now requires that all hooks are made  
39 out of non-stainless-steel when fishing for snapper grouper  
40 species throughout the entire South Atlantic region.

41  
42 A general circle hook regulation has been on the books in the  
43 snapper grouper fishery for some time now, but the council  
44 wanted to require non-offset circle hooks specifically, because  
45 research shows that non-offset hooks reduce the occurrence of  
46 hooking-related mortalities, when compared to those hooks that  
47 are offset.

1 The reason they are only required north of that 28-degree line  
2 is because that, south of that area, the requirement would have  
3 resulted in some negative social and economic effects to the  
4 for-hire industry in that area, as well as the commercial  
5 yellowtail fishery in south Florida. Then, lastly, non-  
6 stainless-steel hooks are now required throughout the South  
7 Atlantic for snapper grouper because they degrade faster, and,  
8 thus, fish that are gut-hooked, or end up with a hook in them,  
9 they have a greater chance of survival.

10  
11 The circle hook and the descending device regulations were the  
12 big ones, and I am going to let Kim take over now and talk about  
13 all of the outreach that we've been doing to get the word out  
14 about these new regulations.

15  
16 **KIM IVERSON:** Thank you, Christina, and thank you for that quick  
17 overview of Regulatory Amendment 29. When Marcos and Miguel  
18 contacted me a few weeks ago and asked for us to review how we  
19 got to where we are with our best fishing practices, I reached  
20 out to Christina, and she was gracious enough, as the lead  
21 person on our tech staff, to go through that amendment, and, at  
22 the end of our presentation, we'll have our contact information,  
23 and so, if you have specific questions about the amendment,  
24 please feel free to reach out.

25  
26 Again, I know we're a little short on time, but one of the key  
27 elements in the discussion of best fishing practices and making  
28 the descending devices mandatory for fishermen that are  
29 targeting snapper grouper species and the hook regulations was  
30 outreach, and you know that you can make all the regulations in  
31 the world, but, if people aren't aware of the regulations, or  
32 understand why they are in place, then it's for naught.

33  
34 We have had great partnerships with our outreach efforts, and  
35 the outreach component of the amendment was included in the  
36 research and monitoring program, and that's how important the  
37 council felt that outreach was to this effort. We have worked  
38 with our community leaders, and we have reached out and used our  
39 partnerships with our advisory panel members, including our  
40 Outreach & Communications Advisory Panel.

41  
42 We have developed some wallet cards that we distributed in  
43 conjunction with implementation of the new requirements, and let  
44 me note that our red snapper fishery this year, recreational  
45 fishery, was four days.

46  
47 It lasted for four days in July, and the new regulations  
48 requiring the descending device use and the hook modifications

1 came out just between those four days. There was a three-day  
2 weekend, and then the regulations were implemented on July 15,  
3 and then, that following Friday, the red snapper recreational  
4 season opened again for one day.

5  
6 We had an opportunity and a challenge, at the same time, to make  
7 fishermen aware. We did press releases, and we sent out lots of  
8 social media postings, and, when I say "we", it's a team effort  
9 here, and I want to start by giving Cameron Rhodes, who is our  
10 Outreach Program Manager, full credit for this. She led this  
11 effort in every way, and we work together as a team, and so I  
12 wanted to briefly give the council just an overview of our  
13 outreach efforts.

14  
15 One of those is -- I mentioned the wallet cards, which we  
16 developed, and Cameron was instrumental in getting those printed  
17 and getting those out in the hands of law enforcement personnel  
18 and the states within our region, as well as Sea Grant and other  
19 agencies, and we were told that our boarding officers were using  
20 those to educate, and it wasn't an issue of writing tickets at  
21 the time, or citations, but it was educating the fishermen about  
22 the new requirements and also how to use them, why to use them  
23 and how to best prevent fishing mortality or the floaters, the  
24 fish that are suffering from barotrauma.

25  
26 I just really quickly wanted to make you aware of the council's  
27 new website, and it is a new site that was developed a few  
28 months ago with input from our advisory panels, and also working  
29 closely with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and  
30 many of you know Emily Muehlstein from the Gulf Council, and  
31 they had put together a best fishing practices page, in  
32 conjunction with their outreach campaign.

33  
34 They do not require descending devices be onboard, but they do  
35 have hook modifications in place, or regulations in place, but  
36 we went to Emily, and we went to the Gulf Council and looked at  
37 some of their web postings, and we came back and Cameron, again,  
38 working with our advisory panels and staff, put together this  
39 webpage that you see there that shows -- It has video  
40 demonstrating the effectiveness of descending devices, and, if  
41 you click on the state resources there, you will see that we  
42 have a map that is interactive that provides information from  
43 various state agencies. You can click on whichever state you  
44 care for there, and it will provide you with the state  
45 resources. The one good thing about that is that that will be  
46 updated as the states update their information that's available.

47  
48 If you have a few minutes, I think that was included as part of

1 the presentation, or the email, and that is to go to our  
2 council's website and look at those resources that would be  
3 available.

4  
5 Now we'll go back to the main page, and you also see, at the  
6 bottom of that best fishing practices page there, is a series of  
7 tabs, and those tabs allow you quick access to additional  
8 information. We are using icons, which is helpful to kind of  
9 guide folks in what they're looking for.

10  
11 If you look, there is the very specific language that we  
12 included in the presentation on the requirements. If you click  
13 on "recognizing barotrauma", the tab at the top, there are  
14 pictures on how to identify fish that are experiencing  
15 barotrauma, and not all fish should -- You should not use a  
16 descending device on all fish, which some fishermen think that  
17 that's mandatory, and it's not. If the fish is okay, you simply  
18 use best fishing practices and then release the fish, but, if it  
19 is showing signs of barotrauma, then you can use those  
20 descending devices, and you should have them readily available.

21  
22 If you have questions, we'll be glad to help answer them, and I  
23 know that Marcos has some video that he wanted to share on his  
24 work with descending devices, and, again, we wanted to provide  
25 you an overview, quickly, of what's been done at our council, in  
26 hopes that maybe it will help elicit some discussion at your  
27 end. Are there any questions?

28  
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Kim. That was a great  
30 presentation from both of you. Does the council have any  
31 questions? We're going to show a little video in a little bit,  
32 and, Natalia, can you have the two videos ready in a moment?  
33 Are there any questions?

34  
35 In the meantime, if you think of questions, what you are seeing  
36 is a private initiative to explore the best method of releasing  
37 the fish, red hind being released at thirty-three feet, which is  
38 one atmosphere, and a silk snapper with barotrauma, both of  
39 them, released in two atmospheres, and we have been hearing a  
40 lot that it is impossible for a silk snapper, after coming to  
41 the surface from so deep, to swim away, and let's see what  
42 happens. Go ahead, Natalia.

43  
44 This red hind was in 137 feet, and had the stomach out of the  
45 mouth and the eyes a little popped. This is not the descending  
46 device, but this is a tool to film or to record the image, and  
47 it's an inverted hook that can be attached to a weight, and here  
48 he goes. Instead of a frigate bird eating a species that you

1 guys catch every day, and imagine if it's a closed season, and  
2 you can make your release count. Now is the silk snapper. It's  
3 the same situation.

4  
5 **MIGUEL ROLON:** How deep, Marcos?  
6

7 **MARCOS HANKE:** It was from 400 feet, and it was released at  
8 sixty-six feet on my dataset that we are building slowly, and  
9 it's a 787 fishing research project, which is a private project.  
10 We release the fish at sixty-six and thirty-three feet, and we  
11 are compiling the data that we're going to donate to a student  
12 to do his master's degree, once he is accepted. I would like to  
13 hear comments from the council. In my opinion, this is a big  
14 step forward, that making the release count goes a long way.  
15 Any of the rest of the council members have any comment?  
16

17 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I don't have anybody here. Marcos, a question to  
18 the council members is that, number one, do you think this is  
19 something that could be adopted in the U.S. Caribbean, and,  
20 number two, how would you like to do it, on a voluntary basis,  
21 or do you want to amend any section of the management plan to  
22 incorporate what you already have, and I also would like to  
23 thank Christina and Kim for this initiative, and it's really  
24 nice that you were able to present this to us.  
25

26 If the Caribbean Council wants to do something regarding this  
27 item in the agenda, we would copy everything that we can get  
28 from the Gulf and the South Atlantic, because they already did  
29 all this work, and it will be a matter of tailoring the needs of  
30 the U.S. Caribbean and adjust what they have here.  
31

32 There is a lot of work underneath these webpages that we have  
33 here, and so, again, thank you to Kim and Christina, and then,  
34 Mr. Chairman, you have about thirteen minutes to decide on this  
35 one.  
36

37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Vanessa, let's go quick about it.  
38

39 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Thank you for the presentation, and I had the  
40 opportunity to see the webinar when you presented this webinar  
41 for the commercial fishermen in the Southeast, and I think it's  
42 a great idea to try to bring this to the Caribbean, but we need  
43 a lot of education, and especially bringing this information in  
44 the language of our commercial fishermen, especially many of  
45 them that don't like to read too much, and so we need a visual  
46 that they can see, like the YouTube channels that you have. I  
47 have seen some of the videos in there, and so I think we should  
48 start with that, to teach our commercial fishermen the

1 efficiency of these programs and how to use it. Thanks.

2  
3 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Mr. Chairman, you have Kim Iverson.

4  
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, I have Kim now. Go ahead, Kim.

6  
7 **KIM IVERSON:** Thank you for those comments, and I just wanted to  
8 reiterate, really quickly, that these regulations apply to our  
9 private recreational anglers as well as commercial and charter,  
10 federally-permitted fishermen, and so it's across-the-board for  
11 the South Atlantic, and, also, one of the reasons that the  
12 council started to address these issues is because we have  
13 regulatory discards.

14  
15 We have red snapper season, as I mentioned, and the recreational  
16 season is four days now, and so a lot of red snapper are out  
17 there, and a lot of fish are being released, and the same with  
18 our shallow-water grouper spawning season closure from January  
19 through March, and for red grouper through April, and so  
20 fishermen were the ones that came to the council and said we're  
21 having a problem here, and we don't want to see these fish  
22 floating away, and we want the fish to survive.

23  
24 There has been recent work on the effectiveness of these  
25 descending devices and other best fishing practices, and so it  
26 was initiated from the fishermen themselves, and one of the  
27 items that is in the Regulatory Amendment 29 is that research  
28 and monitoring plan, and that helps gauge the effectiveness of  
29 these actions as well.

30  
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Kim. Thank you very much again. We  
32 have Graciela and Carlos.

33  
34 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Kim, I have a couple of questions  
35 about the depth of the areas where most of this fishing takes  
36 place. In fact, if the devices have been -- I mean, is someone  
37 monitoring the discards and showing that they actually  
38 significantly improve or decrease the number of discards?

39  
40 **KIM IVERSON:** They improve survivability. As far as reducing  
41 the number of discards, Graciela, the best fishing practices, we  
42 encourage fishermen to move off of a spot. If you're in an area  
43 where you're catching a lot of red snapper, or other species  
44 that you legally can't retain, we encourage people to move away,  
45 and it sounds very simple, but we have fishermen that will talk  
46 about that I threw back twenty-two red snapper today in one  
47 spot, and I'm thinking, well, maybe you should move before you  
48 have to throw back twenty-two red snapper, and so it seems

1 intuitive, but sometimes not so much.

2  
3 Then, as far as the depths fished, and Christina may be able to  
4 help add to that, the South Atlantic -- Our region is so broad,  
5 from North Carolina down to the Florida Keys, that you are going  
6 to have reef fisheries in shallower water and in deeper water.  
7 Off of south Florida, it's very easily accessible, and the  
8 depths may not be quite so great as close to shore, but you can  
9 get into deepwater species, like the tilefishes and the snowy  
10 grouper, et cetera, where it's not that uncommon to fish at  
11 depths of 400 or 500 feet.

12  
13 It has been assumed that those fish always suffer from  
14 barotrauma, and the majority of those don't survive, but the use  
15 of descending devices, as Marcos illustrated -- You can descend  
16 those fish, and there is the ability to document survivability.  
17 Christina, did you want to add anything?

18  
19 **CHRISTINA WIEGAND:** Kim, I think you pretty much nailed it. If  
20 you're in the South Atlantic, between North Carolina and  
21 Florida, there are a lot of different depths that you can be  
22 fishing at, but, in terms of the effectiveness of descending  
23 devices, this is something -- There's been a lot of research  
24 done in the South Atlantic, particularly out of North Carolina  
25 State University.

26  
27 One of the videos that we have on the best fishing practices  
28 website is of a red grouper that's being descended and was  
29 caught in 200-plus feet of water, if I'm remembering correctly,  
30 and we brought a lot of the available research and presented it  
31 to our council's SSC, and they concurred with the idea that  
32 descending devices were in fact effective at reducing release  
33 mortality and improving survivorship.

34  
35 In terms of determining how successful fishermen are at using  
36 these descending devices, now that this regulation has been  
37 implemented, that's something that has been talked about quite a  
38 bit. We don't currently have any required ways to report that,  
39 and the South Atlantic Council does have a number of voluntary  
40 ways, and they allow fishermen to report their catch and whether  
41 or not they are using the descending device and whether it's  
42 effective.

43  
44 The council did request that NMFS look into possibly requiring  
45 fishermen to report information on descending devices and their  
46 use, but that's something that is just now being talked about,  
47 and so we'll see where that goes, but the research does show  
48 that descending devices are effective.



1  
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. I agree with that. Carlos.

3  
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree that we need  
5 to maybe look at this a little further sometime, maybe in  
6 December, or have a meeting before December about this, but I do  
7 agree with what Vanessa said. There has to be a big education  
8 push for the fishermen to use this device.

9  
10 I remember, more than ten years ago, Sea Grant distributed  
11 barotrauma kits for the fishermen here, but that was just a  
12 needle to puncture the bladder and let the air out, and then  
13 they release it from the surface, but I think this is something  
14 that we need to look further into, maybe on a volunteer basis  
15 for now, and work our way up to regulations, if it's needed.  
16 Thank you.

17  
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Carlos. We are a little tight on  
19 time. Miguel, I think we didn't hear anything against it, to  
20 discuss a little more about this issue, and I think it's worth  
21 it to explore, based on my experience with it, especially  
22 because a descending device costs two-dollars, the ones that I  
23 distributed to my friends and we make in thirty seconds with an  
24 inverted hook and a weight. I think -- Do we need to say  
25 anything else for the staff to include this in the next meeting,  
26 or how do we do it?

27  
28 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, we don't need to do anything at this  
29 time, but Alida is taking notes, and probably the best thing to  
30 do is, like Vanessa mentioned, and Carlos, and we could start  
31 with an education project, and then, once we have the education  
32 project, we may be able to -- Let's say for six months to a  
33 year, and then we'll be able to come back and see if there is a  
34 need for a regulation.

35  
36 This is something that was not created overnight by the South  
37 Atlantic and the Gulf, and it took some time for them, and so we  
38 can -- As I said, not copy, but adopt their study, and the first  
39 thing will be to have a good education and outreach program,  
40 project, and so I'm sure that Alida and I will discuss it a  
41 little bit more, and she can include it in her presentation as  
42 something for the next steps to take by the O&E AP.

43  
44 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** I have taken notes for everything.

45  
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much.

47  
48 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, I have a comment from Kim, but I would

1 like her to just say what she just wrote.

2  
3 **KIM IVERSON:** On behalf of Christina and myself and the staff  
4 and the council at the South Atlantic Fishery Management  
5 Council, we appreciate the opportunity to share, and we always  
6 say, in our outreach and education efforts, that you are welcome  
7 to copy and share anything that you want.

8  
9 Plagiarism is the greatest form of flattery, and so please. We  
10 stole things from the Gulf Council, and please feel free to  
11 reach out to us with any questions that you may have, and thank  
12 you, Marcos, for contacting us and sharing. Marcos has been  
13 very gracious in sharing some of his examples of how to make  
14 your own descending device, and we have shared that with our  
15 council and our AP members, and so it's a two-way street, and we  
16 just thank you for the opportunity.

17  
18 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thanks to you, Kim.

19  
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Kim. Thank you very much. We are  
21 ready for the anchoring discussion on the Grammanik Bank.

22  
23 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Before we go into that, we want to allow Graciela  
24 to say something for the record.

25  
26 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** After contemplating the motions that  
27 you just put forth regarding gear, there is a need for an  
28 inventory and a description and a description of the use of  
29 these gears. They have not been revised since 1988 or 1989 or  
30 so, even after all the studies that have taken place since then,  
31 and they tell you what the gears are, but there is no actual  
32 description of these and how they have changed over time.

33  
34 This, in fact, will be impacting the landings information that  
35 is collected from the fishers by gear, because, right now, most  
36 of the gears are not really explained in the landings, in the  
37 catch reports, and, most likely, this will also be associated  
38 with all of the other things that we need to look at regarding  
39 compatibility of regulations, in terms of not only the gears  
40 that you have mentioned, but also all of the other gears, the  
41 traps, et cetera.

42  
43 It opens up a very big review of all gear issues that we need to  
44 look at, and so I just wanted to put that on the record, so that  
45 we know that it's going to be snowballing into many other  
46 aspects of the fishery.

47  
48 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Okay. With those great words, what I would like

1 to propose, Mr. Chairman, is you would allow the staff --  
2 Graciela can have a virtual meeting with Daniel and the U.S.  
3 Virgin Islands counterpart, Dr. Angeli, to start looking at  
4 this, and, probably by the December meeting, she will be able to  
5 have a report as to what can be done regarding these issues and  
6 what Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are willing and  
7 able to do.

8  
9 The way that they collect the information, if they modify it  
10 that way, it will have some impact to the budget and so forth,  
11 and so Graciela will be in charge of that, and, of course, I  
12 will be working, and so we will have a report to you by the  
13 December meeting of any short meeting that we will have with the  
14 local authorities.

15  
16 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. I totally agree, and, just to  
17 put it in perspective, when I was working with the commercial  
18 fishermen that fish for lobster, this was one of the requests  
19 that they had, that, for example, the definition of the trap  
20 fishing, the traps, had to be revised, for many different  
21 reasons, and I know that the council will include the fishermen  
22 with the expertise to support these healthy discussions. Thank  
23 you very much. We are ready now for the anchoring, Miguel.

24  
25 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

26  
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. We are going to address now the  
28 anchoring discussion in the Grammanik Bank. Who is going to --  
29 Go ahead, Maria.

30  
31 **ANCHORING DISCUSSION - GRAMMANIK BANK**

32  
33 **MARIA LOPEZ:** Thank you. I am going to be presenting to you  
34 some discussion points that we put together related to revising  
35 the anchoring regulations in the Grammanik Bank in St. Thomas,  
36 in the U.S. Virgin Islands, per request of the council at the  
37 past council meeting in June.

38  
39 The way that I am going to present this is, first, I'm going to  
40 do a very quick overview of what the Grammanik Bank is and where  
41 it is. I'm also going to talk about historical information  
42 about federal management in the area, talk about the current  
43 management and current use of the area and then some questions  
44 that I believe the council should continue to explore, in order  
45 to consider this action.

46  
47 The Grammanik Bank lies on the southern edge of the Puerto Rico  
48 shelf, fourteen miles south of St. Thomas, USVI, and it is a

1 deep coral bank that includes mesophotic reefs that are  
2 dominated by Orbicella species, and it's separated by a sand  
3 channel with a drop-off on the south edge of approximately  
4 sixty-seven meters, which is dominated by an Agaricia reef.

5  
6 It is also four kilometers east of the Hind Bank Marine  
7 Conservation District, which is a big area that was closed to  
8 all fishing and anchoring in 1999. After the closure of this  
9 area in 1999, some of that fishing pressure that was in that  
10 area shifted towards the Grammanik Bank area.

11  
12 Talking about the historical information about federal  
13 management in the area, the Grammanik Bank is a multispecies  
14 aggregation area, where reef fish, such as snappers and  
15 groupers, aggregate to reproduce at specific times and places on  
16 the reef, and it has historically been an important spawning  
17 aggregation area for the yellowfin grouper, which aggregates to  
18 spawn on the bank from February to April each year, principally.  
19 The yellowfin grouper is a long-lived, slow-growing species, and  
20 it has a higher susceptibility to overfishing.

21  
22 The Grammanik Bank is also a very important aggregation site for  
23 the Nassau grouper, which is another long-lived, slow-growing  
24 species which has been reestablishing an aggregation in the  
25 area. The species is an overfished species, which is currently  
26 under a rebuilding plan, and harvest has been prohibited for  
27 this species since the 1990s.

28  
29 Although the Nassau grouper already have harvest provisions  
30 applicable throughout the EEZ, including the Grammanik Bank, the  
31 fishing pressure for the yellowfin back in the day may have been  
32 resulting in bycatch mortality of the Nassau, and so then,  
33 prompted by research from Nemeth and colleagues from the U.S.  
34 Virgin Islands showing the importance of the bank for the  
35 yellowfin, NMFS implemented an interim rule in 2004 that closed  
36 the Grammanik Bank area from February 1 through April 30 in  
37 2005.

38  
39 This species, at the time, based on the preferred alternatives  
40 for stock status criteria that were contained in the council  
41 draft amendment to the fishery management plan to address the  
42 required provision of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation  
43 and Management Act, and this is, in other words, the Sustainable  
44 Fisheries Act amendment of 2005, the yellowfin grouper was  
45 considered to be undergoing overfishing, and the stock would be  
46 considered to be overfished.

47  
48 The intended effect of that interim proposed rule at the time

1 was to protect the yellowfin grouper spawning aggregation and to  
2 reduce overfishing during that specific year, because long-term  
3 protection of the spawning aggregation was being addressed at  
4 the time in the 2005 SFA amendment, which was under development  
5 at that time. That interim rule prohibited the harvest and  
6 possession of any species of fish, except highly migratory  
7 species, within the closed area during that year.

8  
9 In addition, the 2005 Caribbean SFA amendment implemented a  
10 seasonal closure for all species in Grouper Unit 4, including  
11 the black, red, tiger, yellowedge, and, of course, the yellowfin  
12 grouper, and that was also during February 1 to April 30, which  
13 is the entire yellowfin grouper spawning period, and so that  
14 closure in the Grammanik Bank would further protect and conserve  
15 the yellowfin grouper when it was determined to be overfished.  
16 This grouper and the other groupers were then put in a  
17 rebuilding plan that ended in 2015.

18  
19 The amendment also established regulations to minimize adverse  
20 effects to essential fish habitat, which is defined in the  
21 Magnuson-Stevens Act as those waters and substrates necessary to  
22 fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity, and  
23 it established -- To do this, it established modifications to  
24 anchoring techniques. For example, it required an anchor  
25 retrieval system, to prevent the anchor from dragging along the  
26 bottom during recovery, which was applicable to all commercial  
27 and recreational fishing vessels that fished for or possessed  
28 Caribbean reef fish in or from the EEZ. The 2005 SFA amendment  
29 also banned the use of bottom-tending gear in seasonally-closed  
30 areas, such as the Grammanik Bank.

31  
32 This is the management in the Grammanik Bank that has been in  
33 place since 2005, and the Grammanik Bank seasonally-closed area  
34 is one-and-a-half square kilometers of area, and, within that  
35 area, all fishing and possession of any species of fish, except  
36 for highly migratory species, in or from the Grammanik Bank is  
37 prohibited from February 1 to April 30 of each year.

38  
39 The anchor retrieval system that I mentioned in my previous  
40 slide is required when fishing for reef fish species, and the  
41 use of pots, traps, gillnets, trammel nets, and bottom longlines  
42 is prohibited.

43  
44 This closure protects other spawning species, such as the Nassau  
45 grouper that I mentioned earlier, and it also provides benefits  
46 to protected resources in the closed area, such as corals, which  
47 are considered essential fish habitat for reef fish. Now, I  
48 want to point out all that all of these measures will be carried

1 into the St. Thomas/St. John fishery management plan when this  
2 plan is implemented.

3  
4 There are a couple of things that I want to include into this  
5 discussion, and these are from the discussion of the 2005  
6 Caribbean SFA amendment, and so the area closed was -- The area  
7 that was implemented by regulations in this amendment was the  
8 smallest in size, when compared to other alternatives presented  
9 in the amendment.

10  
11 At the time, it was noted, in the alternatives analysis, that  
12 the area selected may not provide enough of a buffer around the  
13 Grammanik Bank and the spawning aggregations, in turn  
14 potentially complicating enforcement, and this is talking about  
15 the buffer. I mean, even if it was including, at the time, all  
16 of the spawning aggregation.

17  
18 Comments during the council meetings indicated that, if the  
19 larger closed area was selected, there would have been  
20 significant economic impact to other fisheries, for example the  
21 yellowtail snapper fishery that was conducted near the Grammanik  
22 Bank. Yellowtail snapper fishers anchor to fish, and they  
23 requested to continue to be able to anchor, but using the anchor  
24 retrieval system that was implemented, to fish during the open  
25 season in the Grammanik Bank.

26  
27 Also, the discussion at the council meeting considered how close  
28 it was, this bank, to the Marine Conservation District, which  
29 was closed to all fishing and anchoring year-round since 1999.

30  
31 This brings us to the issue discussed here, which is the effect  
32 of anchors to the deep coral reef and the bank. From a  
33 presentation that the council got during the past council  
34 meeting in June by Elizabeth Kadison and colleagues on the  
35 spawning aggregation of Nassau that was occurring in the bank,  
36 and as well as has been documented by the U.S. Virgin Islands  
37 Coral Reef Monitoring Program report from 2015, there appears to  
38 be anchoring damage to area of the shelf edge in the deep reef,  
39 which is presumed to be from fishing activities within the area  
40 that may indirectly harming fishing by impacting corals and  
41 other essential fish habitat.

42  
43 The next things that I am going to mention are based on  
44 testimony from past council meetings, particularly from the June  
45 2020 meeting, where it was indicated that there was minimal  
46 commercial fishing activity occurring in the bank, and it was  
47 mostly for yellowtail fishing at shallower depths, such as the  
48 120 feet and shallower.

1  
2 There was also mention of some recreational fishing in the form  
3 of a headboat, and it is our understanding that there is no  
4 recreational diving, given the depths of the bank. However, we  
5 still have some questions that we should be looking to, so the  
6 council has all the information they need to make an informed  
7 decision about the particular issue that we're discussing, which  
8 is the anchoring damage that was documented in the Grammanik  
9 Bank.

10  
11 If you look at this slide, I noted in here that we have  
12 information, some information, about commercial fishing activity  
13 and some information about recreational fishing, but there's  
14 also other questions, such as, for example, what species are  
15 targeted and how reef fish, if it's reef fish, if it's pelagics,  
16 if it's HMS, lobster, what gear types, do you anchor, do you  
17 need to anchor, what part of the bank is used for fishing  
18 activities and how deep, and how many fishers use the area, for  
19 example, and these are questions that I believe that we still  
20 need to explore.

21  
22 Then what about other uses in the area? For example, it was  
23 mentioned that there was illegal fishing occurring, and illegal  
24 fishing could be fishing during the closed season, or it could  
25 be illegal fishing, and it could be also fishing for people that  
26 are not supposed to be fishing in there or using gears that are  
27 not allowed. It was also mentioned that foreign fishing boats,  
28 and I am putting in here "illegal", because this is the EEZ, and  
29 fishers, for example, that have a commercial license from Puerto  
30 Rico and other places could be illegally fishing in the EEZ as  
31 well.

32  
33 There is also research and survey activities in the bank that  
34 have been going on for several years, which have been  
35 documenting the spawning aggregations. Researchers, as well as  
36 fishers, have emphasized how important the coral reef habitat is  
37 to support spawning aggregations, and, when these areas are  
38 protected and have a good design and monitoring program, you  
39 should be able to see increases in fish size and number of fish  
40 and an increase in landings.

41  
42 The research that has been presented to the Caribbean Fishery  
43 Management Council has shown an initial recovery of spawning  
44 stocks of yellowfin and Nassau groupers in the bank, and, as I  
45 mentioned in the previous slide, during the past council  
46 meeting, the council was shown the extension of anchoring damage  
47 in the Agaricia deep reef and a decline of coral cover, and it  
48 was mentioned at the meeting that the USVI commercial fishers

1 were not responsible for this damage, but that there was some  
2 activity from other boats in there, but it was also noted that  
3 that particular vessel that was pointed out during that meeting  
4 may not be in operation anymore.

5  
6 It was also mentioned that foreign fishers have been observed in  
7 the area, although it was not clear if they anchored or if they  
8 were just fishing, and so, the same as in the previous slide, we  
9 have some questions about commercial and recreational fishing  
10 use. There are other questions that we would like to have more  
11 information, with respect to anchoring damage done in the area,  
12 and these are the questions that -- I posted some of those  
13 questions here in the slide.

14  
15 For example, how much anchoring damage has been documented, what  
16 is the depth, is it recent damage, is the anchoring damage in  
17 areas that are not included in the reserve, or is it in both?  
18 What area research is recommended to be added to the closed area  
19 to protect spawning habitat? For example, what is the depth and  
20 what is the extension?

21  
22 We saw that in the presentation during the last council meeting,  
23 that some of that habitat used by Nassau for spawning may fall  
24 outside the closed area and that areas adjacent to the Marine  
25 Conservation District are also used by individuals to travel to  
26 spawning grounds, and so another question would be if the area  
27 coordinates should be modified to encompass the whole habitat  
28 supporting the aggregations and to what level any additional  
29 protection should be done.

30  
31 Then, from the discussion at the June council meeting, these are  
32 some of the suggestions of how to address the issue that came  
33 either from council members or participants or researchers, and  
34 this slide is not dictating, by any means, what we should or  
35 should not be done, but its purpose is to serve as the starting  
36 point for a white paper or a discussion paper on this topic, if  
37 the council wants to pursue that.

38  
39 One of the questions is should anchoring by fishing vessels be  
40 prohibited within the bank to protect spawning habitat? Should  
41 the closed area boundaries be modified to encompass all habitat  
42 supporting the aggregations and to what level any additional  
43 protections should be done, but, to answer those two questions,  
44 we still have other questions to respond to.

45  
46 For example, what are the expected effects on USVI commercial  
47 fishers? What are the expected effects on USVI recreational  
48 fishers that use the area? What are the expected effects on



1 spawning fish and habitat? Will this action protect the habitat  
2 from other non-fishing uses? Is enforcing an anchoring  
3 regulation feasible with current enforcement capacity? Are  
4 there any other issues that need to be explored?

5  
6 There are also other ways of dealing with this too that could be  
7 explored by themselves, or in combination, and one of them is to  
8 develop an outreach and education program specific to the  
9 Grammanik Bank that would inform stakeholders about what is  
10 allowed and what is prohibited in there.

11  
12 Another question could be if a special management area could be  
13 established within the bank to protect specific habitat from  
14 anchoring damage, and, if so, will this be enforceable, given  
15 that this is such a small area?

16  
17 Another thing that comes to mind, when discussing this topic, is  
18 that this could make the case for the development of federal  
19 permits, for the further development of federal permits, and  
20 that would allow us to gain a better understanding of the  
21 population of fishers and their harvest patterns in the EEZ, and  
22 that will potentially allow for some sort of controlled entry  
23 and effort management, if that was desired.

24  
25 This would also be an opportunity that could be used to evaluate  
26 the performance of the seasonally-closed area with respect to  
27 these management objectives and its goals. It can be any  
28 combination of these, and maybe the council has other  
29 recommendations.

30  
31 Lastly, I would like to ask the council if they have interest in  
32 staff drafting a discussion paper that would address these and  
33 any other questions that they may have, and, with this, I  
34 conclude, and, if you have any questions or comments, I am ready  
35 for those now.

36  
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Maria. I would like to defer this and  
38 give priority to the people from St. Thomas and the Virgin  
39 Islands to start the participation. I have Julian Magras.

40  
41 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** This is one of my biggest issues that I have,  
42 and I was one of the very instrumental people back in 2004 that  
43 fought very hard on this Grammanik Bank closure. We got it to  
44 the size of what it is now, and we taught the scientists how to  
45 find where the fish were spawning, and so we don't want to see  
46 no increase in the size of the bank.

47  
48 The activity that took place by one big recreational charter

1 boat that caused us this havoc that we're here to this issue  
2 today is no longer fishing, and one of the biggest problems that  
3 we always have is enforcement out there not doing their job. We  
4 are the enforcers actually for our fishery right now, because we  
5 don't see no one out there, and it's a serious problem.

6  
7 We have a yellowtail fishery that takes place inside of that  
8 closed area, and we don't fish in the depths of the water where  
9 the damage was done, and that was done by that one recreational  
10 boat, and so the presentation that was given was requested by  
11 the fishers to be given to the council and not for it to turn  
12 around and become something negative against the fishers, and  
13 that's how we are taking it right now, and so I have a serious  
14 issue with the direction and where we are going, because one  
15 boat decided to anchor in deep water.

16  
17 I understand the whole protection, and these species would not  
18 be protected if it wasn't for the commercial fishers, and not  
19 only did we decide to go along with the protection of seasonal  
20 closures for the groupers, but we did it for the snappers, and  
21 we did both deep and shallow-water snappers, and we did it for  
22 several other species, and here it is that we are sixteen years  
23 later, and not one stock assessment has been done, and so we  
24 know, with closures, that they can do more damage if not done  
25 correctly, and so the real question here is when is the council  
26 going to get the people to do the stock assessments?

27  
28 Right now, the fishers feel that all seasonal closures be  
29 opened. A rebuilding stock, how long are you going to rebuild a  
30 stock? Are we going to continue talking about this for the next  
31 twenty-five years? The stock is already rebuilt, and the  
32 yellowfin grouper are out there by the millions, but they are  
33 not concerned with the yellowfin grouper. The only thing you  
34 guys are concerned with is the Nassau grouper, and these big  
35 predators are going to take over the entire fishery if something  
36 is not done soon, so we can start to harvest them.

37  
38 They are out there eating all the juvenile fish, and we worry  
39 about the lionfish, and the lionfish don't have nothing over  
40 these big groupers, and the big groupers are eating the  
41 lionfish, and they're eating all the juvenile fish.

42  
43 Sometimes we need to slow down, and I am so disappointed to see  
44 this presentation before me here today over a nice presentation  
45 on how healthy the Nassau grouper aggregation has become,  
46 because of the fishers working with the college and everybody,  
47 and the council, to get these measures in place, and it's the  
48 same thing as the MCD. It was supposed to open up in five years

1 for the fishers to be able to fish again, and it's been twenty-  
2 one years. How much more protection do you want to put on the  
3 fishers?

4  
5 You guys can pay me a million dollars a year, and I could stay  
6 home, like everybody else, and have a paycheck, but, when I have  
7 to fish, the more you close, you're squeezing everybody into a  
8 little box to cause us to create overfishing in the areas that  
9 we are still able to fish, and this needs to stop. Now Tony  
10 Blanchard has something to say.

11  
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Tony.

13  
14 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Let me echo what Mr. Magras just said, and let  
15 me make it very clear to you guys, so we don't have any  
16 misunderstanding as to where I sit. I am not in favor of  
17 extending the bank any bigger than it is.

18  
19 Once again, this problem that was noted on the destruction of  
20 this piece of coral reef was not done by a commercial fisher.  
21 That boat is currently out of business and out of the Virgin  
22 Islands, but here we are being confronted about whether or not  
23 this bank needs more protection and looking over how we anchor  
24 on the bank when this was discussed and agreed on years ago.

25  
26 The thing is that, in my opinion, and I will be quite blunt  
27 about it, most of that activity that goes on in that bank, and  
28 I'm saying that the anchoring is with the scientists going  
29 inside there to study the grouper on the Grammanik and not the  
30 guys going inside there to go fish the yellowtail.

31  
32 We already can't go in there with any gear, any kind of bottom  
33 gear, and the only one who really uses that bank would be the  
34 guys that would be charter fishing or fishing for the pelagics,  
35 but we seem to have a target on our backs every time we turn  
36 around, and this was supposed to be a good thing, showing the  
37 groupers on the Grammanik flourishing, and here it goes that  
38 this is turned around and a blade in our backs, and that's what  
39 it seems to be.

40  
41 My opinion is this, that, with the regulations that we have on  
42 this bank and on the boat for every other bank, if they were  
43 enforced, we wouldn't be sitting here discussing about the  
44 damage that was done, because this damage probably wouldn't have  
45 happened, and so I am not in for penalizing people for the let's  
46 say actions of a few.

47  
48 What we need to do is enforcement needs to do their job and

1 enforce the regulations that we already have, and there is no  
2 other needed regulations to be put on the Grammanik Bank, or the  
3 Hind Bank, or any other bank, because I'm going to be honest  
4 with you, and I'm sitting here as the Vice Chair of the council,  
5 and I am going to tell you that we ain't doing a good enough job  
6 monitoring these MCDs, what we have in place, for how many years  
7 now, and I'm talking about the Grammanik Bank, but, for the most  
8 part, the Hind Bank that is a fourteen-mile stretch that we only  
9 know what's going on in a very small portion of the bank,  
10 because of the divers that has gone inside there for the college  
11 to do a survey.

12  
13 Don't tell me that we're doing a good job of managing, because I  
14 am telling you that we ain't doing a good job of managing these  
15 banks, and so we ain't doing our part. Every time we turn  
16 around, it seems like we have to put regulations on the  
17 commercial guys, because we don't have no recreational fishery.

18  
19 There is no information out there, and so anybody could go out  
20 there and throw a line overboard and catch what they want, but,  
21 when it comes down to the end of the day, we know these guys is  
22 commercial guys, and they have to file -- They have to send in  
23 their catch reports, and we are the only ones that are really  
24 being monitored.

25  
26 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Hold on a second. Marcos, I have Roy, but,  
27 before Roy says something, I just want to thank Maria del Mar  
28 for a thorough presentation, and please don't kill the  
29 messenger. She is just bringing a presentation to you of all  
30 the issues involved.

31  
32 The last slide, if you do the outreach and education and  
33 evaluate the seasonal closed areas, you are doing what Julian  
34 and Tony are saying, without getting into more issues with this,  
35 but we need to hear from Roy and the rest of the council members  
36 about the next steps for 2021.

37  
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Roy Crabtree.

39  
40 **ROY CRABTREE:** Well, I think that's why the presentation was set  
41 up, is to hear what you guys want to do and get the council's  
42 comments on it, and, as you can see, one of the options there is  
43 to develop an outreach and education plan, and it looks to me --  
44 I am starting to remember 2004 a little bit, after hearing this  
45 conversation.

46  
47 It looks to me like that's where we are. As Maria pointed out,  
48 we really don't have a lot of information on this, and so what

1 I'm hearing from Tony and Julian is that probably we need to,  
2 first, try education and outreach, and then maybe see if we  
3 can't do a better evaluation of what's going on, and maybe  
4 that's the way to improve the situation right now.

5  
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Roy. We have a follow-up  
7 from Tony.

8  
9 **TONY BLANCHARD:** There are some greats, Roy, and I agree with  
10 you and Maria, but let me just -- I shouldn't say educate you,  
11 but let me just put this point on the table. All of you see how  
12 I'm sitting down here with Mr. Magras, because he's got a  
13 computer, and the majority of us don't have no computer, and  
14 we've got a cellphone, and we are limited in the ways in which  
15 we can talk with the council, especially now when everything is  
16 a virtual meeting here, or a virtual meeting there, or however  
17 you want to put it, and everything is virtual now.

18  
19 We don't operate like that, and I am being straightforward,  
20 because, if it wasn't for him that asked me to come over,  
21 because he's got a computer, I would be sitting down in front of  
22 the cellphone watching a phone number, and I ain't afraid to say  
23 so, and the majority of us think the same way. We do not  
24 operate the way that government officials or scientists operate,  
25 and we are not on a computer all the time, and this is not what  
26 we do.

27  
28 We are hands-on people, and we get out there, and we do what we  
29 need to do, and so this virtual thing, at this point in time,  
30 ain't working for no outreach and education, and I personally  
31 think it's a waste of time, and I think the approach to this  
32 problem is you have enforcement have the regulations enforced,  
33 and then there will be no need for all of this. The guys have  
34 to go to register every year, and they get the handbook for the  
35 regulations, and most of them know the regulations, and they  
36 probably know it by heart, better than the officers.

37  
38 Now, some of them probably ain't too sharp on some of the  
39 regulations, depending on where they usually fish, but the  
40 majority of guys that are going to go out and fish in that area  
41 already know the regulations, but my thing is that, here, this  
42 was supposed to be a good thing, and this is like a slap in the  
43 face, where Mr. Magras asked Elizabeth Kadison to come and give  
44 this presentation, and, because there was some destruction found  
45 outside the bank, that we didn't have nothing to do with, we is  
46 the one that they're pointing the finger at again.

47  
48 There comes a point in time, and, like someone has said, because

1 at this point in time, I am, because I feel that we, once again,  
2 are being attacked, and so this what is going to come out of it.  
3 Make sure that, when you point the finger, that you point the  
4 finger at the right people, and, like I told you, this  
5 destruction was by one individual, and that boat is no longer in  
6 the Virgin Islands, and so we don't need no more regulations.

7  
8 We don't need to explore expanding this bank any bigger than it  
9 is, because, to be honest with you, I think that the commercial  
10 guys, the people of the Virgin Islands, have given up enough  
11 grounds to protect the Virgin Islands, and so we need to explore  
12 a different alternative.

13  
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** Tony, thank you very much.

15  
16 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, I agree with everything that Tony said,  
17 but the thing is that you have to put some perspective and do  
18 the thing that you need to do, and I believe that, hearing from  
19 Roy, the thing that you can do right here, following Julian's  
20 and Tony's presentation, is that we could go ahead with an  
21 aggressive outreach and education activities, and, by the way,  
22 outreach and education is not virtual meetings. It's a little  
23 bit more than that.

24  
25 Then Alida, as always, is taking notes, and we can work on that  
26 part, and the other one, the other thing that I believe is  
27 important, is to evaluate the performance of the seasonal  
28 closures, and that can be done without any more regulations, and  
29 I believe that we should make a point of sending a letter from  
30 the council to the Chair -- I mean, the Chair of the council,  
31 excuse me, to the local authorities and federal authorities  
32 regarding the issue of enforcement and the need to enforce these  
33 areas, as Tony has mentioned.

34  
35 With those three actions, you will honor your commitment to  
36 protect the resources without getting to more unnecessary  
37 regulations at this time, and so I believe, Mr. Chairman, that  
38 probably -- You don't need a motion for this, but you can have a  
39 motion anyway to instruct the staff to follow the suggestions by  
40 Maria and the SERO staff to have an outreach and look at the  
41 possibility of evaluating the performance of seasonal closed  
42 areas as something that we need to do, and, also, to write a  
43 note, letter, request, any document, that will raise the point  
44 of enforcement needed in these particular areas, and that can be  
45 sent to the Coast Guard, National Marine Fisheries Service, and  
46 the local authorities.

47  
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. Let's speed up on the

1 discussion. I have Roy and Julian, and then I want to make a  
2 comment.

3  
4 **ROY CRABTREE:** I appreciate your comments, Tony, and that's why  
5 it's so important that we have people like you and Vanessa on  
6 the council, who are fishermen and fisherwomen and know how  
7 these things go and understand what it's like in your area.

8  
9 I agree with you that none of this virtual meeting situation is  
10 ideal, and I don't like it either, but it's what we're stuck  
11 with for the moment, but this is a temporary thing, and I think  
12 we will get back to something more normal next year some time,  
13 and it sounds to me like maybe some of the outreach and  
14 education that we need to do is to our law enforcement folks, to  
15 make sure -- Just to remind them that we do have these rules,  
16 and they are important to us, and ask them to put a little more  
17 emphasis on it, and I know -- I think Manny Antonaras is on the  
18 meeting, and so he's hearing this discussion.

19  
20 It makes sense to me that we, maybe like Miguel said, send a  
21 letter to enforcement, encouraging enforcement to try to put  
22 more emphasis on this, and then we do the best we can with  
23 outreach and education, just reminding folks about this, and  
24 maybe that will be difficult until we're able to travel and meet  
25 in-person again, but, in the meantime, we just do the best we  
26 can, but, I mean, that's why we need you on the council, Tony,  
27 to make sure we understand these things.

28  
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Roy. Julian.

30  
31 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Just one follow-up. You know, right now, with  
32 the MCD being closed for twenty-one years, do you know how much  
33 millions of dollars in studies have been put into that bank? A  
34 lot. I wouldn't even be able to comprehend the amount of money  
35 that is put into that bank, and, like Tony said, it's very small  
36 areas being studied, and a chosen few have been chosen to be  
37 part of that study, and where are the fishers' involvement?  
38 Little to none.

39  
40 The same with the Grammanik Bank. It's been studied from 2005,  
41 and here we are fifteen years later, and thousands and millions  
42 of dollars have been spent, and how much time are we going to  
43 spend looking at the same species year after year after year  
44 after year, where we have so many other things to be looking at,  
45 and you continue giving -- Every time a new group comes up, you  
46 guys give them thousands, hundreds of thousands, of dollars to  
47 study the same things over and over.

1 You know they have gotten so good at doing this that they have  
2 even gone and bought their own boats, so they don't have to use  
3 the fishing boats anymore, and they get to keep all the money in  
4 their pockets, and that's why, when these grants are written,  
5 the council and NMFS and NOAA and everybody should make it part  
6 of the grant that fisher involvement is there.

7  
8 You know, I just heard today, and it's so disturbing to hear,  
9 that they're not using the fishing boats anymore to do some of  
10 the studies and that these people went out and bought their own  
11 boats, so they could make the money, and that's unfair to the  
12 fishers, the little bit that a few fishers were making, and now  
13 they can't make it anymore.

14  
15 This needs to stop, and we're making our own money fishing, and  
16 now they're taking money from us, and they're the only ones able  
17 to go in the bank and catch the fish, and some of them are  
18 allowed to bring in the fish after they catch them, and others  
19 have got to release them, and it's unfair to the fishers, and  
20 this needs to change. The way we think about the commercial  
21 fishers, who are the users and the persons with the most  
22 knowledge of what's going on out there in the ocean needs to  
23 change, and you need to include us, and I've been saying so for  
24 years.

25  
26 You guys have the power to do it, and all of the grants that  
27 were written this past year just came back, and not one grant  
28 was given for studies for the reef fish in the different  
29 management plans in the Caribbean, and everything was given to  
30 the Gulf and every place else, and the Caribbean, I guess,  
31 wasn't important this time, but all of these other people find  
32 us to be important, because they are getting their regular  
33 turnaround of the money every year to do five-year studies and  
34 ten-year studies, but what are the fishers getting? More and  
35 more stress every year.

36  
37 We have been quiet for a long time, and it seems like we need to  
38 start to make noise again, and we don't want to do that, because  
39 I find that the way we've been working together as a team has  
40 been very helpful, and it's not only with the council, but we  
41 have the same problem right now with the local government, and  
42 it's the first time in sixteen years that I have to fight my own  
43 people because they don't support the commercial fishers, and so  
44 we have to fight for ourselves.

45  
46 We are fighting for ourselves, and, up until now, we can't get  
47 our disaster money, and only those who got \$2,500 and \$5,000 got  
48 the money, but all the real fishers who took the big loss of



1 gear and boats and everything have not gotten a penny, three  
2 years later. The process needs to change. Thank you.

3  
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Tony, and thank you, Julian. Manny  
5 Antonaras. Please be very brief, and I'm going to make a  
6 comment to close the discussion. Manny. I am not hearing you.

7  
8 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, while Manny gets his audio back, Vanessa  
9 is in agreement with Tony's and Julian's comments, and she  
10 believes that what is happening regarding enforcement and  
11 outreach and education is also true for around Puerto Rico.

12  
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, and thank you for putting that on the  
14 record. The comment that I want to make is that -- Manny, are  
15 you ready?

16  
17 **MANNY ANTONARAS:** Yes.

18  
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Go ahead.

20  
21 **MANNY ANTONARAS:** I just wanted to thank Julian and Tony for the  
22 comments, and I just wanted to note, for the council, that our  
23 folks have followed-up on specific information with regard to  
24 illegal fishing in these areas, but I just want to emphasize  
25 that it's important that we do -- When folks are making these  
26 sort of general statements of lack of enforcement, that we do  
27 have some specifics.

28  
29 I do recall, from the last meeting, there was discussion about a  
30 charter boat that was illegally operating in the area, and I  
31 understand that that boat is no longer operating in the USVI,  
32 but, if there are specifics with regard to illegal fishing or  
33 anything involving those areas, please let our folks know. We do  
34 have, as you all know, Miguel in Puerto Rico, and I will offer  
35 my contact information as well for specific information.

36  
37 I can also tell you that we have targeted patrol activity in  
38 those areas in the past, and we're more than willing to work  
39 with the U.S. Coast Guard to pursue future patrols in those  
40 areas. Thank you.

41  
42 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. One last comment from  
43 myself is that I liked the presentation, because, the way I see  
44 the presentation, it really covered the discussion in the  
45 previous meetings, and it had all the options there, including  
46 the options that fit on what Julian and Tony are requesting, and  
47 this already serves, in the way I see it, as a pathway to  
48 strengthen the need of outreach and education to the law

1 enforcement to engage them on the interest and the things that  
2 we need to fix or to address a little more direct.

3  
4 I think the presentation was great on that matter, and I thank  
5 you, Maria, for making a good presentation to us that put us in  
6 the right perspective with the feedback from the people of St.  
7 Thomas, in this case Julian and Tony, and thank you very much.

8  
9 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, after all the thanking, what is it that  
10 you want us to do? Do you want to do the develop more outreach  
11 and send a letter to enforcement and evaluate the -- Start  
12 working on the evaluation of the performance of the seasonal  
13 closures, like Julian requested?

14  
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** That's correct, those three items, Miguel.

16  
17 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Okay, and so we don't need a motion for that, and  
18 we have it in the notes, and so Graciela and Maria will work  
19 after the meeting on the next steps for 2021, as Maria del Mar  
20 asked, and I also would like to relay my thanks to Maria, and  
21 this is a presentation of several slides, but it took a lot of  
22 work, going back to all the minutes, et cetera, and so I'm  
23 really grateful for what she did, and it's very well organized,  
24 et cetera.

25  
26 The next thing that we have in the agenda, Mr. Chairman, is the  
27 public comment period, and I believe that you have some people  
28 that may want to talk.

29  
30 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** You have Rene Esteves online.

31  
32 **MIGUEL ROLON:** If we don't have anybody else, we have Rene  
33 Esteves as the next one.

34  
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Rene, are you available to start?

36  
37 **RENE ESTEVES:** Yes.

38  
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead, please.

40  
41 **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

42  
43 **RENE ESTEVES:** First, let me say hello to everybody, and thanks  
44 for the opportunity. I do recognize some of the voices, and I  
45 miss seeing you all, and I just wanted to quickly give an update  
46 on -- I am Rene Esteves from Puerto Rico Sea Grant, the Marine  
47 Outreach Program, and I wanted to talk about addressing the  
48 decompression sickness crisis in commercial fishermen in Puerto

1 Rico.

2  
3 Some time ago, we got a call from the head doctor at the  
4 decompression chamber in San Juan, because they were really  
5 concerned about the increased number of fishermen divers  
6 arriving at the chamber and the number of times that each diver  
7 would show up, one again and again and again. They wanted to  
8 talk to us about what could be done about it, and so a little  
9 bit about what we've been doing to address that issue.

10  
11 We met with the doctors, and we asked them what is it that's  
12 going on over there, and they said that the fishermen show up  
13 with very little information about how deep and how long have  
14 they been down there, which is key for them to select what kind  
15 of treatment they receive, or the doctors prescribe, what  
16 protocols, and the resources that they have at the decompression  
17 chamber, in terms of staff, were being stretched thin, and they  
18 wanted to be more specific, more effective, in the treatment  
19 that they could offer to these fishermen.

20  
21 We came up with the idea of buying some computers, diving  
22 computers, that we could program for them, just to record the  
23 dive profiles, and we handed them to six fishermen, two from  
24 Cabo Rojo, two from Vieques, one from Guanica, and one from  
25 Humacao. This, based on the information from the chamber  
26 doctors -- Most of the patients they received were from the  
27 southwest and southeast of Puerto Rico.

28  
29 After a couple of months of the fishermen wearing the computers,  
30 we retrieved the computers and analyzed, with the idea of, for  
31 the first time, getting some empirical information of what were  
32 the fishermen actually doing, in terms of their diving patterns,  
33 so that the hyperbaric chamber doctors had a better idea of what  
34 treatment to prescribe.

35  
36 What came out was no surprise, and none of the divers were  
37 consistently within the recreational dive safety tables. In  
38 collaboration with the council, we did some video interviews of  
39 fishermen from throughout the island, and many of you saw some  
40 of that work on your previous meeting, and we also then decided  
41 to go around with a chart and ask a subset of the fishermen  
42 about the particular areas where they would go diving, just to  
43 inform and educate the doctors on the time it would actually  
44 take for them to head back to land, because all of this is taken  
45 into account when prescribing the protocol that they put the  
46 fishermen through in the chamber.

47  
48 In addition to that, we met with a Cabo Rojo mayor, who, at the

1 time, was the only municipality official who incentivized this  
2 economically and incentivized the commercial fishermen sector,  
3 and they asked if we could sort of make an incentivized program  
4 for diving safety, where, if these fishermen were to continue to  
5 receive these incentives, they had to go through at least a  
6 basic diving course.

7  
8 They agreed, and we're in the process of making that happen,  
9 and, obviously, everything has been held back, because of what  
10 we're going through, and we also brought in other mayors from  
11 throughout the south and east municipalities to the Cabo Rojo  
12 mayor's office, for them to get an idea, literally get how Cabo  
13 Rojo was doing it and what they get out of it from an elected  
14 official perspective and how they incentivize the economics  
15 through this help they give out to their commercial fishermen,  
16 and one of the mayors saw the light and hopped in, and this was  
17 Humacao, which is now, obviously, a part of our team, and they  
18 have agreed to separate a budget of about \$10,000 each for  
19 providing this education on basic diving techniques.

20  
21 We are currently putting together educational curricula for  
22 first responders in some of these municipalities, for them to be  
23 able to identify the symptoms and treat and immediately refer  
24 the patients to the chamber, through the correct transportation  
25 options, and, based on what we're doing, we just wanted to let  
26 everybody in the council, since you're experts in the subject,  
27 know that this has been --

28  
29 This is our current and latest initiative regarding fishermen  
30 safety, in terms of education, and we are more than happy to  
31 collaborate with any existing group or agency that has a similar  
32 initiative, in order to leverage, enhance, or expand this  
33 important activity. Thank you so much, again, for the time, and  
34 I'm happy to hear you all.

35  
36 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. For the council members, do  
37 you have any comments? Hearing none, it's very helpful  
38 information, and we are going to keep in touch, for sure, with  
39 you on future ways we can collaborate to increase the safety of  
40 the divers in the water.

41  
42 Any other people on the public comment? Hearing none, we are  
43 ready to adjourn the meeting, and thank you very much, all, for  
44 your attention and for being there and a very productive  
45 meeting, again, and thank you very much. We are ready to  
46 adjourn, if there is nothing else, Miguel.

47  
48 **MIGUEL ROLON:** No, Mr. Chairman. For tomorrow, remember you

1 only have a half-day, and so please keep that in mind for the  
2 discussions.

3  
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. The meeting is adjourned. Thank you  
5 very much to all.

6  
7 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed on August 11, 2020.)  
8

9 - - -

10  
11 August 12, 2020  
12

13 WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION  
14

15 - - -

16  
17 The Caribbean Fishery Management Council reconvened via webinar  
18 on Wednesday morning, August 12, 2020, and was called to order  
19 at 1:00 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Marcos Hanke.  
20

21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Good morning, everyone. Today is Wednesday,  
22 August 12, 2020, the 170<sup>th</sup> CFMC meeting. we are going to start  
23 the meeting. Just a reminder that, every time you participate,  
24 state your name, on every participation. Use the chat to ask  
25 for a turn to speak, or the emoji with the little hand. All  
26 votes will be by roll call with full name, yes, no, or abstain.  
27 Public comments will have five minutes at the end of the  
28 meeting. the meeting will be recorded, and simultaneous  
29 translation is available, like yesterday, and we can start the  
30 roll call. Natalia.  
31

32 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Good morning, everyone. I am going to start  
33 with Graciela.  
34

35 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Buenos dias, Graciela Garcia-Moliner,  
36 council staff.  
37

38 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Liajay Rivera.  
39

40 **LIAJAY RIVERA:** Liajay Rivera, council staff, buenos dias.  
41

42 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Miguel Rolon.  
43

44 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Good morning. Miguel Rolon, council staff.  
45

46 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Jack McGovern.  
47

48 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Jack McGovern, NOAA Fisheries. Good morning.

1  
2 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Alexis Sabine.  
3  
4 **ALEXIS SABINE:** Alexis Sabine.  
5  
6 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Alida Ortiz.  
7  
8 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Alida Ortiz, present.  
9  
10 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Bill Cordero.  
11  
12 **BILL CORDERO:** Bill Cordero, present.  
13  
14 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Carlos Farchette. Christina Olan.  
15  
16 **CHRISTINA OLAN:** Buenos dias. Christina Olan, council staff.  
17  
18 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Diana Martino.  
19  
20 **DIANA MARTINO:** Buenos dias. Diana Martino, council staff.  
21  
22 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Edward Schuster.  
23  
24 **EDWARD SCHUSTER:** Edward Schuster, DAP Chair, St. Croix. Good  
25 morning.  
26  
27 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Iris Oliveras. Jocelyn D'Ambrosio.  
28  
29 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Good morning. Jocelyn D'Ambrosio, NOAA  
30 Office of General Counsel.  
31  
32 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** John Walter. Julian Magras.  
33  
34 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras, DAP Chair, St. Thomas/St. John.  
35  
36 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Buenos dias. Tony Blanchard, Vice Chair.  
37  
38 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Thank you, Tony. Katie Siegfried.  
39  
40 **KATIE SIEGFRIED:** Good morning. Katie Siegfried, Southeast  
41 Fisheries Science Center.  
42  
43 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Loren Remsberg.  
44  
45 **LOREN REMSBERG:** Loren Remsberg, NOAA Office of General Counsel.  
46 Good morning.  
47  
48 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Michelle Scharer.

1  
2 **MICHELLE SCHARER:** Buenos dias. Michelle Scharer, independent  
3 contractor.

4  
5 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Marcos Hanke.

6  
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Good morning, everyone. Marcos Hanke, present.

8  
9 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** María de los Irizarry.

10  
11 **MARIA DE LOS IRIZARRY:** Good morning. María de los Irizarry,  
12 council staff.

13  
14 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Good morning. Maria Lopez.

15  
16 **MARIA LOPEZ:** Buenos dias. Maria Lopez, NOAA Fisheries.

17  
18 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Matthew Wailea.

19  
20 **MATTHEW WAILEA:** Good morning. Matt Wailea, NOAA Office of Law  
21 Enforcement.

22  
23 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Miguel Borges.

24  
25 **MIGUEL BORGES:** Miguel Borges, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement.  
26 Good morning.

27  
28 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Nelson Crespo.

29  
30 **NELSON CRESPO:** Good morning, everyone. Nelson Crespo, DAP  
31 Chair, Puerto Rico.

32  
33 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Nicole Angeli.

34  
35 **NICOLE ANGELI:** Good morning. Nicole Angeli, USVI Department of  
36 Planning and Natural Resources.

37  
38 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Orian Tzadik.

39  
40 **ORIAN TZADIK:** Good morning, everyone. Orian Tzadik, Pew  
41 Charitable Trusts.

42  
43 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Ricardo Lopez.

44  
45 **RICARDO LOPEZ:** Good morning. Ricardo Lopez, Puerto Rico DNER.

46  
47 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Richard Appeldoorn.

1 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Good morning. Rich Appeldoorn, SSC Chair.  
2  
3 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Robert Copeland.  
4  
5 **ROBERT COPELAND:** Good morning. Lieutenant Robert Copeland,  
6 U.S. Coast Guard, District 7.  
7  
8 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Sarah Stephenson.  
9  
10 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Good morning. Sarah Stephenson, NOAA  
11 Fisheries.  
12  
13 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Skyler Sagarese.  
14  
15 **SKYLER SAGARESE:** Skyler Sagarese, NOAA Fisheries.  
16  
17 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Tauna Rankin.  
18  
19 **TAUNA RANKIN:** Good morning. Tauna Rankin, NOAA Fisheries.  
20  
21 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Vanessa Ramirez.  
22  
23 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Good morning. Vanessa Ramirez, council  
24 member.  
25  
26 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Good morning. I had audio problems. Carlos  
27 Farchette, present, council member.  
28  
29 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Thank you, Carlos. If I missed anybody --  
30 That's all I have in my list.  
31  
32 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Good morning. Damaris Delgado, Puerto Rico  
33 DNER.  
34  
35 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** Thank you, Damaris.  
36  
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Natalia.  
38  
39 **IRIS OLIVERAS:** Good morning. Iris Oliveras, council staff.  
40  
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Iris. Anybody else? Just write in  
42 the chat if there is anybody that is having any trouble with the  
43 audio, and we have to keep on with the meeting. I want to  
44 highlight today that our meeting is a half-day, and I need the  
45 cooperation of everybody in order to finish with this agenda,  
46 and there are many important issues that we're going to address.  
47 Speaking with Miguel Rolon this morning, we have, under Other  
48 Business, some items to cover, which is -- Miguel, do you want



1 to explain that, or do you want me to just to give the titles?

2  
3 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have two topics that  
4 will be covered by Carlos Farchette, the lobster fishery in St.  
5 Croix and the island-based FMP for St. Croix and then the  
6 generation gap and how do we get young fishers into the fishery,  
7 and I believe that that will be shared with Julian and Ruth, if  
8 she joins in, for a possible project. Then that will be  
9 followed by the Executive Order of the President for the seafood  
10 of the United States industry, and I will explain a little bit  
11 about it.

12  
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Miguel. Let's start today  
14 again, and I need the cooperation of everybody being very  
15 precise and objective in your participation, in order to follow  
16 the agenda, a half-day agenda, that we have.

17  
18 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Mr. Chairman, David Ortiz is present, and Carlos  
19 Farchette wants to speak.

20  
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. David Ortiz, we recognize your presence.  
22 Carlos Farchette, go ahead.

23  
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Good morning, Mr. Chair. Yesterday, when we  
25 were discussing the gill and trammel net for pelagics, it kind  
26 of slipped me, and I was wondering how -- Maybe Roy can tell me  
27 how can we get to include trawling nets in that discussion.

28  
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos, just for clarity, and I couldn't hear,  
30 but which kind of net?

31  
32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Trawling. You know you've got those big  
33 trawlers that put out those humungous nets.

34  
35 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Carlos, just sent an email to Graciela, and she  
36 will take care of it for the staff.

37  
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay.

39  
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Carlos. The first item on the agenda  
41 is Island-Based Fishery Management Plans Update by Maria del Mar  
42 Lopez.

43  
44 **ISLAND-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS UPDATE**

45  
46 **MARIA LOPEZ:** Good morning. This is going to be a short update.  
47 In the slide on your screen, you're going to see what I am going  
48 to be -- This is a summary of what I'm going to be talking

1 about, and so this island-based fishery management plans and the  
2 progress to date.

3  
4 From the last meeting, we mentioned, for those of you that  
5 participated, that the notice of availability of the fishery  
6 management was published, and it's still open for comment until  
7 August 25, 2020, and, if you follow that link that is on the  
8 screen, or if you go to the council's website, you can see the  
9 Fishery Bulletin, or you can get access directly to where this  
10 document is on the internet, and then you can make your  
11 comments. Also, you can send your comments through the mail.  
12 If you have any questions on how to provide any more comments,  
13 please send me an email or call me, and I will provide that  
14 information for you.

15  
16 The other thing that's coming up is, as Jocelyn mentioned  
17 yesterday, is the decision date on the island-based FMPs, which  
18 is the Secretary of Commerce makes a determination as to  
19 approve, disapprove, or partially approve the plans, and this is  
20 going to happen -- The deadline for this is September 24, 2020,  
21 and so this is the date where the plans should be approved.

22  
23 Next, after that, we are going to continue developing the  
24 proposed rule and associated documents, and we're already  
25 working on that, and, once that is ready, we are going to  
26 publish a Fishery Bulletin that is going to indicate how to make  
27 comments on that proposed rule, and that proposed rule is going  
28 to be open for comments for thirty days. This information is  
29 going to be published by the council, and you're going to  
30 receive also this information in Fishery Bulletins.

31  
32 All the comments that are received are going to be addressed in  
33 the final rule, and that final rule, when it's published, after  
34 it is published, there is a letter that the fishery management  
35 plans are going to be implemented.

36  
37 As I have mentioned in the past, our goal is to have the plans  
38 applicable in the 2021 fishing season, and so that's the goal,  
39 and we're working hard to get there, and, in the meantime, the  
40 council would continue to discuss actions for potential  
41 amendments to each one of the island-based FMPs, as desired.

42  
43 Again, just to reiterate, the fishery management plans are still  
44 open for comment for another week, August 25. So far, we have  
45 received two comments, and you can take a look at all of that if  
46 you visit the website. That's all I have, in case anybody has  
47 any other questions.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Maria. I don't see anybody on the  
2 chat for now. Let's go for the next item on the agenda, hearing  
3 no questions, which is the Options Paper for Updating the Spiny  
4 Lobster Annual Catch Limit.

5  
6 **OPTIONS PAPER FOR UPDATING THE SPINY LOBSTER ANNUAL CATCH LIMIT**

7  
8 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Good morning. There was an options document  
9 that was given to the council and is up on their webpage, and  
10 this is what you're seeing now, and, if we need to, we can refer  
11 to this document at the end with questions, but, for now, if you  
12 will go to the presentation.

13  
14 I am just going to go through this presentation kind of quickly,  
15 because it is a lot of information, and I will take questions at  
16 the end. This presentation will just provide an overview of the  
17 options for updating management reference points for spiny  
18 lobster following the accepted SEDAR 57 stock assessment. The  
19 modifications to the management reference points would be  
20 included in an amendment to each of the island-based fishery  
21 management plans.

22  
23 The first few slides is a presentation just provided for you for  
24 an overview, or a review, of actions that have already happened.  
25 The three island-based FMPs were voted up at the December 2019  
26 council meeting for review, approval, and implementation. The  
27 comment period, as Maria just said, for the notice of  
28 availability for the plans is open through August 25, and so  
29 there's still time to make comments on the notice.

30  
31 Each island-based FMP includes the council's acceptable  
32 biological catch control rule, which was used to determine  
33 management reference points for each stock and stock complex  
34 included in each of the three FMPs. All stock and stock  
35 complexes in those FMPs were under Tier 4 of the ABC control  
36 rule, which was considered to be data-limited with no expected  
37 assessment available. The management reference points  
38 determined under Tier 4 for each stock or stock complex would  
39 remain in place until such time that they were amended.

40  
41 The island-based FMPs updated the management reference points  
42 for spiny lobster from those that were determined through  
43 amendments to the Spiny Lobster FMP, and the acceptable  
44 biological catch and annual catch limits for spiny lobster under  
45 each island-based FMP are shown in this table, and we can come  
46 back to those, if need be.

47  
48 This is just a quick look at Tier 4a of the control rule, which

1 was used to determine management reference points for spiny  
2 lobster under each island-based FMP, and Tier 4a stocks are  
3 data-limited, with no accepted assessment, but with a relatively  
4 low vulnerability to fishing pressure.

5  
6 For each island, the spiny lobster stock was considered to be  
7 highly productive with a low to moderate level of susceptibility  
8 to the fishery, and the council considered the long history of  
9 management and compatible regulations for spiny lobster and set  
10 the ACL for each island at 95 percent of the ABC that was  
11 resultant from the control rule.

12  
13 The Southeast Data Assessment and Review, which is what SEDAR  
14 stands for, the SEDAR stock assessments for spiny lobster were  
15 completed in August of 2019, and they were initially reviewed by  
16 the SSC at their October 2019 meeting. The SEDAR 57 stock  
17 assessments estimated numerical values for the maximum  
18 sustainable yield proxy, which is the largest long-term yield  
19 that can be taken from a stock under current conditions; the  
20 maximum fishing mortality threshold, which is used to determine  
21 if a stock is undergoing overfishing; and a minimum stock size  
22 threshold, which is used to determine if a stock is overfished.

23  
24 The Tier 4 of the control rule had those determinations, but it  
25 wasn't able to assign a numerical value to it. The SEDAR 57  
26 stock assessment was able to do that.

27  
28 The stock assessments also projected overfishing limits for 2019  
29 to 2022, but, following a council request at the December  
30 meeting, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center updated those  
31 model projections, using more recent landings data, and  
32 projected overfishing limits for the years 2021 through 2026,  
33 which were presented to the council at the June 2020 meeting.

34  
35 At the May 2020 meeting, the SSC determined that the SEDAR 57  
36 stock assessments are suitable for management advice, and the  
37 SSC Chair reported that out at the June 2020 council meeting.

38  
39 Having an accepted assessment shifts the spiny lobster stock for  
40 each island from Tier 4a to Tier 3 of the ABC control rule,  
41 which would require an amendment to update the management  
42 reference points. Tier 3 stocks are still considered to be data  
43 limited, but with an accepted assessment, and so that's the big  
44 difference.

45  
46 Discussions at the December 2019 and the June 2020 council  
47 meetings focused on procedures for determining the ABC from the  
48 projected OFLs, including the council's acceptable level of risk

1 for the probability of overfishing for the spiny lobster, and  
2 that was the P\* that a lot of the discussions centered around.

3  
4 Following the accepted assessments, an amendment will be needed  
5 for each island-based FMP, to update the management reference  
6 points for the stock. At the June meeting, the council  
7 requested staff bring options for updating the spiny lobster  
8 ACLs to this meeting that could be considered in a joint  
9 amendment to the three FMPs.

10  
11 Under the amendment, the MSY, MFMT, MSST, and OFL management  
12 reference points would be updated automatically, based on the  
13 SEDAR 57 determinations. For updates to the spiny lobster ABC,  
14 the council would provide input to the SSC on its acceptable  
15 probability of overfishing, or P\*. Based on that P\*, the SSC  
16 would then recommend ABCs, as reduced from the OFLs, for 2021  
17 through 2026.

18  
19 The council provided their selected P\* at the June meeting, and  
20 that decision and resulting discussion was captured and included  
21 as Action 1 of the options paper. For updates to the spiny  
22 lobster ACL, the council would first need to determine how they  
23 would use the ABCs recommended by the SSC, either using the  
24 annual ABCs recommended for each year, which would result in  
25 ACLs that change every year, or using a multiyear ABC that would  
26 result in an ACL that is set at a constant value.

27  
28 The council would then need to set the ACL from the ABC,  
29 accounting for their level of management uncertainty and their  
30 ability to constrain catch to the ACL. These steps are included  
31 in Action 2 of the options paper.

32  
33 Depending on the processes used and the outcomes of updating the  
34 ACLs, the accountability measures for spiny lobster included in  
35 the island-based FMPs may need to be revised. Since those ACL  
36 outcomes are unknown at this time, the revision of the  
37 accountability measure was not included in the options paper,  
38 but it will be discussed briefly at the end of the presentation.

39  
40 Following the request at the June council meeting, staff drafted  
41 an options paper that could be considered in a joint amendment  
42 to the island-based FMPs that would modify the spiny lobster  
43 management reference points based on the SEDAR 57 stock  
44 assessments. The option paper simply provides examples that the  
45 council could consider for updating these management reference  
46 points. The council could accept, modify, reject, or add to the  
47 options that are provided in the paper.

1 The options paper is available on the council's webpage, and it  
2 includes two actions. Action 1 provides options for updating  
3 the ABCs, which were based on discussions at the December 2019  
4 meeting and the P\* decision made at the June 2020 meeting, and  
5 Action 2 provides options for updating the spiny lobster ACL for  
6 each island.

7  
8 Under Action 1, the council would select their P\* for spiny  
9 lobster for each island group and accept the SSC's  
10 recommendation associated with that P\*, and so the council  
11 considered a range of P\* values and selected an acceptable P\* of  
12 0.45. Action 1 records the council's decisions and rationale in  
13 the document for the options that were considered.

14  
15 Seven options were included in the options paper, and Option 1  
16 is the no action, which would retain the ABC for spiny lobster  
17 specified in each island-based FMP, but this option would not  
18 allow for updates to the ABC, but it would be based on the best  
19 scientific information available, AKA the SEDAR stock  
20 assessments, and this is required for analysis purposes, this  
21 option.

22  
23 Options 2 through 7 correspond to the range of P\* values  
24 selected by the council at the December meeting, with Option 2  
25 corresponding to a P\* of 0.4 and so on, until Option 7, which  
26 corresponds to the P\* of 0.45. At the June meeting, the council  
27 discussed the range of P\* values considered and selected a P\* of  
28 0.45, and that reflected the level of uncertainty in the SEDAR  
29 57 stock assessments that they were comfortable with to ensure  
30 that overfishing does not occur.

31  
32 In the options paper, Option 7 is listed as the preliminary  
33 preferred option for Puerto Rico, St. Thomas/St. John, and St.  
34 Croix. Tables are included in the options paper for each island  
35 or island group that lists the resulting ABCs for spiny lobster  
36 for each option, and the tables are just too big to include in  
37 the presentation, and so, if people would like, at the end, we  
38 can switch over to the document and look at those. A high-level  
39 comparative analysis of the options was also included.

40  
41 Under Action 2, the council would select the process for  
42 determining the ACL and optimum yield for spiny lobster in each  
43 island or island group from the ABCs that were recommended by  
44 the SSC. That reflects the council's level of management  
45 uncertainty.

46  
47 Per the Magnuson-Stevens Act and regulations, the ACL set by the  
48 council cannot exceed the ABC recommended by the SSC. It can be

1 equal to the recommended ABC, but it cannot exceed the ABC.  
2 This legal requirement guided the options that were considered  
3 in the options paper.

4  
5 Three options were included under Action 2, and, as I mentioned  
6 previously, the options can be modified, per council guidance.  
7 Option 1 is the no action, which would retain the ACL for spiny  
8 lobster specified in each island-based FMP. Similar to the  
9 previous action, this option would not allow for updates to the  
10 ACL based on the best scientific information available, but it's  
11 required for analysis purposes.

12  
13 At this time, only two options were considered, based on the  
14 ABCs that were recommended by the SSC. Option 2 would set the  
15 ACL and the optimum yield equal to the ABC recommended by the  
16 SSC for each year from 2021 to 2026, as reduced by a management  
17 uncertainty buffer in one of the sub-options.

18  
19 Under this option, the ACLs would change from year-to-year  
20 during the six-year period, because the ABCs change every year.  
21 Sub-Options 2a through 2c use a range of management uncertainty  
22 buffers from zero to 10 percent, which were selected as options  
23 just based on historical actions. Sub-Option 2a would set the  
24 ACL equal to the ABC recommended by the SSC in each year, and  
25 Sub-Option 2b would set the ACL at 95 percent of the recommended  
26 ABC each year, and Sub-Option 2c would set the ACL at 90 percent  
27 of the recommended ABC each year.

28  
29 Option 3 would set the ACL and optimum yield equal to the  
30 minimum ABC recommended by the SSC for the 2021 to 2026 time  
31 period, again, as reduced by the management uncertainty buffer  
32 in one of the sub-options. Under this option, the ACL for spiny  
33 lobster in each island or island group would be set at a  
34 constant value during the six-year period. The minimum ABC was  
35 used in order to keep the ACL each year under the recommended  
36 ABC, and I will show you how this works in just a moment and why  
37 we selected this option.

38  
39 Sub-Options 3a through 3c use the same range of management  
40 uncertainty buffers as Option 2, and, again, those could be  
41 modified or added to, if so requested by the council. Tables  
42 for Action 2 are included in the options paper for each island  
43 or island group that list the resulting ACLs for spiny lobster  
44 for each option and so sub-option and corresponding to each P\*  
45 value from Action 1, so you can kind of get the whole suite of  
46 what the ACLs could be.

47  
48 Other options may be possible for setting ACLs from the

1 recommended ABCs, but only these two options were included in  
2 the options paper, in order to provide a complete document with  
3 comparative analysis in time for this August meeting.

4  
5 This is just a quick look at pros and cons to be considered when  
6 comparing the options for Action 2. As mentioned, Option 1, the  
7 no action, would not update the management reference points for  
8 spiny lobster based on the SEDAR 57 stock assessments, and so it  
9 wouldn't be based on the best scientific information available.

10  
11 Option 2, which sets the ACL equal to the ABC each year, as  
12 reduced by some level of management uncertainty, would set ACLs  
13 at a higher level than the Option 3 sub-options, but it would  
14 result in ACLs that change every year, and that would prompt an  
15 action to be included in the amendment to revise the  
16 accountability measures, which are currently compared to a set  
17 value ACL.

18  
19 Also, considering the two-year data lag in available commercial  
20 landings, having ACLs that change from year to year could  
21 prevent a timely evaluation of whether the ACL that was in  
22 effect during a given year was exceeded, and this complicates  
23 efforts to ensure accountability with the ACL.

24  
25 Option 3, which would set a constant value ACL from the  
26 recommended ABCs, would be similar to the current process, in  
27 which landings are compared to a constant-value ACL, and that  
28 would be easier and less confusing for monitoring purposes.  
29 Under this action, the AM would not necessarily need to be  
30 revised, although it may be updated to reflect different years  
31 of landings data.

32  
33 However, due to legal requirements that state that the ACL  
34 cannot exceed the recommended ABC, the ACL would need to be set  
35 equal to the minimum value of the ABCs recommended during the  
36 six-year period. For St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix, in  
37 which the ABCs increase in the first year, 2021, and then  
38 decrease in time, to converge on the level of the MSY proxy, and  
39 those are the graphs that Adyan showed us at the June meeting,  
40 and this option would not allow for that increase in catch  
41 initially observed in the first year. Therefore, over the six-  
42 year period, a portion of the acceptable catch recommended by  
43 the SSC could be foregone with Option 3.

44  
45 Staff realized that setting the ACL from the minimum ABC may not  
46 be desirable, especially in light of that foregone yield, and  
47 they considered other options for setting ACLs from the ABCs  
48 that were recommended by the SSC.



1  
2 Here are some of those options that were considered using the  
3 average ABC from the six-year period, using the median ABC  
4 value, or using that maximum ABC value. However, all three of  
5 those options failed the requirement that the ACL not exceed the  
6 ABC in one or more of the six years.

7  
8 The table to the right highlights the example of using the  
9 average ABC calculated from the 2021 through 2026 ABCs that were  
10 recommended by the SSC to set the ACL over the same range of  
11 management uncertainty buffers used in Option 2, and so no  
12 management uncertainty buffer, 0.95, or 0.9.

13  
14 The red numbers in the table represent years in which the ACL  
15 exceeded the ABC recommended for that year, and so you can see  
16 that the ACLs in the last column, which represent a management  
17 uncertainty buffer of 0.9, applied to the average ABC, only  
18 violates the legal requirement in the last year. This example  
19 helps illustrate the point that, based on the ABCs that were  
20 recommended by the SSC, only by setting the ACL equal to the  
21 minimum value during that time period would result in an ACL  
22 value that is less than the ABC. If you set it at any other  
23 value, you're going to violate that requirement in at least the  
24 last year, in at least the year with the lowest ABC.

25  
26 Similar results happen when using the median ABC or the maximum  
27 ABC to set the ACLs. Some years would have an ACL that is  
28 greater than the recommended ABC, which would violate the  
29 Magnuson-Stevens Act and regulations.

30  
31 What are the next steps? The spiny lobster interdisciplinary  
32 planning team, or IPT, which is comprised of council and NMFS  
33 staff, will work with the Science Center to evaluate other  
34 options, based on the ABCs that were recommended, which change  
35 over year, to see if there is something that we could do based  
36 on what the SSC has already recommended.

37  
38 The council could request the SSC recommend an acceptable  
39 constant catch ABC for each island or island group in addition  
40 to the moving catch that they have already recommended. This  
41 would provide the council with more options for setting a  
42 constant catch ACL that could allow for more harvest over the  
43 six-year period when compared to Option 3, which was using the  
44 minimum value of the ABCs already recommended.

45  
46 Then, following council input and guidance from this meeting,  
47 the IPT will develop the spiny lobster amendment to the island-  
48 based FMPs for consideration at the December council meeting.

1  
2 Depending on that input and guidance that we get, the draft  
3 amendment may include a third action to revise the  
4 accountability measures for spiny lobster. Under the island-  
5 based FMPs, the accountability measure for lobster uses a spin-  
6 up process to compare landings data to the spiny lobster ACL,  
7 and, again, that's a set value ACL.

8  
9 In the spin-up process, a single year, followed by a two-year  
10 average, followed by a three-year average of landings, would be  
11 compared to that spiny lobster ACL, and that would remain  
12 constant through time, until so amended.

13  
14 If an AM is triggered, the length of the spiny lobster fishing  
15 season would be reduced the following year by the amount  
16 necessary to ensure that landings do not again exceed the ACL in  
17 the year of the application. This application of the AM would  
18 be less straightforward if the ACL changed every year, and so  
19 that's why it would probably need to be revised.

20  
21 If the council considers options that result in ACLs that change  
22 from year to year, the AM would need to be revised. For  
23 example, the trigger for that AM could compare a single year of  
24 landings to a single-year ACL, or it could compare average  
25 landings over multiple years to the average ACL for those years.  
26 If needed, options for an accountability measure revision would  
27 be included and analyzed as a third option in the amendment.  
28 With that, I will take any questions.

29  
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Sarah. That was a great presentation,  
31 and there was a lot of things to digest and to understand. Any  
32 questions for Sarah? I have nothing in the chat yet. Damaris,  
33 did you have a question?

34  
35 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Yes. Thank you. From my understanding, the  
36 lobster populations in Puerto Rico are doing fine, and why are  
37 you considering an option to make more strict measures?

38  
39 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Thank you. That is because of the new stock  
40 assessment that was done and that was accepted by both the SSC  
41 and the council, and so, based on the determinations that were  
42 made in that stock assessment, it shifted the tiers that spiny  
43 lobster was listed in, which is what those original ACLs were  
44 set on, into a new tier, and so they all need to be redone, and,  
45 based on the values that came out of the stock assessment,  
46 that's why this is happening.

47  
48 They are more restrictive than what would be included in the

1 island-based FMPs, but, if you compare them to the current ACLs  
2 from the Spiny Lobster FMP, they actually could potentially  
3 increase, depending on which management uncertainty buffer was  
4 selected, and so all of this was triggered by the stock  
5 assessment.

6  
7 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** All right. Thank you.

8  
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Richard. Then, after Richard, Vanessa.

10  
11 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Thank you. Just a couple of comments.  
12 When the council is considering these things, they should be  
13 aware that we're putting together our experience with the  
14 lobster fishery over time with what the model is saying about  
15 the lobster fishery over time, and, when we were back in Tier 4,  
16 we were going, okay, our experience is pretty good, and let's up  
17 this, and we actually upped it quite a bit.

18  
19 The model is telling us that maybe we shouldn't do it that way,  
20 and so our history of success was based on the old ACL, and we  
21 didn't have any information to know what the new ACL would have  
22 been under Tier 4, whether it would have been good or not, but  
23 the model was telling us that, no, that's not where we want to  
24 be.

25  
26 As it was pointed out, that's the best information we have at  
27 the moment, and it is a data-limited model, and there might be  
28 some aspects of it that will change as we get information,  
29 especially on the selectivity information, that studies now  
30 underway, or starting to get underway, will answer, and so we're  
31 hoping that maybe there will be some updates that will improve  
32 the scenario, but please keep in mind that the analysis that was  
33 done under the SEDAR process did show that populations exceeded  
34 the overfishing level in two of the three platforms, but there  
35 is a peak period, and so it is possible, under the current  
36 fishing levels, or levels that have historically occurred, to  
37 exceed the levels where we should be, and so we have to be a bit  
38 more cautious.

39  
40 This may not be what's actually happening in the population,  
41 because, as I said, this is a data-limited model, and things may  
42 be more robust than we think, but the actions are driven by the  
43 model and not by what we otherwise think, and so that's the  
44 reason for having some caution, so we don't trigger an  
45 overfishing determination. Thank you.

46  
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Vanessa.

1 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** I have some comments. We already know that  
2 the data in Puerto Rico is not the best, and this is based on  
3 the number of commercial fishermen that have licenses, and  
4 practically 50 percent of the real commercial fishermen don't  
5 have licenses, some because they lose them between the time of  
6 2017, after Maria, and they don't complete the process for the  
7 renovation, and they have to start again, practically, in 2018  
8 and 2019, and so, if we -- It's just a question.

9  
10 If we are taking the numbers based on 2017 and 2018, how will  
11 this affect our commercial fishermen that now that they are  
12 taking out their license again and putting again the numbers,  
13 the real numbers, in the statistics? Basically, with this  
14 number, just one town, or the west side of the island, we will  
15 make that quota, and so I think that we should think on that,  
16 because, if we consider this for the next five years, we are  
17 trying -- In the fish markets, we are trying, in here, to make  
18 them put the real numbers and tell them that it doesn't affect  
19 the government benefits, and that is the most common thing that  
20 they use, to just don't put the real numbers.

21  
22 Also, we are trying, after this, they are now looking for their  
23 license again, and many of the fishers that we have are now  
24 having their provisional license, and how will this affect for  
25 the next years, if we already know that the data is not correct  
26 and that practically I could say, day by day, that what I see in  
27 here, that just one town, my town, will make practically more  
28 than the 70 percent of this quota. Thanks.

29  
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Sarah.

31  
32 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I think that's more a question for the  
33 Science Center. Is there someone on that could maybe address  
34 how the data that's going to be coming out in the next few years  
35 -- How that could maybe play into the levels that are set from  
36 SEDAR?

37  
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Is there anybody from the Science Center?

39  
40 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Is Adyan on the call?

41  
42 **JOHN WALTER:** Good morning, everyone. As the landings data come  
43 in, they will be accounted for in the progress towards the  
44 annual catch limit, and we noted that landings have been down,  
45 due to the hurricanes and a lot of the effects on the fishers  
46 due to that, and so we would expect them to come up, and most of  
47 these options are substantial increases from what recent years  
48 have been, because of that, and so, presumably, those increased

1 catches, as fishermen recover, would be possible under any of  
2 these ABCs and ACLs.

3  
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. We have Julian and then Roy.

5  
6 **TONY BLANCHARD:** It's Tony Blanchard. Could you bring back up  
7 the slide with the chart on it? Right there. I've got a  
8 question. Why is it taking on a six-year -- Why does the track  
9 go through six years, instead of a shorter or a longer term?

10  
11 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** The six years are based on the period that  
12 the SEDAR assessment projected OFLs, and so OFLs were projected  
13 for the years 2021 through 2026, and so the SSC set, and the  
14 council together set, the ABCs for those same six years, and so  
15 we don't have any projections past the year 2026, and, when I  
16 mentioned that, in the next steps slide, how the IPT could get  
17 together with the Science Center, we could get together and try  
18 to determine if there are any other options that maybe we could  
19 use that would get a higher level of catch over the six-year  
20 time period but that wouldn't violate the requirement that the  
21 ACL be equal to or less than the ABC.

22  
23 There may be other options out there, but that's why we're only  
24 looking at the six-year period, and so the first question, I  
25 guess, to the council is do you want an ACL that changes from  
26 year to year, even if the first three years is one value and the  
27 second three years, or if they change every two years, and is  
28 that okay?

29  
30 Is that something that you would consider, knowing that it means  
31 that you have to revise the accountability measures and how  
32 things are triggered and how things are compared to the ACL, or  
33 do you just want a constant value through time? Do you want one  
34 number that you have to know and that you have to compare your  
35 landings to? That's kind of the first question, but that's why  
36 we only used the six years. Does that answer your question?

37  
38 **TONY BLANCHARD:** This is how I'm looking at it. We're looking  
39 at projections going through a six-year period, right?

40  
41 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes.

42  
43 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Right now, we can't even project what will  
44 happen in the next six months with this pandemic, as an example,  
45 or the hurricane season, which we're getting up into the height  
46 of it, but we are here speculating and projecting what things  
47 are going to look like in the next six years.

1 The point I'm trying to make here is, the longer we look ahead,  
2 the more inaccurate this will become, and so what I am looking  
3 at is a shorter timeframe that we would be able to work with and  
4 that is probably more realistic in the grand scheme of things.  
5 Do you understand what I'm saying?

6  
7 How I see it is, the longer ahead we look at this, the -- It's  
8 like looking at the hurricanes and the weatherman, and they're  
9 projecting what's going to happen in a week's time. The  
10 projections will tell you that, the farther out it is, the  
11 farther away it is, the harder it is to make an accurate  
12 projection. The point here is, the farther out we look, it's  
13 harder to project an accurate number.

14  
15 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I just want to add on to what Tony said, and I  
16 think it should be a shorter time period, and then you're  
17 watching these projections and the numbers keep going down.  
18 Before, we ran the ACLs off of one set number, and you had three  
19 years that you collect information, and it would give you an  
20 overrun or an underrun, something to work with, but, here,  
21 you're projecting that the numbers are continually going to  
22 decline, and, actually, right now, the numbers are down, because  
23 the lobster fishery has taken one of the biggest hits, due to  
24 the fact of the pandemic and the hotels being closed.

25  
26 Those numbers are really down, but we don't know what's going to  
27 happen six months to a year from now, and I don't think the  
28 pandemic is going away anytime soon. Right here in St. Thomas,  
29 right now, our cases are almost forty new cases a day, and so we  
30 are on the rise, and so I think we're looking at a longer time  
31 period, and different numbers is a problem. I think it needs to  
32 be a shorter time period and stick with one number for at least  
33 three years, and let's see what happens over that three-year  
34 period.

35  
36 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I agree with Mr. Magras.

37  
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Tony, Richard Appeldoorn wants to follow-up on  
39 your observation, and so finish, and then I will pass to Richard  
40 and then Roy on the queue. Go ahead.

41  
42 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Okay. What was wrong with keeping it at three  
43 years and how we have it currently, looking at it for three  
44 years, and, if we overrun, then we deal with it, on a three-year  
45 average? The question is why can't we stick to the three-year  
46 average scenario?

47  
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** Sarah.

1  
2 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** You could do that, but the reason why it was  
3 set up this way in the options paper and the document was  
4 because this was the information that came out of the SEDAR  
5 assessment and set down through the SSC, and so, if the  
6 projections -- If the SSC says that it would be acceptable to  
7 just do something using the first three years, then we could  
8 follow that. We didn't want to make that assumption, and so we  
9 used the information that came out of the assessment.

10  
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Let's give the opportunity for Richard to weigh-  
12 in and then Roy Crabtree after that.

13  
14 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Thank you. The reason -- I'm not sure  
15 which island this is for, but the reason the numbers would go  
16 down in this projection is because the catch rates that were  
17 used to set this clearly indicated that fishing had been much  
18 lower, and therefore there is an excess amount of lobsters that  
19 are available to be harvested, and then, gradually, that's  
20 reduced down to where the ABC value would be, and, therefore,  
21 it's allowing you to take this extra.

22  
23 The SSC had recommended that you may want to do periodic updates  
24 to this, and it's not changing the model, but it's changing the  
25 model, what Tony had said.

26  
27 If you find out that you are underharvesting, because of storms  
28 and pandemics or whatever, you just ask for a recalculation, and  
29 the excess amount of stock that was made available by not being  
30 harvested, due to those impacts, would then be recalculated into  
31 the ABC automatically, and you would have to somehow update the  
32 plan to accept those changes, but those changes can be made very  
33 quickly, and it was our recommendation, in fact, that you do  
34 that. His point about those projections being less realistic  
35 the further you go out is absolutely true, and that was my  
36 comment.

37  
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Richard. Roy Crabtree.

39  
40 **ROY CRABTREE:** I think I agree with a lot of what Tony is  
41 saying. Projecting out six years is a long time, and,  
42 typically, with a number of SSCs, they will only give  
43 projections out for three years, and sometimes five years, but  
44 even that's a long way to go, and it seems to me, in this case,  
45 what we ought to do is schedule an update of the assessment to  
46 be done let's say in 2023, and this would just be an update, and  
47 so it would pull in the landings and the kind of information,  
48 and then we could probably look at setting the ABCs based on

1 three years, and then we get the new update done in 2023 and put  
2 in place new catch levels from 2024 out.

3  
4 I believe that John Walter is on, and I don't know if there is a  
5 schedule, or if you all thought about when we ought to do an  
6 update, but, certainly, given all the things going on with  
7 uncertainty about effort and how much effort there is going to  
8 be, there is a lot of reasons for why we might want to ensure  
9 that we have an update assessment in three years, and I would be  
10 interested in hearing John's thought on what he would think  
11 about us setting it based on three years of the projection and  
12 then schedule an update and reset things there and if that's  
13 something the Science Center feels like would be workable.

14  
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Roy. A response with John Walter, and  
16 I agree with what you said. Go ahead, John,

17  
18 **JOHN WALTER:** The SEDAR Steering Committee is the committee who  
19 plans and schedules assessments. Right now, on the books for  
20 the Caribbean, next up in the queue is queen trigger on all  
21 three island platforms, and then that is scheduled for 2021, and  
22 we start then queen snapper in 2022, redbait parrotfish at the  
23 same time, and then, in 2024, it's lane snapper.

24  
25 Right now, we don't have lobster on the planning schedule, that  
26 I can see, but lobster is clearly one of the most important  
27 species, and so surely that could be taken up and so  
28 reprioritization happen.

29  
30 Now, as an update, or kind of an interim assessment, it's  
31 probably something that, as long as the data were available, and  
32 the data collection streams work fairly well, it wouldn't be  
33 that hard to do.

34  
35 What I'm hearing is that it could potentially be different or  
36 affected by differential reporting, and that could challenge  
37 conducting the assessment, but, as long as the data comes in, I  
38 think it's something that we could bring to the SEDAR Steering  
39 Committee to get in the queue earlier. That would allow for  
40 setting an ABC for three years under the assumption that, in  
41 2023, an assessment would occur that would allow for an update  
42 of the status. Thanks.

43  
44 **ROY CRABTREE:** If I could, Mr. Chairman, that's helpful, John,  
45 and that seems like, to me, a good course of action, and then I  
46 don't think any of us want to set different ACL values for each  
47 year and have to do all of that and change the accountability  
48 mechanisms.



1  
2 Maybe what we could do is kind of direction to staff that we  
3 want to look at setting a constant ACL, and so we need a  
4 constant ABC, and we would like to focus on three years, and  
5 then, at the next SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, which I  
6 believe there is already one scheduled in the fall, we try to  
7 get an update for spiny lobster scheduled for 2023, and we make  
8 adjustments in the assessment schedule, as needed, and we go  
9 with that.

10  
11 Then staff could kind of pull all of this together for us to  
12 review next time around, along those lines, if we think that's  
13 workable. I don't know if that would mean that we would need to  
14 have the SSC look at this again or not, and I guess we would  
15 need some input about that.

16  
17 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Roy. I think we are going the right  
18 route here. Graciela.

19  
20 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** I will defer to Richard, who wants to  
21 respond to Roy, and you have other people in the queue.

22  
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, and we have a lot of people in the queue,  
24 and it's a little confusing. Richard.

25  
26 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Two points. As I said, one of the reasons  
27 these values go down is we're looking at a -- We're dealing with  
28 excess stock, and we're allowing the fishery to catch that and  
29 gradually getting down to where the OFL and ABC would occur.  
30 It's taking -- This projection is taking six years to get down  
31 to that level. If you want to change it to three years, you're  
32 going to get down to that level in three years, I think is how  
33 that would be mandated, but that's probably more a question for  
34 Jocelyn.

35  
36 The thing that the SSC was recommending was that the most recent  
37 landings data be used to recalculate what the ABCs would be, and  
38 this could be done pretty much with the click of a button,  
39 because the model is already set up to do that, and all you're  
40 introducing is the new landings information, and, while that  
41 would require some administrative change to accept the new ABCs,  
42 this is not a new SEDAR assessment, and it doesn't need to be  
43 put on the SEDAR schedule or anything like that.

44  
45 If we finally get information, say on gear selectivity, that's  
46 different, and that would change the model, and that would  
47 probably require some form of SEDAR assessment, and I'm not sure  
48 if it's a full review or some kind of partial change, but

1 there's two things going on here. Just changing the landings  
2 data information to actually implement and accept what the real  
3 situation is in the fishery relative to landings, that's very  
4 simple to do, and it doesn't require a big analysis.

5  
6 It just requires whatever process needs to have the ABC set from  
7 whatever the old value was to the new value, but, if we actually  
8 wanted to drive this to a three-year time period, I think you're  
9 going to drive it from that 164,000 to the 120,000 in that  
10 three-year period.

11  
12 As I said, there might be some clarification on that on what is  
13 legally acceptable, but the point of the analysis is to get to  
14 what the ABC would be if we were fishing at maximum sustainable  
15 yield all the time, and so, if you want to say it takes longer  
16 to get there, maybe there will be a different allocation of the  
17 resources, and, if you want to say I want to get there in a  
18 shorter period of time, there's going to be a different  
19 allocation of the resources, but that's why you have this six-  
20 year thing, is to gradually get you to where the ABC would be if  
21 your fishery was on a --

22  
23 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, I think we should allow Jocelyn to say  
24 something, and maybe we need to reconsider the legalities of  
25 anything that we are doing.

26  
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Jocelyn and then Graciela and then Tony.  
28 Go ahead.

29  
30 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thank you. One of the things that I was  
31 going to note is that, if the council is thinking about setting  
32 a constant ABC and wants to base that on a -- Sorry. A constant  
33 ACL, and wants to base that on a constant ABC, I would recommend  
34 that the council ask its SSC to revise that ABC recommendation,  
35 and, right now, as it's shown here, we have ABC recommendations  
36 that change over the year, and so we would want to get a  
37 different ABC recommendation from the SSC, and the council could  
38 ask for that constant ABC.

39  
40 Given some of the discussion here about the appropriate  
41 timeframe, the council could ask for the SSC to look over a  
42 three-year time period, and that could require coordination with  
43 the Science Center, because they have provided, based on the  
44 assessment, those OFL projections over a different time series,  
45 and so I would just recommend going back to the SSC, if we want  
46 a different ABC recommendation that looks at a shorter time  
47 period, and also if we want that constant ABC recommendation.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Jocelyn. Graciela.

2  
3 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** I would defer to John Walter, who is  
4 wanting to respond, and then you also have Tony in the queue.

5  
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. John Walter and then Tony.

7  
8 **JOHN WALTER:** Thank you. Thank you, Graciela. One of the new  
9 jobs that I've got in my position is trying to better coordinate  
10 the communications and the requests from the council to the  
11 Science Center, and so, Miguel and Graciela, you will be getting  
12 a letter about how to better do that, so that we can respond to  
13 things.

14  
15 One of these responses and a request could be for an interim  
16 assessment, and, as Rich well put, that would not need to go  
17 through the SEDAR process, and so, if the council requested an  
18 interim update assessment of spiny lobster, to give 2024 advice,  
19 to request that for 2023, it would be through that process,  
20 where you would send a letter and we would go through the  
21 process of trying to make that happen, and that seems very  
22 doable.

23  
24 If there is substantially more information, like the selectivity  
25 experiments come through, it might need to expand beyond just an  
26 interim approach, but that process is going to be put into place  
27 to make those requests happen. Thanks.

28  
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Tony and then Roy.

30  
31 **TONY BLANCHARD:** I am going back to the statement that Jocelyn  
32 made a little while ago. I agree with what Jocelyn said, and I  
33 agree that we need to look at this in a three-year time period,  
34 and so I would follow Jocelyn's recommendations, and we will go  
35 on the three-year average, like we agreed on, and let's look at  
36 the numbers and let the SSC, or whoever needs to recalculate, do  
37 their job.

38  
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Tony. Next in the queue is John  
40 Walter and then Roy Crabtree.

41  
42 **MIGUEL ROLON:** John Walter already talked, and it's Roy Crabtree  
43 now.

44  
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Roy.

46  
47 **ROY CRABTREE:** I think that's the way to go, and I guess we do  
48 need to consult with the SSC again, and I'm not really following

1 what Richard said about needing to get down to the 120,000  
2 faster if we just go with three. It seems to me that, with the  
3 projection, there is a certain biomass and a certain level of  
4 harvest that they can sustain, and, if we set things for three  
5 years and then update it, it doesn't -- I am not following why  
6 it would decline any faster just because of that, but that's  
7 neither here nor there, and they can sort that out with the  
8 Science Center, but I guess our question to the SSC would be  
9 that we want to set a constant ACL, based on three years, and  
10 then we're going to schedule a new assessment.

11  
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Richard, do you want to respond to that?

13  
14 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** Yes, and I don't have any problem with  
15 what's being requested, and the reason I had suggested that we  
16 would need to get down to that 120,000 in that earlier timeframe  
17 is because what happens if nothing happens in 2023 and it does  
18 not go through an update, and it can't be done? Are we now  
19 stuck with some higher level that's going to go on for a longer  
20 period of time, or does the fishery close, because there is no  
21 ACL set or whatever, or should it be set at the level of what  
22 the long-term ABC would be?

23  
24 That's something that I think would be -- The answer to that can  
25 be discussed and brought to the SSC, so we're fully aware of  
26 what the options are and how to do this, so we don't get  
27 ourselves in a jam, should we not get the update on schedule.  
28 That's really my concern.

29  
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Roy, did you want to respond?

31  
32 **ROY CRABTREE:** What we would do would be set in the regulations  
33 an ABC based on those three years, or the ACL, and it would be  
34 the ACL until changed, but, if we got to 2023 and, for whatever  
35 reason, there wasn't going to be a new assessment, then I think  
36 we would have to readdress the ACL and change it based on the  
37 projections that we have, and so I suppose, if that was the way  
38 it played out, we could be looking at some real reductions in  
39 2024, but I think that just underscores that we need to get the  
40 interim assessment done to deal with that.

41  
42 We do this a lot of times with all the councils, where we'll set  
43 an ABC based on three years, and that's what is in the  
44 regulations until changed, but the ABC here -- We would still  
45 have to deal with the fact that, in 2024, we don't have a new  
46 assessment, and we're potentially harvesting too many lobster,  
47 and we would have to look at it, but I really don't see what  
48 would prevent us from getting the interim assessment done.

1  
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. I have Julian Magras.  
3

4 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I listened to Richard stating that we're going  
5 to be harvesting this higher number, and I can see, with all  
6 that is going on here in St. Thomas and St. John, of us getting  
7 to any higher number and that we need to get to that 120,000  
8 pounds faster.  
9

10 Presently, with the pandemic and the hotels closed, and there  
11 are no cruise ships, and our biggest hotel, which is Frenchmen's  
12 Reef, has not even started back the renovations since the  
13 pandemic has kicked in, and they're talking about maybe June of  
14 2021 to start back to finish their project of rebuilding, and no  
15 one knows when the cruise ships are going to be coming back.  
16

17 There is no way that we will be able to harvest the quantity of  
18 lobsters that we were able to harvest a year ago, and we're  
19 still recovering from the hurricanes, and so let's say, for  
20 instance, were to use that 164,000 pounds for 2021 and come down  
21 to the average of 127,000 pounds, like what it shows there,  
22 because these numbers reflect St. Thomas/St. John.  
23

24 We're never going to get close to those numbers with what's  
25 going on right now. Lobsters is one of the hardest things to  
26 sell during this time, and, like I said, we don't know what's  
27 going to happen, and so I think we need to let the three years  
28 play out, and we're going to continue looking at it every year.  
29

30 Maybe, every time we have a council meeting, maybe some kind of  
31 update is given on what's going on in the islands, and has  
32 things improved, or have things gotten better, and the DAP  
33 chairs and the council members that represent each platform can  
34 give an update on that, because we're the ones with the hands-on  
35 experience and know what's going on in our area, and so I think  
36 we need to stick with the three-year plan and don't rush to get  
37 into something that's' going to, in the long run, hurt the  
38 fishermen. Thank you.  
39

40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Julian, and I want just to highlight  
41 that the restaurants and the hotels -- In many cases, they are  
42 not in the recovery process, and they are already closed, and  
43 that's just to support the lines that Julian put on the record.  
44 Roy, the next turn is for you, and I need maybe help from Roy,  
45 to see if I need a motion or a specific instruction to the staff  
46 to proceed with what is being discussed. Roy.  
47

48 **ROY CRABTREE:** Thanks, Marcos. To the extent that Julian is

1 right and all these lobster aren't caught and the catches are  
2 lower than these values in the projections, then, all things  
3 equal, that likely means that we're going to be leaving biomass  
4 in the water, which we could catch down the road, and so, if the  
5 catches are lower, it's quite likely that we would be able to  
6 have higher ABCs down the road.

7  
8 The best way to get at that is through the update of the  
9 assessment, but that will be taken into account, and so I think,  
10 in terms of a motion, and I'm asking folks to help me out on  
11 staff with that at the moment, but I think what we do is we go  
12 back to the SSC and ask them to look at giving us a constant ABC  
13 based on the first three years of the projection, and the SSC  
14 can work out this issue of how much the projections need to  
15 decline with the Science Center at that time, but we ask for a  
16 new constant ABC for 2021 to 2023.

17  
18 Then, generally, at SEDAR Steering Committees, the chair of the  
19 council and Miguel and Graciela would usually be there, and we  
20 would then work with John Walter and the Science Center and get  
21 an interim assessment scheduled for 2023. **I will make a motion,**  
22 **Marcos, that we ask the SSC to provide us with a new constant**  
23 **ABC for 2021 to 2023.**

24  
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Roy, can you hold on for a second, for Natalia to  
26 be ready to write down the motion? Thank you. Natalia, are you  
27 ready, or Liajay?

28  
29 **NATALIA PERDOMO:** I'm ready.

30  
31 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Just dictate the motion to Natalia slowly.

32  
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Go ahead, Roy.

34  
35 **ROY CRABTREE:** The council requests the SSC coordinate with the  
36 Science Center to provide a constant ABC for spiny lobster in  
37 each of the three island-based FMPs based on the first three  
38 years of the projections --

39  
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Roy, it's too fast. The council requests the SSC  
41 to coordinate --

42  
43 **ROY CRABTREE:** Coordinate with the Science Center to provide a  
44 constant ABC for spiny lobster for each island group, based on  
45 SEDAR 57, and based on the first three years of the OFL  
46 projections, and that would be 2021 to 2023. It is the  
47 council's intent to request an interim assessment be conducted  
48 in 2023 to set catch levels for 2024 and beyond.

1  
2 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Second.

3  
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** I will give you a little time for you to read the  
5 motion. I am going to read it for the record. The council  
6 requests the SSC to coordinate with the Science Center to  
7 provide a constant ABC for spiny lobster for each island group,  
8 based on SEDAR 57, and based on the first three years of the OFL  
9 projections, from 2021 to 2023. It is the council's intent to  
10 request an interim assessment to be conducted in 2023 to set  
11 catch levels for 2024 and beyond. The motion was presented by  
12 Roy Crabtree and seconded by Tony Blanchard. Is there  
13 discussion now?  
14

15 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Mr. Chair, Richard has a question or a  
16 clarification on the motion.  
17

18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Richard.  
19

20 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I have a question whether "OFL" should read  
21 "ABC".  
22

23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Roy, it's your motion, and is it acceptable, the  
24 change?  
25

26 **ROY CRABTREE:** Yes, that's fine.  
27

28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Anybody else for discussion? Hearing  
29 none, I think we are ready to vote. Did I see somebody coming  
30 in? Carlos Farchette, before we vote.  
31

32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I just wanted to say that I agree with what  
33 was said by Tony, Roy, and Jocelyn, and I agree with Roy that we  
34 need to keep it constant. This thing of going up or down every  
35 year, or down every year, it would be very difficult for  
36 Schuster and I to tell the fishermen that you've got 10,000  
37 pounds less this year, or 5,000 pounds less that year, and  
38 that's very confusing, and so I think we're going in the right  
39 direction. I know, if we have to go to these fishers and keep  
40 telling them that you're up or down, him and I would probably be  
41 wearing cement shoes shortly.  
42

43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Carlos. Let me see if I have anybody  
44 else here to speak.  
45

46 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Mr. Chairman, this should be a roll call and so  
47 call everybody for a yea or nay.  
48

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Is there anybody in opposition?  
2  
3 **MIGUEL ROLON:** No. Do a roll call and get a yea or nay.  
4  
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Let me see here. Carlos Farchette.  
6  
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.  
8  
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Tony Blanchard.  
10  
11 **TONY BLANCHARD:** Yes.  
12  
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Vanessa Ramirez.  
14  
15 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Yes.  
16  
17 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nicole Angeli.  
18  
19 **NICOLE ANGELI:** Yes.  
20  
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Damaris Delgado.  
22  
23 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Yes.  
24  
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Roy.  
26  
27 **ROY CRABTREE:** Yes.  
28  
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.  
30  
31 **MIGUEL ROLON:** It's unanimous.  
32  
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** **It's unanimous, and the motion carries.** We can  
34 go back to the presentation and the discussion, I believe.  
35  
36 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Is there anything else in the presentation that  
37 we need to discuss? If not, you can go ahead and go to the  
38 other ones, and so let's ask the presenter whether she needs to  
39 have any other things for the presentation or whether we need  
40 something from the council to continue the work on the spiny  
41 lobster.  
42  
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Sarah, are we missing anything else that is super  
44 important?  
45  
46 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I think, at this time, no. Eventually, you  
47 will need to make that decision on the management uncertainty  
48 buffer, but that can probably wait until we come back with a new



1 document with new numbers for you to look at.

2  
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Thank you very much, Sarah. Then we are  
4 ready to move on in the agenda, and thank you very much,  
5 everybody. The next item on the agenda is the yellowtail  
6 snapper -- Go ahead, Graciela.

7  
8 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Sorry to interrupt, but you have Maria  
9 with a turn to speak regarding the spiny lobster.

10  
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Maria Lopez.

12  
13 **MARIA LOPEZ:** Just for the spiny lobster, we would like to have  
14 some guidance from the council about what you would be expecting  
15 from staff for the December meeting. Like if you were wanting  
16 to take final action on this in December, then we will have to  
17 probably schedule a meeting or something, so that you can see  
18 the amendment this fall, after the SSC makes the recommendations  
19 and after new options are created for the amendment based on the  
20 discussions that we had today, and so if you can please give us  
21 some guidance on what you would like to do at this time, or if  
22 you would like to see that later, so that we know what to do.  
23 Thank you.

24  
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Miguel.

26  
27 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Probably we could ask Maria what she recommends  
28 the council to do to follow the process, and that would be  
29 easier than reinventing the wheel by the councils. Maria, can  
30 you tell us more or less what you think we can follow as the  
31 staff for between here and the December meeting regarding this  
32 topic?

33  
34 **MARIA LOPEZ:** That will depend on when you will have the SSC  
35 meeting to discuss this, because that means that, after that SSC  
36 meeting, the IPT will be meeting to take that information and  
37 put it together in a paper, and so that decision will be on the  
38 council, to decide that when that happens.

39  
40 For example, if they have a meeting in September or October, and  
41 then are able to make some recommendations that we can use for  
42 this paper, then we will take that back and produce a document  
43 that you can see at a council meeting before the December  
44 meeting, so you can put it on the agenda for the December  
45 meeting. otherwise, if the meeting occurs later in the fall,  
46 then we will bring the recommendations for December, and then we  
47 can take final action later, if needed.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Miguel, I have a question.

2  
3 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Hold on a second. We have John Walter that would  
4 like to speak before I say something else.

5  
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** This is what I was trying to say. John Walter,  
7 go ahead.

8  
9 **JOHN WALTER:** Thank you, everybody. I just wanted to get some  
10 clarity on what the request was and the motion, and it seems  
11 like the briefing book document, or the options paper, almost  
12 already has the information that we need to make this decision,  
13 and perhaps -- I don't want to speak for what the SSC request  
14 would be, except I think that it would be that the projections  
15 of the ABC at different buffers and then choosing the minimum or  
16 maximum -- Choosing the catch that would not lead to overfishing  
17 in any of the three-year periods, as opposed to what is  
18 currently used as a six-year period. That's the process that  
19 the SSC went through to determine a constant catch.

20  
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Miguel.

22  
23 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, I suggest that you leave this to the  
24 staff and the Center and the people who are around the table, so  
25 we can bring whatever is needed to the meeting in December, be  
26 that final action or whatever, because you only have a few  
27 minutes more. That way, everybody will be clear on what is  
28 needed.

29  
30 The next step will be for Graciela and Richard to coordinate  
31 with John and others, and Maria del Mar, about the next steps,  
32 and we will inform you, during the course of these several  
33 months, what will be expected at the December meeting. That  
34 way, today, what you have done is to shorten the number of years  
35 that you project from now on, and you have already accepted  
36 that, and so now what we need to do is to allow the staff to put  
37 together the roadmap for achieving the goals and objectives that  
38 you set today.

39  
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Thank you. I think that's the right  
41 direction, and thank you, Miguel. We are ready to pass to the  
42 next item on the agenda, and we are a little tight on time.  
43 This is the discussion on the yellowtail snapper recreational  
44 bag limit.

45  
46 **DISCUSSION OF YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER RECREATIONAL BAG LIMIT**

47  
48 **MARIA LOPEZ:** I am going to be doing this presentation. Thank

1 you very much. At the last council meeting, the council  
2 requested staff to look into looking into discussing a potential  
3 recreational bag limit for the yellowtail snapper under the St.  
4 Croix fishery management plan, as requested by Carlos Farchette.

5  
6 This is what you requested, to develop an amendment to the St.  
7 Croix FMP, once this amendment is implemented, to modify the  
8 current recreational bag limit for the snapper grouper and  
9 parrotfish aggregate that would allow the yellowtail snapper to  
10 be managed with a separate bag limit specific to the species.

11  
12 First, I am going to provide a little bit of background, and  
13 this is going to be a short presentation, and then I'm going to  
14 talk about what are the current management measures that are  
15 applicable to yellowtail snapper and the rationale provided by  
16 the fishers and some examples of how this fishery is conducted  
17 in St. Croix. I want to thank Carlos Farchette and Marcos Hanke  
18 for providing the information that is going to be used for this  
19 presentation.

20  
21 The yellowtail snapper is a very important component of the U.S.  
22 Caribbean fisheries for both commercial and recreational  
23 harvest. It was included for management in 1995, in the Reef  
24 Fish FMP, and since that time, it has been managed with a  
25 minimum size limit. In St. Croix, this species is managed under  
26 the snapper complex of the Reef Fish FMP for annual catch limits  
27 and monitoring, and this is what is going on right now, until  
28 the island-based FMPs are implemented.

29  
30 Under the St. Croix FMP, once it's implemented, the species will  
31 be managed as an individual stock with a single ACL. The  
32 species was assessed in 2005, through SEDAR 8, and it was --  
33 That assessment did not provide stock status determination,  
34 because the data was deemed to be insufficient. It was also  
35 included in SEDAR 46, which is the SEDAR that assessed data-  
36 limited stocks, although it was only assessed for Puerto Rico.

37  
38 As of March 31, 2020, the stock status determined by NOAA  
39 Fisheries for the Caribbean snappers as an aggregate, which  
40 includes the yellowtail snapper, is that the species is not  
41 undergoing overfishing, and its overfished status is unknown,  
42 and this is based on the stock status determinations that are  
43 included in the Reef Fish FMP.

44  
45 In the St. Croix FMP, the species is considered to have a  
46 productivity of moderate to high, and the productivity is the  
47 capacity of the stock to produce maximum sustainable yield and  
48 to recover if the population is depleted. It also has

1 low/moderate susceptibility, and the susceptibility is the  
2 potential for the stock to be impacted by the fishery, which  
3 includes direct capture as well as indirect impacts to the  
4 fishery, such as loss of habitat quality.

5  
6 These are the current management measures that are applicable to  
7 yellowtail snapper, and there is a recreational bag limit for  
8 groupers, snappers, and parrotfish combined, and it's five per  
9 person per day, or, if three or more persons are onboard,  
10 fifteen per vessel per day is the max, but not to exceed two  
11 parrotfish per person per day, or six parrotfish per vessel per  
12 day. This recreational bag limit was implemented through the  
13 2010 Caribbean ACL amendment, the regulations that implemented  
14 that amendment, for species that, at the time, were undergoing  
15 overfishing.

16  
17 There is no compatible bag limit regulations in territorial  
18 waters of Puerto Rico or the USVI. There is also a size limit  
19 applicable for all harvest of yellowtail in federal waters of  
20 twelve inches total length, and the USVI does not have a similar  
21 size limit, and Puerto Rico has a minimum size limit in the  
22 territorial waters of 10.5 inches fork length, which is almost  
23 equivalent to the same as in federal waters.

24  
25 The species is managed, as I mentioned earlier, with an annual  
26 catch limit and accountability measures, and the species will be  
27 managed in the island-based FMPs, as I mentioned earlier, with  
28 individual stock ACLs in each one of the islands. There are no  
29 recreational landings collected for the species in the USVI, as  
30 of now, that are being used for the monitoring, but that may  
31 change in the future, and I just wanted to point out that all of  
32 these measures will be carried over to all the three island-  
33 based FMPs.

34  
35 In this presentation, we're only focusing on St. Croix, because  
36 this is what was requested by the council, and I just wanted to  
37 show in here, and this is commercial landings, because we don't  
38 have recreational landings reported, but, based on commercial  
39 landings, if you look at the graph, the bottom graph, which is  
40 the one that has all the yellow, we have, in the dotted lines,  
41 the yellowtail snapper ACL that would be implemented under the  
42 St. Croix FMP, and you can see the level is a little less than  
43 16,000 pounds.

44  
45 The columns show the harvest that has been reported for the  
46 yellowtail snapper commercial, which is the only one that is  
47 monitored, and you can see that it would be under the proposed  
48 ACL.

1  
2 If you look at the graph that is on the top, the blue represents  
3 other managed snappers, because remember that, with the snapper  
4 ACL that was included in the Reef Fish FMP, the yellowtail  
5 snapper was included in the snapper complex ACL, and so it was  
6 for all the species included in that, and the landings were also  
7 under, considerably under, the proposed ACL, and so I just  
8 wanted to point that out.

9  
10 I want to thank Carlos for providing this information, and this  
11 is the rationale that was captured during the past council  
12 meeting and then in conversations with Carlos Farchette and  
13 Marcos and other fishers that fish for yellowtail snapper, and  
14 so the fishers are interested in a separate bag limit for the  
15 yellowtail snapper because the yellowtail snapper is fished  
16 differently than other reef fish species, with different  
17 techniques.

18  
19 They mentioned that fishers can be selective, by using different  
20 chum strategies, choosing locations or distance from hardbottom,  
21 working with tides, hook sizes, or hook weights. They indicate  
22 that the current limit appears to be too restrictive and that it  
23 could support higher numbers of yellowtail.

24  
25 This fishery produces minimum bycatch, and I will mention that  
26 in the next slide as well, and the fish are less likely to be  
27 affected by barotrauma, because they are hooked higher in the  
28 water column, where the chum attracts the school.

29  
30 If the species is abundant and desired by locals, this is an  
31 opportunity to move fishing away from classic bottom fishing,  
32 which is multispecies and less selective and has more  
33 interactions with the bottom, and the current limit that they  
34 are referring to, of course, is the recreational, and we're  
35 looking at making changes to the recreational harvest, and so  
36 they are asking for a bag limit that could allow for higher  
37 numbers of yellowtail to be harvested recreationally.

38  
39 These are some of the characteristics of recreational fishing in  
40 St. Croix, and it was mentioned by the fishers that the  
41 recreational and commercial fishers use the same technique.  
42 They fish with yo-yo or rod-and-reel, and they don't use bottom-  
43 tending gear to fish for this species.

44  
45 All fishing is done by anchoring approximately thirty meters  
46 deep and paying out scope on the anchor line until they drift  
47 off the shelf edge. They anchor using homemade grappling hooks  
48 that are made with rebar steel for easy retrieval, which also

1 minimizes damage to corals, and they don't use a lead weight.  
2 The fishers will play out the line when the current is pulling  
3 off the shelf edge so that they can float the bait in the area  
4 where the fish may be feeding on the chum line.

5  
6 For bait, fishers in St. Croix use chum to raise fish from the  
7 bottom, and they also use natural bait, which is preferred, like  
8 sardines and anchovies, alive or dead.

9  
10 As I mentioned earlier, there is no barotrauma, because the fish  
11 rise just to below the surface or the mid-water column, feeding  
12 on the chum line, and the bycatch in St. Croix of the species  
13 are mostly mutton snapper, and occasionally crevalle jack and  
14 blue runner.

15  
16 In St. Croix, this is mostly a nighttime fishery, and there is a  
17 dependency on the right moon phase and the currents. There is a  
18 use of historical locations for yellowtail snapper fishing, and  
19 all of the locations are off the shelf edge. It was indicated  
20 that there are no headboats in St. Croix, and charters mostly  
21 specialize in pelagics, although there is the occasional  
22 personal fishing to bring out tourists, et cetera, that would  
23 harvest this species recreationally.

24  
25 This brings us to what would be the potential action if the  
26 council is interested in pursuing this, and that would be to  
27 establish a separate bag limit for the yellowtail snapper under  
28 the St. Croix FMP, once it's implemented, and there are some  
29 options that were mentioned during the past council meeting, and  
30 we still have to evaluate other options and include other  
31 options, the council desires.

32  
33 We would include a no action alternative, which would be to keep  
34 the yellowtail in the snapper grouper/parrotfish recreational  
35 bag limit, and the other option could be to recommend a separate  
36 recreational bag limit for the yellowtail snapper, and then  
37 there would be options, or there could be options, as to what  
38 the number should be. During the last meeting, it was mentioned  
39 fifteen per fisher, or thirty yellowtail max per boat, and,  
40 obviously, there are some details that would need to be decided  
41 in here.

42  
43 For example, how many fishers -- Do you want to put a limit on  
44 the number of fishers, for example? If you want to do a  
45 different number, or if you have any other suggestions that you  
46 would like to explore in here, so that they could be included in  
47 an options paper and evaluated.

1 Now, there's a couple of things that maybe the council wants to  
2 consider when setting bag limits, and one of them is that there  
3 is no monitoring of recreational landings in the USVI at this  
4 time, although that may change, and so we have to keep in  
5 consideration that there may be overfishing concerns.

6  
7 However, we hope that recreational landings stay the same,  
8 allowing maybe an increase, and, in here, we made a note about  
9 we need to evaluate what would be the effects on assumptions of  
10 the sustainable yield level that was included in the St. Croix  
11 FMP, and what that is, is it's the level of landings that can be  
12 sustained over the long-term that was intended to be used when  
13 the information of resources is needed to produce a quantitative  
14 stock assessment are not available to determine the maximum  
15 sustainable yield or corresponding points, such as the  
16 overfishing limit, and so, basically, the SYL in the island-  
17 based FMPs is used as an indicator of the sustainability of the  
18 fishery.

19  
20 The SYL assumes that recreational landings will continue as in  
21 the past, and so we will have to evaluate how this may or may  
22 not change, and so this is something that would be included in a  
23 potential amendment.

24  
25 Another thing to consider is the enforcement, particularly  
26 because it's a nighttime fishery, and there is also a lack of  
27 compatibility with territorial regulations. However, I  
28 understand that this is not necessarily different than how it is  
29 conducted right now, as the yellowtail snapper is already  
30 included in a bag limit, but that's something that needs to be  
31 considered as well.

32  
33 The last point is, is there a potential for illegal sale of fish  
34 if higher limits are selected, and that was something that was  
35 mentioned during the past council meeting as a consideration to  
36 keep in mind for the council when setting a limit.

37  
38 These are the next steps. The next step could be to develop an  
39 options paper for the December 2020 meeting or the April 2021  
40 meeting, depending, of course, on workload, to amend the St.  
41 Croix fishery management plan. The other decision that the  
42 council may want to evaluate is if Puerto Rico and/or St. Thomas  
43 and St. John were interested in pursuing a similar action.

44  
45 Now, the last part of the presentation is some examples of  
46 information that would be included in a potential amendment.  
47 Staff would review any information available for the species,  
48 and that could come from several sources, and SEAMAP, for

1 example, and the evaluations that have been done in the past  
2 from SEDAR, research conducted, et cetera.

3  
4 We would also be using information about the yellowtail snapper  
5 fishery for both recreational and commercial fishing, for  
6 example how many fishers, how much fishing is in federal waters,  
7 so we can capture how this fishery is being conducted in federal  
8 waters. The other information that could be collected from the  
9 USVI recreational fishing license are market information, for  
10 example price per pound and the demand for the species, and the  
11 reason we would include that is because it would be interesting  
12 to know if, for any reason, the price of the yellowtail  
13 influences recreational harvest, and this is just an example of  
14 information that could be looked at. Then any other information  
15 that could be useful to make this determination.

16  
17 This is all that I have for now. If the council would like to  
18 have any questions, if you have any questions on any of this and  
19 how to proceed, just let me know.

20  
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Do you have another slide, Maria?

22  
23 **MARIA LOPEZ:** No, and it's just a slide that says questions, and  
24 so it's perfectly fine to stay here.

25  
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Carlos, just to speed up the process,  
27 because we are a little behind schedule, I will give you a turn  
28 to comment, and I have a comment, too.

29  
30 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I want  
31 to thank Maria for such an excellent presentation. I mean, it  
32 covered everything. I just want to clear up some things here,  
33 any misconception, because this was brought to my attention by a  
34 district advisory member who represents the recreational fishing  
35 sector, and that was brought to his attention by his  
36 constituents. I am a recreational fisher, but I will be honest  
37 with you that I don't eat yellowtail.

38  
39 I really don't like the texture of the fish, but, when we  
40 discuss that later on, for that white paper -- You know, here on  
41 St. Croix, like I said before, that fishery is a nighttime  
42 fishery. However, I would not doubt that, at some time in the  
43 future, it may become a daytime fishery. We do not have  
44 headboats on St. Croix, and maybe that's something that we need  
45 to also manage in the future.

46  
47 When it comes to fishing for yellowtail recreationally, it's  
48 normally two people per boat, and no more than three, and one



1 thing that I did not ask, when I was out there speaking to  
2 fishermen and the DAP member, was would the commercial fishers  
3 have any objection to this increase in bag limit or separating  
4 for recreational fishing.

5  
6 I know in territorial waters, which we're hoping to have  
7 compatible regulations in the near future, right now, there is  
8 no harvest limit for yellowtail in territorial waters, and so a  
9 recreational guy can, in two hours, catch 150 pounds of  
10 yellowtail, and he would be okay. That creates a market for a  
11 recreational user, and that should not be allowed. Thank you,  
12 Mr. Chair.

13  
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Carlos. Tony Blanchard.

15  
16 **TONY BLANCHARD:** The yellowtail can be caught in the daytime.  
17 My concern is, although you don't have any headboats now, in the  
18 future, it could become a problem, and so I'm willing to support  
19 what Carlos is looking for in the separation of the yellowtail  
20 from the other species and the bag limit, but what I think we  
21 need to be concerned about is the amount per boat per person,  
22 because it may not be a problem now, but a lot of these guys are  
23 probably starting to get into the chartering, especially down  
24 here in St. Thomas, and you have a lot of smaller boats that go  
25 out and take people on charter. That needs to be something that  
26 I think you should look at, and that's my comment.

27  
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Tony. Richard.

29  
30 **RICHARD APPELDOORN:** I am looking at this and going, from a  
31 stock point of view, why are we even considering this, and this  
32 is a regulation that would only apply for recreational fishing  
33 out in Lang Bank, and the issue seems to be one of, if tourism  
34 ever gets back to where I think everybody would like it to be,  
35 then is there a potential for that to start driving say a black  
36 market for the fish coming out of the recreational side instead  
37 of the commercial side, and so that's the issue, and that seems  
38 to be mostly a local issue, rather than a council issue, but, if  
39 the council wants to be preemptive here and maybe drive the  
40 local regulations to be compatible, that's their discretion.

41  
42 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, and I have many comments addressing what you  
43 just said, Richard. Jocelyn.

44  
45 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thank you, Marcos. I just wanted to  
46 reiterate one of the points that Maria made about the  
47 sustainable yield level, that SYL, and how the council should  
48 consider any effect of the change in this bag limit on the SYL.

1 Currently, we don't have recreational landings, and so the  
2 commercial landings were used to set the sustainable yield level  
3 for the stock, and there was an assumption about what those  
4 recreational landings were relative to the commercial landings.

5  
6 If you change the bag limit, that might affect that assumption,  
7 and so I think, if you move forward with this amendment process,  
8 I would recommend coordinating with the SSC and getting their  
9 advice on how any changes to the bag limit might affect some of  
10 those measures that we have for stock status and some of the ABC  
11 recommendations, for example.

12  
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Jocelyn. A comment on the slide, and  
14 Maria put ten yellowtail snapper per person, a maximum of  
15 twenty, a maximum of thirty, and, with that, I think we  
16 addressed the potential of creating somebody that is willing to  
17 go at night for that amount of fish, and it doesn't make it very  
18 profitable, and I think we can address it in that way, and I  
19 want the people to recognize that yellowtail fishing chumming --  
20 You have a very restricted area on behind the boat where you can  
21 accommodate the fishermen and drop the lines behind.

22  
23 In that case, the way the fishing is performed for yellowtail  
24 for quantity, it's already limited by two people on the boat,  
25 fishing behind the boat, and that's a very important comment, in  
26 terms of how the fishing is performed. Carlos, did you want to  
27 make a motion, and we'll go from there?

28  
29 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, before you make any motions, just decide  
30 what you're going to do. What Maria del Mar is asking you what  
31 will be the next steps, and my recommendation is to allow the  
32 staff to prepare -- Remember the staff has a lot of other things  
33 that you charged them to do, and so probably what we could  
34 propose is to let the staff work this out and prepare the  
35 options paper for the 2021 April meeting, and that will allow  
36 them time to discuss it with you and Carlos and whatever, and  
37 we'll start with St. Croix and see how it goes.

38  
39 If the other areas -- By that time, hopefully, we will have the  
40 island-based FMPs approved, and then we can go ahead and have  
41 the appropriate action.

42  
43 The other thing that was mentioned is that remember that the EEZ  
44 is a little bit of an area off of St. Croix, and so the local  
45 government has to really step in and decide what they want to do  
46 regarding the yellowtail and compatible regulations, and so, if  
47 you need a motion, the motion will be just to instruct the staff  
48 to pursue the St. Croix FMP regarding this item and prepare an

1 options paper that could be discussed at the April meeting in  
2 2021, virtual or in-person or a mix of the two.

3  
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Can you help with that motion, suggest the  
5 language for Carlos to consider, Miguel, and --

6  
7 **MIGUEL ROLON:** If Carlos agrees, the motion will be to instruct  
8 the staff to prepare an options paper for the yellowtail  
9 recreational fishery off St. Croix that will be considered at  
10 the spring meeting of the CFMC in 2021. I would like to hear  
11 from Carlos if he agrees with that language or if he wants to  
12 modify it somehow.

13  
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos.

15  
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I agree with the motion.

17  
18 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Okay, and so you move that, and we need a second.

19  
20 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** So motion by Carlos Farchette and  
21 second by --

22  
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Second.

24  
25 **MIGUEL ROLON:** All in favor say aye or, if there's no  
26 opposition, the motion carries. Marcos, can you say something  
27 like that?

28  
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Is there any opposition on the motion? Hearing  
30 none, the motion carries. We are behind schedule, and let's  
31 make a short break of five minutes for people to go to the  
32 bathroom, and we can --

33  
34 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Just say five minutes and let the people decide.

35  
36 **MARCOS HANKE:** I cannot hear you, Miguel. Can you repeat it?

37  
38 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Just give the five or ten-minute break and let  
39 people decide what they're going to do with those minutes.

40  
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. We will be back in five minutes.

42  
43 **MIGUEL ROLON:** So 11:00.

44  
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** 11:00.

46  
47 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you.

2  
3 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

4  
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Let's restart the meeting. Alida, you are the  
6 next one for the presentation.

7  
8 **OUTREACH AND EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL REPORT**  
9

10 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Good morning. I will have a very short  
11 presentation on an update of the activities that we have been  
12 developing with the Outreach and Education Advisory Panel and  
13 those that are for the next meeting.

14  
15 The first thing that we have been talking about for a long time  
16 is the fishery ecosystem plan, especially with the Technical  
17 Advisory Panel. This is a project that is actually conducted  
18 with the stakeholders, with the Pew Charitable Trusts, that will  
19 conduct small group meetings to engage stakeholders and solicit  
20 their input. They are the people that are going to meet with  
21 the people and that will do the surveys. The CFMC will not  
22 conduct any kind of survey.

23  
24 The Pew Charitable Trusts, what we are working with them, what  
25 we are collaborating, is that we have identified the NGOs that,  
26 in one way or another, may have something to do with fishing and  
27 with fisheries and that information would be valuable for the  
28 fishery ecosystem plan. We are also collaborating with the  
29 Lenfest project that you have heard about in the past meetings,  
30 and that is the same thing. They are going to be the people who  
31 are going to meet with the fishers, and they are going to meet  
32 with the stakeholders, and the council is only collaborating on  
33 if they have information that we have, in terms of outreach that  
34 we can do.

35  
36 The other campaign that we have been working on, and we have  
37 talked about it a little bit, is the sustainable seafood  
38 consumption campaign, and what I want to update now is that we  
39 are working on the production of a sustainable seafood cookbook,  
40 a recipe book or cookbook, for Puerto Rico and the USVI, and a  
41 working group has been formed with chefs like Juan Carlos  
42 Vincens, Wanda Pantojas, Cedric Taquin, Cory Magras from St.  
43 Thomas, Nikole Greaux from St. Thomas, Carlos Farchette from St.  
44 Croix, and then Diana, Miguel, and myself are sort of  
45 coordinating the entire thing.

46  
47 The idea is to have the consumer become familiar with the  
48 variety of fish that is available in our market, and we will

1 concentrate on sixteen of the species, the majority of which are  
2 not commonly known by the consumers, even though they are  
3 abundant in the catch. We will get information on biology and  
4 ecology and management status and availability of the species to  
5 be cooked, because the idea is that the consumer know about what  
6 they eat and where it comes from and what is the habitat that  
7 they occupy, and then they will obviously used in the cookbook,  
8 and so there is a lot of information on cooking methods, and we  
9 will be working on this project from August, even though we are  
10 already meeting very often with the group, and, by December, we  
11 will have the product to the council.

12  
13 The other project that we presented and we discussed with the  
14 Outreach and Education Advisory Panel is this idea of putting  
15 some importance, or more importance, on the women's  
16 participation in fisheries in Puerto Rico and the USVI.

17  
18 We already had a product in one of the newspapers in Puerto Rico  
19 that had a report on one of the women fishers in Cabo Rojo and  
20 how she works, where does she work, what is the importance and  
21 how does she feel about it, and the idea is to, besides that,  
22 work on a full book from different women from Puerto Rico and  
23 the USVI that are involved in fisheries, and, here, we have, as  
24 collaborators, Janette Ramos and Nicole Greaux from St. Thomas,  
25 and, also, Nikita Edwards will also help us with that. Then  
26 Carlos Farchette and Julian, and we need information to make  
27 these women visible and to have the public appreciate and  
28 respect the work they do.

29  
30 There will be other reports of fisherwomen from different  
31 regions in Puerto Rico, and then we are working on contacting  
32 newspapers in St. Thomas and St. Croix, to make a similar report  
33 like the one that was done in Puerto Rico.

34  
35 One project that we will be working with, and I think that  
36 Miguel and Carlos are going to talk about this a little in the  
37 Other Business, but it's a pilot project in the USVI, with the  
38 collaboration of Carlos Farchette, Ruth Gomez, Julian Magras,  
39 and other well-known fishers, and the idea is to have some sort  
40 of activity, and now it has to be virtual, because there is no  
41 other way, but then probably we will change, change products,  
42 after we get out of this scenario of the pandemic.

43  
44 It is the idea to invite youth to explore different aspects of  
45 fisheries opportunities, as fishers, as scientists, as  
46 educators, and then we will have presenters from the field,  
47 those well-known fishers that are in the USVI and Puerto Rico,  
48 and we will have the young people look at the field of fishing

1 and the field of understanding the marine environment and  
2 understanding the value of the fishers in our area, and so this  
3 is what I have now, but Miguel will give you a little bit more  
4 information, and Carlos, in a little while.

5  
6 The other project that we completed is the book *Marine Fisheries*  
7 *Ecosystem of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands*, and it is  
8 both in English and in Spanish, and I think the council members  
9 have received it, and they have been sent to the DAPs.

10  
11 Originally, the idea was that this book was going to be  
12 accompanied by workshops in the field, with the fishers and the  
13 fishing communities, but that is not possible right now, and so,  
14 right now, we are working on developing virtual material, let's  
15 say, like short videos and PowerPoints and games, anything that  
16 can be used in virtual workshops with fishers, fishing  
17 communities, and educators, and so we have the material, and we  
18 have to find and invent ways of getting the information to the  
19 people, but we are working on that.

20  
21 The other project that is under development, and probably you  
22 have seen a long time ago this poster on the life cycle of the  
23 queen conch. Right now, we have to review the content of that  
24 poster and review the information and the illustrations, and the  
25 objective of this new poster is to include other *Strombus*  
26 species that are confused with the mature specimens of *Aliger*  
27 *gigas*, and that's *Strombus gigas* and *Lobatus gigas*, but the new  
28 name is *Aliger gigas*. We will have that done by August, and we  
29 are working on that already, and we have the artist, and, by  
30 December, we will have the product of this.

31  
32 With that, we will develop other products, like fact sheets and  
33 postcards, so that they have this information on the queen  
34 conch, so that they do not confuse other species, other genera,  
35 with the mature queen conch.

36  
37 We also are working on the outreach and education aspect of the  
38 CFMC strategic plan that you already know, and our participation  
39 now is to take these six aspects of outreach and education that  
40 Michelle Duval presented to us in our meeting last week, and we  
41 have asked all the O&E AP members to study those aspects and  
42 prioritize them.

43  
44 They are frequency of communication, variety of tools,  
45 educational resources, improving general public awareness,  
46 regular in-person outreach workshops, and clarity and simplicity  
47 of presentations. Then, within each one of those aspects, there  
48 are also alternatives, and so we should give our knowledge of

1 what do the consumers, what do the fishers, what does the  
2 public, prefer. Can they still work with radio, or what do they  
3 have for the facilities for visual, or do they go to the  
4 newspapers and this type of thing, and so that communication  
5 with the Outreach and Education Advisory Panel members and the  
6 people who participate in our meetings will be available, I  
7 hope, probably by next week, or very soon, and we will present  
8 it to the council in the December meeting.

9  
10 With the social media, I am not going to go through how many  
11 people are visiting Facebook or YouTube, and that's the  
12 information that Christina Olan gives in our meetings, but we  
13 have products for Facebook and YouTube that are new, and we will  
14 have very short videos, based on the existing essential fish  
15 habitat videos, to emphasize the ecological aspects of  
16 fisheries, something like is climate change connected to  
17 fisheries and questions like that, and the importance of  
18 critical habitats within the essential fish habitats for those  
19 ecosystem-based management plans.

20  
21 We will have videos on queen conch statistical methods of stock  
22 assessment, collaboration with CARICOOS, and CARICOOS is  
23 developing workshops for the fishers, and the council is  
24 supporting that action, and the workshops are being streamed on  
25 Facebook, so the participants can take it from there, and that  
26 has information from Puerto Rico and also from the Virgin  
27 Islands. That is my presentation, and do you have any  
28 questions?

29  
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Let's leave a space for two questions, very  
31 quick, please. Vanessa.

32  
33 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Thank you. Alida, thanks for including all  
34 the questions that I had about the queen conch in your  
35 presentation. Just two things. I wish that, also, with the  
36 poster, because the poster is very useful in the fish markets,  
37 but we need something more handy for the fishermen, like a small  
38 card that they can have in their boats, so that they can find  
39 out the difference between one species and another.

40  
41 Also, if we can work with the tool for the measure of the lips,  
42 because many of them don't know even that the measure of the  
43 lips is the one that they have to use to know the juveniles from  
44 the others.

45  
46 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Okay. That is very good information, Vanessa. We  
47 will take it into account, and, as soon as possible, as soon as  
48 we can get out of these pandemic regulations, we are going to

1 Cabo Rojo and talk to you and talk to the people there, so you  
2 can see what we are doing, and we will take a lot of information  
3 for all the knowledge that you have.

4  
5 Something that Graciela said yesterday to me is very important  
6 is to take the knowledge of the fishers and turn it into the  
7 scientific information that we have, and so we have to change  
8 the vocabulary and the way we address the issue. Vanessa, thank  
9 you so much for all your help, and I will talk to you also about  
10 the material for the schools, and I am still interested in the  
11 schools.

12  
13 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Thank you, Alida. Also, I understand the --

14  
15 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Alida and Vanessa, we already sent you the  
16 posters, and, also, we will send you a set of books, but what  
17 Vanessa is asking can be done now, and you don't have to meet  
18 with the fishers for that. We can work on the small decal, and  
19 so, once we have the books, we can send that to the fishers.

20  
21 The other thing is the gizmo for measuring the conch, and we  
22 sent, through the Department of Natural Resources, a long time  
23 ago, something that we copied from the U.S. Virgin Islands,  
24 actually. They came with the idea, and, with that triangle, you  
25 can measure fish, queen conch, and whelk, and so it's a matter  
26 of finding somebody who can do that for us, and Natalia and I  
27 will work on finding that material, and, once we finish with the  
28 poster that Alida Ortiz is working on, we will make sure that we  
29 have the small decal and any other tool that we can use for  
30 allowing the fishermen to take this information.

31  
32 The other thing is that all of this will be digital, and so  
33 anybody can download it from the internet, from our webpage, and  
34 use it as they see fit, plus we are not -- As soon as everybody  
35 has a vaccine, and they are going to go to Russia to get a  
36 vaccine, we can go back to the field, but, in the meantime, I  
37 cannot authorize anybody to go anywhere, using council funding,  
38 until probably the end of December of 2021, unless everybody has  
39 a vaccine and we know that the council is not responsible for  
40 your death or your relatives.

41  
42 **ALIDA ORTIZ:** Okay, Miguel. Any other questions? I want to  
43 thank Nicole Greaux from St. Thomas and Carlos Farchette from  
44 St. Croix very, very much, because they have given us many,  
45 many, many ideas. Okay. For me, that's it.

46  
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Alida. The next item on the agenda is  
48 enforcement. We can start with Puerto Rico DNER.



1  
2 **ENFORCEMENT REPORTS**  
3 **PUERTO RICO DNER**  
4

5 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Good morning. There has not been significant  
6 interventions in federal waters for protected species during  
7 this time, in June, and this is mainly due to the pandemic, and  
8 the recreational fishing has been limited, or prohibited, by  
9 means of executive orders of the governor, because of COVID-19.  
10 Only commercial fishers are authorized to go fishing during this  
11 time.

12  
13 Among the interventions that Rangers conducted, we had three  
14 crab cases, and these were captures in the Humacao region during  
15 the crab closure. During this time, DNER passed an  
16 administrative order confirming that people or businesses that  
17 sell crabs have seven days after the crab closure to sell their  
18 already-acquired crab products, and this is what is stated in  
19 Regulation 79-49. That's pretty much our report. Thank you.

20  
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Damaris. USVI.  
22

23 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, before we go into the next, Vanessa  
24 wanted to say something regarding enforcement, and this is the  
25 time, Vanessa, if you want to do that now, or you can wait for  
26 some other time.

27  
28 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Thank you, Miguel. Well, particularly, we  
29 have been talking -- First, I have to appreciate and thank  
30 Damaris for all the work that she has been doing. Since day-one  
31 of this pandemic, practically, I have bothering her every day,  
32 and so we have been in contact during all this, but, especially,  
33 I want, for the record, to say that, now that we have the  
34 closure of the queen conch, we have a big problem in the west,  
35 especially not only because of some fishermen that are outside,  
36 but also because the stakeholders are making pressure to them.

37  
38 We already know that some of the fishermen that are out, the  
39 commercial ones, usually, they have their work comprised with  
40 the fish market that helps them when they have they have engine  
41 or any problem with the boat, and so, right now, we are asking  
42 if there is any way that we can start or give like an  
43 orientation visit to these fish markets or these fishermen that  
44 we already have recognized that are not making the things as  
45 they are supposed to.

46  
47 I am here every day, and it's really frustrating to see how they  
48 pass the queen conch, and I always make the orientation, and I

1 always tell them what you should do for this, but, practically,  
2 I think that we have already given education and orientation  
3 enough, especially in the west, and so I think that it's time  
4 that the Rangers take action.

5  
6 We have fishermen that are ready to say names and to say the PRs  
7 of the boats that are doing this, and, also, we have some fish  
8 markets already that we have photos, and we have everything, but  
9 we don't have the legal to make the intervention with them, and  
10 so we need to talk about this more, and we need to take action  
11 now. Thanks.

12  
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Damaris.

14  
15 **MIGUEL ROLON:** That's just for Damaris to take note, and that's  
16 it, and then she can report back to the council in December of  
17 any activity that they have taken in answer to Vanessa's  
18 request.

19  
20 **DAMARIS DELGADO:** Yes. Thank you.

21  
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Damaris. I just wanted to make sure  
23 that you heard and took notes. Let's go for the USVI Department  
24 of Planning and Natural Resources.

25  
26 **USVI DPNR**

27  
28 **NICOLE ANGELI:** I will be presenting for Howard Forbes from the  
29 Division of Environmental Enforcement. Currently, all staff,  
30 due to the COVID-19 state of emergency declaration, in  
31 enforcement have been called to the VIPD for assistance in  
32 enforcement of our state of emergency, and so there is no  
33 fisheries enforcement report at this time.

34  
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Nicole. The other enforcement report  
36 is the U.S. Coast Guard.

37  
38 **U.S. COAST GUARD**

39  
40 **ROBERT COPELAND:** Good afternoon, all. The Coast Guard is  
41 continuing to conduct the mission sets. However, there is no  
42 significant LE boardings to report upon in the Caribbean area.  
43 I do want to take this time, if I could, to try to iron out  
44 something that came up yesterday from our USVI partners, and I  
45 believe Julian and Tony had some comments about law enforcement,  
46 and I wanted to turn it over to them to get some clarity in  
47 their comments from yesterday and a way that the Coast Guard  
48 could assist in their comments.

1  
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Can you be more specific for them to react?  
3

4 **ROBERT COPELAND:** Sure. It appeared, yesterday, that they were  
5 frustrated with the law enforcement down in the Caribbean area,  
6 and I was a bit confused as to what they were frustrated with,  
7 and if they could help determine how the Coast Guard could help  
8 benefit, or assist, in that matter, to alleviate some of those  
9 frustrations.  
10

11 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, if I may, the enforcement issue that they  
12 brought to the attention of the council was related to the  
13 Grammanik Bank, and they are frustrated because there is no  
14 enforcement that prohibits people from anchoring there,  
15 jeopardizing the opportunities of the commercial fishers, and  
16 then other people are damaging the area, and they feel that they  
17 are being blamed for something that is not their fault, and Tony  
18 and Julian believe that, if we have more enforcement from the  
19 Coast Guard and the local authorities and the National Marine  
20 Fisheries Service, this could alleviate this problem.  
21

22 We all believe that we need to have more outreach and education  
23 to the fishers and the general public, especially the  
24 recreational component, and to the tourist industry and other  
25 people that might use the area and anchor improperly in those  
26 places, and that's the main issue that they brought to the  
27 attention of the council regarding enforcement.  
28

29 **MARCOS HANKE:** I have Jocelyn requesting to speak. Go ahead.  
30

31 **JOCELYN D'AMBROSIO:** Thank you, Marcos. I just wanted to  
32 clarify, regarding the anchoring, that there's nothing right now  
33 that prohibits anchoring by fishing vessels in the Grammanik  
34 Bank, and so the council was looking at whether that was  
35 something they wanted to pursue, and so, in terms of  
36 enforcement, that isn't necessarily the issue, because there is  
37 nothing prohibiting anchoring, but there is a closed season, and  
38 so, if someone was anchored and fishing during the closed  
39 season, that would be a violation of the laws as they exist now.  
40

41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Jocelyn. I don't see anybody else. I  
42 have Nelson Crespo putting on the chat that he also has to bring  
43 attention to the high increment of deepwater snapper poachers,  
44 illegal fishermen, fishing for deepwater snapper, and I'm  
45 assuming that is on the west coast, from where he is. The next  
46 presentation is the NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement.  
47

48 **NOAA FISHERIES OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**

1  
2 **MANNY ANTONARAS:** Good afternoon, everybody. I am going to  
3 provide just a brief update, following our last report during  
4 the June meeting. At that time, we provided an update,  
5 enforcement update, with some recent cases, and we showed a  
6 presentation, and so, for this meeting, I have nothing formal to  
7 present, although I did want to update the council on a recent  
8 sentencing, as a follow-up to the coral smuggling case that I  
9 discussed during the June meeting.

10  
11 Just a few weeks ago, Juan Pablo Castro-Torres from Puerto Rico  
12 pled guilty to two felony violations for the Lacey Act for  
13 collecting and falsely labeling marine species from Puerto Rico.  
14 Mr. Torres personally collected many of these species, which  
15 were actually Ricordea and other reef creatures that were sold  
16 off-island, and, because Ricordea are attached to the reef  
17 substrate, the defendant would utilize a chisel and break these  
18 things off of the reef, and so, in doing so, chunks of reef were  
19 also taken, causing habitat damage to the local area.

20  
21 These products were sold to local aquarium stores operated by  
22 Mr. Sanchez, and Mr. Sanchez previously pleaded guilty to Lacey  
23 Act violations and is awaiting sentencing as well. Castro-  
24 Torres is also scheduled for sentencing, and fact that was  
25 included in the press release from the Department of Justice was  
26 regarding the value, and so, for the product that Mr. Torres  
27 admitted to harvesting, it was worth approximately \$15,000.

28  
29 During the June meeting, again, I did talk about Ramon Torres-  
30 Ramos, who also pled before a U.S. District Court judge, and he  
31 is awaiting sentencing, which is scheduled for, I believe,  
32 November of 2020. I just wanted to highlight the collaborative  
33 effort between the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, the U.S. Fish  
34 and Wildlife, and the Department of Justice in this  
35 investigation.

36  
37 Then the only other item I had and wanted to bring up, which  
38 Lieutenant Copeland just brought up, was regarding yesterday's  
39 discussion. I have to admit that I left the meeting a bit  
40 confused, and the discussion started off with a discussion of  
41 potential coral damage in the Grammanik Bank, and, ultimately,  
42 it was determined to be an enforcement problem. I was going to  
43 ask for additional information, because of specifically what was  
44 brought up, with no prohibitions on anchoring, and I was wanting  
45 some help in assessing the problem.

46  
47 We are definitely more than willing to do what we can, and I  
48 have already reached out to Mr. Forbes with the USVI DPNR, in

1 addition to communicating back and forth with Lieutenant  
2 Copeland from District 7 Coast Guard, and we will work towards  
3 addressing the problem, but I just, again, need to know a bit  
4 more on the specifics. Is this a habitat destruction problem,  
5 or is it poaching? What regulations are being violated? What  
6 prohibitions do we feel are not being enforced? With that, that  
7 concludes my brief. Thank you.

8  
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. I am not seeing the people  
10 from the Virgin Islands talking about this, but, for sure, we  
11 can make the connections and talk to Julian and -- I have Julian  
12 on the line. Julian.

13  
14 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I think one of the big problems is a lot of  
15 these recreational boats that are out there in federal waters  
16 fishing don't follow the guidelines to the recreational bag  
17 limits, and I think that would be a good place to start with  
18 these recreational vessels, because they go out there, and there  
19 are not many of them, but there are some of them, and they are  
20 out there, and they are catching more than what the recreational  
21 bag limits are with no commercial licenses.

22  
23 They also are coming in and they are selling them into our  
24 markets, and so the big issue always falls back on enforcement.  
25 Now, I can say that I have seen the Coast Guard out on the  
26 waters over the past -- About three weeks ago, they were running  
27 the lines of the MCD, but I think, with some collaboration with  
28 myself and some other individuals, we can give some good  
29 direction on the days or the times of when would be good to look  
30 for this activity taking place, because, of course, they are not  
31 going to be out there in the rough waters. They wait until the  
32 weather is flat, like this Sunday and Monday coming, to take  
33 advantage of going out there in those areas when the waters are  
34 flat, and it's a quick in and out.

35  
36 I will be contacting Miguel and Manny and having a conversation  
37 with this and seeing how we could also arrange it, and, also,  
38 while we're speaking on that, I've been getting a lot of  
39 complaints on undersized yellowfin tuna being harvested and  
40 landed at the different locations of where the charter vessels  
41 are going out, and so that's something that also needs to be  
42 looked into, and that would be the Red Hook area. I'm getting a  
43 lot of complaints of undersized yellowfin tuna coming in.

44  
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Julian. Vanessa.

46  
47 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Thank you, Marcos. I just wanted to make a  
48 comment on the same line of Julian. We have the same problem

1 here in Puerto Rico, and we already know that we have the  
2 recreational license in the papers, but we don't have that in  
3 the outside, and, with all this thing of the pandemic, I have  
4 seen, and I already know, that many recreational are getting  
5 out, but they are only stopping the small boats. The big ones,  
6 because they are big boats, or just because they have friends  
7 inside, no one gets interviewed, and so we need to work with  
8 that also in Puerto Rico. Thanks.

9  
10 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. I don't see any other  
11 persons on the line, and we are really tight on time. Miguel.

12  
13 **MIGUEL ROLON:** I propose to allow Julian and Tony to send an  
14 email to us, so we can share it with Jocelyn and the enforcement  
15 officials, and so we could do this in a formal way, so we will  
16 be able to discuss it and be able to bring whatever comes out of  
17 this exercise, and we can bring you an update at the December  
18 meeting, but the thing will start with Julian and Tony to send  
19 us an email on the specific issues that they have, and also from  
20 Vanessa, so we can work on this, rather than keep talking about  
21 it, because already the enforcement officials are asking, from  
22 the Coast Guard and National Marine Fisheries Service,  
23 specifics, so they can address it and work on it.

24  
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** I understand, and Julian already said that, yes,  
26 he would send an email, and I think they hear you loud and clear  
27 for the need for that email with the specifics. Thank you,  
28 Miguel. I think we can conclude the enforcement reports, and we  
29 are going now for Other Business. In Other Business, Miguel,  
30 you have --

31  
32 **OTHER BUSINESS**

33  
34 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Let me go very quick, because some of the other  
35 business we already have discussed. The young fishers, this is  
36 something that Carlos Farchette brought to my attention, and I  
37 discussed it with Julian and Ruth, and Ruth came up with the  
38 idea of having a workshop with fishers in St. Thomas, and the  
39 idea is to have fishermen like Julian and Winston Ledee and look  
40 at the different fishing sectors that you have in St. Thomas and  
41 have -- At this time, it has to be virtual of course, but have a  
42 meeting where we will have presentations by these fishers, and  
43 then we will have an exchange of information, a question-and-  
44 answer session, with the youngsters that will be interested in  
45 coming to this virtual meeting.

46  
47 Everything will be run by the council, and I will be the  
48 facilitator, and it will be mostly fishermen talking to young

1 men and women that would like to join the fishery for some  
2 reason or the other, and Julian and Ruth and Carlos Farchette  
3 will be part of this exercise, and we need to recruit some  
4 fishers with experience, like Winston Ledee and Gregory Ledee  
5 and others that can give a brief presentation to them, and that  
6 will be a panel of veteran fishers that will be discussing these  
7 activities with the young people interested in the fishery.

8  
9 If this project works well, then we envision that we can move it  
10 to St. Croix and other parts of Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rico,  
11 they started this a long time ago, but then the administration  
12 changed, and nothing else happened, but the issue is that the  
13 generation gap is getting bigger. The average age of the  
14 fishermen is around fifty-seven now, and it jumped from forty-  
15 seven, and fishermen are getting out of the fishery for  
16 different reasons, and they are not being replaced by young  
17 people.

18  
19 I talked about this with a fisher from St. Thomas, and  
20 everywhere, and they are all telling me the same, that, Miguel,  
21 we need to do something, because the youngsters are not coming  
22 into the fishery, and we need the industry to continue after the  
23 retirement of these fishers, and so that's what we are going to  
24 do, and we will probably inform to you -- I will be working with  
25 Julian and Ruth and the others, and Carlos, of course, and, as  
26 soon as we have something else, we can give you an update at the  
27 December meeting.

28  
29 The other things that we have in Other Business are related to  
30 the spiny lobster fishery issue in St. Croix, and I believe that  
31 you already addressed that, in a way, and you also had the  
32 yellowtail addressed before, and so we can go to the EO 13921.

33  
34 We sent a correspondence to you in May, to everybody, and,  
35 lately, I asked Diana to send -- I guess that we sent it to  
36 sixty-five people, but the EO 13921 from the President of the  
37 United States, which is an Executive Order on Promoting American  
38 Seafood Competition and Economics. Section 4 asks the councils,  
39 specifically the councils, within eighty days after May 7, 2020,  
40 to submit actions that you recommend on a priority list.

41  
42 This is going to be submitted by each council to Chris Oliver,  
43 the National Marine Fisheries Service Director, no later than  
44 the end of October, because he needs to submit the whole thing  
45 by November. We sent you all of this already, and, also, we sent  
46 you topics to consider that were submitted to us by Dave Whaley,  
47 our liaison with Congress, and we can present this to you again.

1 This includes marketing of underutilized species and ways to  
2 cook them, et cetera, and, by coincidence, that's exactly what  
3 we're doing now, and you have seen the presentation by Dr. Alida  
4 Ortiz that covered that part, but there are other things, like  
5 incentives to do secondary processing in the U.S., and  
6 processing in the U.S. Caribbean means something else, but  
7 processing, as you know, is from scaling and gutting a fish to  
8 having a huge plant to can the fish.

9  
10 There are many things in the agenda that -- Not in the agenda,  
11 but in the possible topics that they are going to submit to  
12 Chris that are not really related to us. However, my request to  
13 everybody, when we sent this information, was for you to think  
14 about how you can tailor this to the needs of the U.S.  
15 Caribbean.

16  
17 I received, from Marcos Hanke, and, by the way, he's the only  
18 one that I have received suggestions, that, for example, we can  
19 talk about new boat ramps and parking improvements to access the  
20 fishing grounds, develop regional fisheries support, et cetera.  
21 This has been sent to you.

22  
23 Our proposal, Mr. Chairman, is that maybe have a one-day  
24 meeting, so everybody will come prepared to give you this  
25 information, or that people send you an email, or to me, with  
26 their reactions to the email that we sent before, and either  
27 way, but the point is that we need to submit all of this to  
28 Marcos, because he has to write a letter that will be sent to  
29 Chris Oliver no later than the end of probably October 15, so we  
30 can be on time for questions and answers that the Washington  
31 office may have.

32  
33 If you agree to have a one-day meeting, we also can have the  
34 five-year strategic plan, the same presentation that we are  
35 going to give to the DAPs on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of  
36 August, and we can have a one-day meeting for those two topics  
37 and any other topic that you think will be appropriate before  
38 the December meeting.

39  
40 The reason for doing the meeting, a special meeting, of the  
41 council is so that we have input from the council members and  
42 the chairs of the committees that advise the council is that we  
43 will be able to assist Dr. Michelle Duval on the prioritization  
44 of the issues and topics that are going to include in the five-  
45 year plan, and remember that, because of Paperwork Reduction Act  
46 concerns, we can no longer use the survey, and this is a way  
47 that we can analyze all the information that we need to supply  
48 to Dr. Duval for her to prepare the draft five-year plan that is



1 going to be submitted for council consideration in 2021. That's  
2 all we have, Mr. Chairman.

3  
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. I am in agreement for the  
5 one-day meeting to address those two topics, and maybe a few  
6 others that are going to show up on the way during the planning  
7 time. We have Julian Magras and Vanessa Ramirez with a turn to  
8 speak. Julian.

9  
10 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** What Miguel was saying about us meeting and  
11 putting a plan together to have a virtual meeting with the young  
12 fishers, we are going to be working here in the very near future  
13 with Miguel and Ruth Gomez, so we can put something together for  
14 St. Thomas/St. John, and, of course, with Carlos for St. Croix,  
15 and we will have a presentation to give at the December meeting.

16  
17 I spoke with Ruth this morning, and we will be working  
18 diligently over the next couple of months to put something  
19 together, so we can move forward and present to the council in  
20 December.

21  
22 While I have the mic, also, I would like to request two items to  
23 be added to the December agenda, if possible, and that will be  
24 we want to give a presentation on the queen triggerfish, known  
25 as the olewife, and a presentation on the mutton snapper, lane  
26 snapper, and blackfin snapper from collections that were made  
27 through Virginia Shervette, and we will have those two  
28 presentations ready to be given at the December meeting, and so,  
29 if at all possible, if we could be added to the agenda with  
30 those presentations.

31  
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Julian. We will note that.

33  
34 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Julian, please send me an email, so we won't miss  
35 anything, and certainly we will have to include those  
36 presentations at the December meeting.

37  
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Vanessa.

39  
40 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I had the opportunity  
41 to read the email that we received and the recommendations that  
42 Marcos made, and he covered everything that we need to be in  
43 touch with this, and perhaps really a question. How will we  
44 connect this, or this proposition, to bring this to the  
45 Caribbean with the bureaucracy that we have in the government  
46 for permits and all that?

47  
48 I think that we should talk about that in another session,

1 because, right now, it's very difficult to get permits, and it's  
2 hard. I have a company that has been a year trying, and they  
3 have already a company in New Jersey, and they have all the  
4 equipment, and they are just waiting, and, every time that they  
5 request a permit, it's something else and something else and  
6 something else, and so the people that want to come and work  
7 with this kind of business will think two times. Thanks.

8  
9 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Vanessa, this doesn't have anything to do with  
10 that part, but we can -- After the meeting, you and I can talk  
11 and see if we can put together a special meeting with --  
12 Remember that, if we have a meeting of the council, it has to go  
13 through the Federal Register and all those hoops, but, if have a  
14 meeting with -- That will be something that Damaris can help  
15 with, and we can bring those topics for discussion, because this  
16 is mostly related to the Puerto Rico system, and we can also  
17 join efforts with the federal government. If we have any  
18 information that you may need, then I can contact the Regional  
19 Office, and I'm sure that Maria del Mar can help us, and people  
20 at the Regional Office can help us with that.

21  
22 My proposal is for -- Vanessa, you can send me an email as a  
23 reminder of the topic, and then we can take it from there, and  
24 send a copy, please, to Damaris Delgado, and Marcos, of course,  
25 so we can work on this part.

26  
27 Mr. Chairman, if you agree to have the one-day meeting for these  
28 topics, from 9:00 to 12:00, that will be the five-year strategic  
29 plan, and so you would have maybe an hour or two in the  
30 afternoon, and we cannot have a lot of topics on that one-day  
31 meeting, because that will defeat the purpose of having a one-  
32 day meeting for specifics, and any other things should be moved  
33 to the December meeting.

34  
35 With virtual meetings, the advantage that we have is that we can  
36 have a meeting every other week, if we don't need to advertise  
37 it in the Federal Register. However, for the councils, we need  
38 to advertise it in the Federal Register, and so the fastest  
39 period of submitting will be every month, and I don't think that  
40 we need that, especially if we need to incorporate the federal  
41 government, and this area is the only one with three councils,  
42 and so the time they have is very short for attending all the  
43 three councils, and so our proposal, Mr. Chairman, if you agree,  
44 and then we can have that meeting and discuss it with Michelle  
45 for the possibility of having the meeting in September.

46  
47 If we don't have any hurricanes or storms in the middle, we are  
48 proposing September 25, and that's when she will be available,

1 and Carlos and I, because we have the CCC meeting the same week,  
2 the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, and so the proposal, Mr. Chairman, specific  
3 from our point of view, is to have a one-day meeting with two  
4 topics, the five-year strategic plan in the morning and then --  
5 I would encourage everybody that are in the list of the sixty-  
6 five that we sent this EO document, to bring to the table your  
7 comments and suggestions, and you can use Marcos as an example  
8 to follow, because we -- The way that Dave Whaley told us is  
9 this is an opportunity for all the councils to throw everything  
10 against the wall and see what sticks.

11  
12 There is already -- Whenever you have something in the public,  
13 you have people who oppose it, and so there is a bunch of NGOs  
14 that believe that this order will be favoring the high-rollers,  
15 the big industries, in detriment to the small shops, the ma-and-  
16 pa factories and fishing operations that we have all over the  
17 states, and so this is important that the local people involved  
18 in fisheries have a say-so, and we can submit that, through  
19 Marcos, on time for Chris Oliver to take it into consideration.

20  
21 I believe that, if we can prove the case for the top -- Let's  
22 say the top-five issues that all of you believe are important,  
23 something will be done, and something will be able to help, and,  
24 just to give you an idea, because of the pandemic, the money is  
25 not that great all around the nation, but this executive order  
26 provides some funding, and it may provide some funding for the  
27 future, that will be given according to the needs that will be  
28 coming out -- The documented needs that will be coming out of  
29 this exercise by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

30  
31 The time schedule, this is something that has to be submitted in  
32 November. In November, you may have a change of the whole  
33 government, as you all know, and it's election time, but,  
34 hopefully, all of this will survive to 2021 and 2022, and we  
35 hope that we can get some positive actions regarding the U.S.  
36 Caribbean on these topics. I need to hear from -- If there is  
37 no opposition to this plan, Mr. Chairman, to have a one-day  
38 meeting on September 25 with those two topics.

39  
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Let's do the meeting, and I am in agreement, and  
41 I didn't see any opposition on the chat, and let's plan for the  
42 meeting accordingly. Vanessa just wrote again that there is no  
43 objection, and that's the right way. Go ahead, Miguel.

44  
45 **MIGUEL ROLON:** The other thing is just to reiterate that the  
46 next meeting of the council after the 25<sup>th</sup> of September will be  
47 December 9 and 10, also a virtual meeting. Just to give you an  
48 idea, the National Marine Fisheries Service -- They have a Phase

1 0, 1, 2, and 3, and, depending on the movement of COVID, the  
2 development of a COVID vaccine and all that, they move from one  
3 station to another.

4  
5 Right now, most of the National Marine Fisheries Service is in  
6 Phase 0, and that means that almost everybody is working from  
7 home, and Phases 1 through 3 will allow the government to reopen  
8 again, and some of the issues they have, for example, needs to  
9 do with the surveys, and survey vessels cannot go out, because  
10 it's very difficult. Right now, the observer program is  
11 stopped, also.

12  
13 We will inform you in December of any new developments in the  
14 National Marine Fisheries Service. The executive directors, we  
15 are meeting every month, and we receive an update from National  
16 Marine Fisheries Service, so we can work together to see if we  
17 can adjust to the COVID means. That's all we have, Mr.  
18 Chairman, and we have now the public comment period.

19  
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. We are going to start with the public  
21 comment period now. Is there anybody from the public that would  
22 like to speak? I don't hear anybody.

23  
24 **MIGUEL ROLON:** They're all so happy with the meeting that they  
25 are happy with it.

26  
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, and thank you very much, everybody. I think  
28 it was a productive meeting.

29  
30 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Hold on a second. There was a letter, or not a  
31 letter, but there was some instructions sent by Jocelyn to  
32 Marcos, and, in the case that people would like to apply for the  
33 gear, to use the gear that we discussed yesterday, and this is  
34 not to rehash the whole meeting now, but what we are going to do  
35 is, anybody who wants to join in with that letter, we have  
36 received instructions from Jocelyn on how to do it, and we will  
37 post this on the council webpage, and I will send a copy of  
38 those instructions to everybody in this meeting via email.

39  
40 Any fisherman from Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands who  
41 wishes to be considered for using this gear, following the  
42 instructions that Jocelyn sent us, will be receiving that  
43 information.

44  
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay, Miguel. Thank you very much. Vanessa.

46  
47 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** Thanks. Just to make a point on this. Since  
48 yesterday, practically, the fishermen started receiving the

1 envelopes, and they are very confused about it, because, first,  
2 most of them don't like to read, or don't even know how to read,  
3 and so I have, since yesterday, ten of them that were calling  
4 me, just to explain to them the envelopes, and so I think that  
5 maybe we can put something on Facebook, because many fishermen  
6 are on the pages of Facebook, and we can share it that way, so  
7 they understand why they are receiving these envelopes and the  
8 instructions that are inside, so they know for what and what  
9 they can do if they have anything to say about it. Thanks.

10  
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Vanessa, I'm a little confused. Which envelope  
12 are you talking about?  
13

14 **VANESSA RAMIREZ:** It's a yellow envelope from the Caribbean  
15 Fishery Management Council that has inside practically the  
16 instructions if they want to make any comment on the plans, and  
17 it also has the application for the fishery disaster, and it has  
18 a letter from NOAA about the comments that they are asking for  
19 the plans, and they have until the 25<sup>th</sup> to answer.  
20

21 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, that's the information that we sent to  
22 all fishers for the closed seasons and the closed areas, and  
23 it's any new bulletins that are sent by the Regional Office, and  
24 we distribute it to everybody.  
25

26 **MARCOS HANKE:** I just want to clarify to Vanessa that what  
27 Miguel was mentioning was in regard to the deepwater snapper  
28 discussion yesterday and the instructions sent by Jocelyn on how  
29 the fishermen can apply.  
30

31 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Marcos, what I believe that Vanessa is saying is  
32 what we should follow, and all this information -- I will  
33 include it in the Facebook account that we have, and we will  
34 send it to any appropriate fishing village. I am resting on the  
35 help from Nelson Crespo and others to identify those fishers  
36 that might be willing to join in with Mr. Font and Nelson and  
37 others to request or send this letter that Jocelyn is talking  
38 about.  
39

40 Probably, by the time that we receive all of that -- Anyway,  
41 there are many other things to consider, but, at this time, the  
42 take-home that I have is that we will assist with Vanessa in all  
43 the ways possible to the fishers on how to get this information  
44 the best way possible and to help them put together the  
45 application for this gear.  
46

47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. Do you have anything else?  
48

1 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Maybe Graciela. Graciela, do you have anything  
2 else to add?

3  
4 **GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER:** Sarah has put together a list of  
5 everything that you have accomplished during these two days, and  
6 so we'll be looking at that and looking at the motions and the  
7 guidance that you have given the staff. I didn't have any other  
8 notes in my annotated agenda, and we received new guidance  
9 regarding the meeting with the SSC, and so one more item will be  
10 added to their next upcoming meeting, or, depending on what the  
11 Science Center has to say, it might be two separate meetings,  
12 the ecosystem conceptual model and then dealing with the spiny  
13 lobster. Thank you.

14  
15 **MIGUEL ROLON:** Okay. Mr. Chairman, before we finish, I would  
16 like to thank people that have been helping us a lot, and I will  
17 just start with Natalia and Liajay and Graciela. Thanks to  
18 them. The meetings flow because of the three of them working  
19 together.

20  
21 From the Regional Office, I have Maria del Mar, and the poor  
22 lady almost got bit up, just to be the messenger of a  
23 presentation, and it was well-done work. Then Sarah and the  
24 people from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Kevin's  
25 presentation was the first time that I have seen, and this is  
26 something that he took upon himself to do it, a presentation of  
27 all the projects that are being conducted in the U.S. Virgin  
28 Islands and Puerto Rico. At some times, you have people that  
29 are doing studies here, and we don't know anything about those  
30 studies, and, for that, we thank him for that, and I wanted to  
31 take note of that.

32  
33 Then Liajay and Natalia did a great job, notwithstanding the  
34 issues with the internet and audio and everything that we  
35 confronted, and so, for that, I am very grateful, and I just  
36 wanted to say that for the record. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

37  
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel, and thank you to all for a  
39 great meeting again, and thank you for being kind to the  
40 Chairman, and thank you for all the support from all the staff  
41 and council members and fishermen and participants during all  
42 those times for those years and on this new opportunity to be a  
43 council member. I am very thankful and honored with the  
44 opportunity, and thank you very much. We are ready to adjourn  
45 the meeting. The meeting is ending now, and it's 12:01 p.m.  
46 Thank you very much to everybody. The meeting is over. Thank  
47 you.

1 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on August 12, 2020.)  
2  
3 - - -