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PAGE 63: Motion to select Action 2, Alternative 3 for Saint Croix to update the OFL and ABC for spiny lobster for the period of 2024 through 2026 based on constant catch approach and set the ACL equal to 0.95 of the ABC until modified. The motion carried on page 64.

PAGE 64: Motion to select Action 3, Alternative 3 for Saint Thomas/Saint John District to update the OFL and ABC for spiny lobster for the period of 2024 through 2026 based on constant catch approach and set the ACL equal to 0.95 of the ABC until modified. The motion carried on page 64.

PAGE 77: The Council moves to select Action 1(b), Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2(b) for Puerto Rico. The motion carried on page 80.

PAGE 81: The Council moves to select Action 1(c), Alternative 2, as preferred. The motion carried on page 84.

PAGE 84: The Council moves to select Action 1(d), Alternative 2, as preferred. The motion carried on page 85.

PAGE 88: The Council moves to adopt Action 2(b), Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2(b) as presented in the document modified. The motion carried on page 92.

PAGE 93: The Council adopts Action 2(b), Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2(b) presented in the document as modified. The motion carried on page 94.

PAGE 94: The Council moves to select Action 2(c), Alternative 2, as preferred for the Saint Croix District. The motion carried on page 94.

PAGE 95: The Council moves to select Action 2(c), Alternative 2 as preferred for the Saint Thomas Saint/John District. The motion carried on page 95 with all in favor.

PAGE 96: For the Island of Saint Croix, the Council moves to select Action 2(d), Alternative 2 as preferred. For Saint Thomas/Saint

1 John District, the Council moves to select Action 3(d), Alternative
2 2 as preferred. [The motion carried on page 98.](#)

3
4 [PAGE 118](#): The Council moves to select Alternative 3 in Action 1(a)
5 and Action 3(a), to establish a 24-inch fork length minimum size
6 for dolphin in federal water for all sectors. [The motion carried](#)
7 [on page 122.](#)

8
9 [PAGE 122](#): The Council moves to select Alternative 3 in Action 2(a)
10 and Action 4(a), to establish a 40-inch fork length minimum size
11 for wahoo in federal water for all sectors. [The motion carried on](#)
12 [page 129.](#)

13
14 [PAGE 130](#): The Council moves to select Alternative 2 in Action
15 1(b) and Action 3(b), to establish a recreational bag limit of
16 10 dolphinfish per person per day, not to exceed 32 dolphinfish
17 per vessel per day, whichever is less. [The motion carried on](#)
18 [page 136.](#)

19
20 [PAGE 137](#): Motion to reappoint Jason Cope to the SSC. [The motion](#)
21 [carried on page 137.](#)

22
23 [PAGE 156](#): Council moves to include in Action 2(b) and Action
24 4(b) a new alternative, two wahoo per person per day bag limit,
25 and 10 wahoo per vessel per day. [The motion carried on page 160.](#)

26
27 [PAGE 164](#): Council moves to have Actions 1(c), 2(c), 3(c) and
28 4(c) be eliminated from the amendment and moved to considered
29 but rejected. [The motion carried on page 165.](#)

30
31 [PAGE 166](#): Council moves to add Actions to Amendment 3 for size
32 limits and recreational bag limits for dolphin and wahoo in
33 Puerto Rico. [The motion carried on page 169.](#)

34
35 [PAGE 173](#): Motion to adopt the draft document as final the SSC's
36 best practices and procedures regarding objectivity and
37 conflicts of interest on peer review of scientific information
38 and best scientific information available. [The motion carried on](#)
39 [page 174.](#)

1 **CARIBBEAN FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**
2 **181ST REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**
3 **Isla Verde, Puerto Rico**

4
5 April 18-19, 2023
6

7 The Caribbean Fishery Management Council convened on Monday
8 morning, April 18, 2023, and was called to order at 9:04 a.m. by
9 Chairman Marcos Hanke.

10
11 **Call to Order and Roll Call**
12

13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Good morning, everyone. Please take your seats.
14 We're going to start in a few minutes.

15
16 Good morning, everyone. Cristina, are we recording? Yes. Thank
17 you.

18
19 Today is April 18th, 2023. This is the CFMC 181 regular meeting.
20 Thank you for attending this meeting. It's 9:04 AM We are going to
21 start the meeting with the roll call and at this time for the
22 benefit.

23
24 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Marcos. Good morning, Cristina, for the
25 record. The interpreter needs me to check something during Zoom
26 before we continue the meeting.

27
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** I am sorry, Cristina, I couldn't hear you. Can you
29 repeat please? Slow.

30
31 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** That the interpreter needs me to check
32 something in soon before we continue the meeting. Thanks.

33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** Oh. Thank you very much. I will wait for your sign
35 to start.

36
37 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Cristina, no hay que interpretar el roll call.
38 We can go ahead with the roll call and then whenever he is ready.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay, let's keep moving with the--

41
42 Okay. Good morning again, everyone. We're going to start with the
43 roll call at this time. Please, for the benefits of the people
44 that are attending the meeting for the first-time, state not just
45 your name, but what you do and your title for the benefit of
46 everybody. Go ahead.

47
48 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Buenos días. Liajay Rivera García, Council

1 staff.

2
3 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Good morning. María López, NOAA Fisheries
4 Caribbean Branch and Sustainable Fisheries in the Southeast
5 Region.
6

7 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Good morning. Nicole Angeli, Director of the
8 Virgin Islands Fish and Wildlife Division.
9

10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Morning. Carl Farchette, Vice-Chair CFMC.
11

12 **MARCOS HANKE:** For the benefit of Janet Coit, who is attending the
13 meeting today, I'm going to request, especially the industry
14 people, to add a little more detail, like, I'm Marcos Hanke, the
15 Chairman of the Caribbean Council, charter operator, ex-commercial
16 fisherman a long time ago and passionate about fishing. Fish on
17 the east coast of Puerto Rico, used multiple gears. My background
18 is in marine biology, and I have been on the Council for many,
19 many years. I think those are the pertinent details for Janet to
20 know where each of the industry participants are. Please follow my
21 steps and give some more details to her and to have a better
22 meeting and for her to know what to address and what to say to you
23 guys. Go ahead.
24

25 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Good morning, Vanessa Ramírez, Council member
26 for the Commercial Fishermen of Puerto Rico. I work in the West
27 Coast in Cabo Rojo, specifically, where we have more than 400
28 commercial fishermen.
29

30 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** James Kreglo, Council member of Saint Thomas
31 Virgin Islands. Thank you. Good morning.
32

33 **JOHN WALTER, III:** John Walter. I'm the Deputy Director for Science
34 and Council Services of the Southeast Fishery Science Center in
35 Miami. And I'll represent the Center for Clay Porch, who is on a
36 much well-earned vacation for the month. Thank you.
37

38 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Andy Strelcheck, Regional Administrator, NOAA
39 Fishery Southeast Regional Office, Saint Petersburg, Florida.
40

41 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Miguel Rolón, Council staff. Those of you who
42 need the radio for translation services, please raise your hand
43 and the technician will bring it to you.
44

45 **JANET L. COIT:** Good morning, everyone. I'm Janet Coit. I am the
46 Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries. So, the head of the
47 National Marine Fisheries Service, and it's a pleasure to be here
48 this morning.

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Next.
3

4 **SENNAI HABTES:** Good morning, all. Sennai Habtes, Chief of
5 Fisheries, Division of Fish and Wildlife. I also serve as the
6 Ecosystems-Based Fisheries Management Technical Advisory Panel
7 Chair.
8

9 **VANCE VICENTE:** Yeah. I am Vance Vicente, recently appointed Chair
10 of the SSC. So that's it.
11

12 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Good morning. My name is Alida Ortiz
13 Sotomayor. I am the president of the Outreach Education Advisory
14 Panel.
15

16 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Hey, good morning. My name is Julia Magras. I'm
17 the District Advisory Panel Chair for Saint Thomas/Saint John. I'm
18 also a commercial trap fisherman. I'm also the president and one
19 of the founders of the Saint Thomas's Fisherman's Association. So
20 good morning to everyone and thanks for being here.
21

22 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Good morning, everybody. My name is Gerson
23 Martínez. I'm the Chair of the DAP, District Advisory Panel. I'm
24 also a commercial fisherman, trap fisherman in Saint Croix, and
25 also a diver for lobster and conchs.
26

27 **NELSON CRESPO:** Good morning, everyone. My name is Nelson Crespo,
28 DAP Chair, commercial fisherman, expertise in deep-water snappers
29 and trap lobster fisherman.
30

31 **DIANA T. MARTINO:** Diana Martino, Council staff.
32

33 **SEAN MCNALLY:** Hi everyone. My name's Sean McNally. I'm the Advisor
34 to the Assistant Administrator, Janet Coit.
35

36 **JANNETTE RAMOS-GARCÍA:** Morning. Jannette Ramos-García from Puerto
37 Rico Sea Grant program and also member of the Outreach and
38 Education Panel.
39

40 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Hi. I'm Wanda Ortiz. I'm an educator at the
41 Sea Grant College Program and a master's student at the Department
42 of Marine Sciences in University of Puerto Rico.
43

44 **WILSON SANTIAGO:** Good morning, everyone. Wilson Santiago, Puerto
45 Rico Fisheries liaison.
46

47 **ABDIEL CONNELLY:** Good morning, everyone. My name is Abdiel
48 Connelly. I'm a commercial fisherman from Vieques.

1
2 **RUTH GOMEZ:** Good morning. Ruth Gomez, member of the DAP, member
3 of the OEAP panel and the Saint Thomas Fisherman's Association.
4

5 **DARYL BRYAN:** Daryl Bryan, commercial Fisher, Saint Thomas/Saint
6 John District, current President of the Saint Thomas Fisherman's
7 Association. DAP Members Saint Thomas/Saint John and FAC members
8 Saint Thomas.
9

10 **DIANA T. MARTINO:** We're good, Mr. Chairman.
11

12 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Good morning to everybody. My name is Ricardo
13 López from Puerto Rico DNR.
14

15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Welcome, Ricardo. Diana, do we have everybody else
16 from the room? No? The table here? Sarah.
17

18 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Sarah Stephenson, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast
19 Regional Office. Sustainable Fisheries, Caribbean Branch.
20

21 **MIGUEL BORGES:** Good morning, everybody. I'm Miguel Borges. I'm
22 with NOAA Office of Law Enforcement. I'm a special agent in San
23 Juan and I cover all the Caribbean as well. Thank you.
24

25 **MATTHEW WALIA:** Hey, good morning. I'm Matt Walia. I'm the
26 Compliance Liaison with Office of Law Enforcement. I'm based up in
27 Saint Pete at our Regional Division Office. I work with all the
28 Councils to try to get compliance with the fishermen.
29

30 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Good morning, everybody. Kevin McCarthy. I'm the
31 branch Chief of the Caribbean Fisheries Branch, located at the
32 Southeast Fishery Science Center. I'm in Miami, but I've got folks
33 kind of spread around a little bit, but most are in Miami.
34

35 **JOHN MCGOVERN:** Good morning, Jack McGovern. I'm at the Southeast
36 Regional Office, assistant Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries.
37

38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Well, I think we need to address the virtual
39 participants. Can Liajay or Cristina read it, please. For the
40 record.
41

42 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Okay. For the record, people in Zoom are
43 Matt Walia, Brandon W. Taylor. Let me open the list of
44 participants. Adyan Rios, Brandon W. Taylor, Helena Antoun,
45 Chelsea and Evan Tuohy, Jesus Rivera Hernandez, Katherine Zamboni,
46 Laura Cimo, Matt Walia, Rachel Eckley, Rachel O'Malley, Refik Orhun
47 Ricardo Lugo, Yamitza Rodriguez, Julie Neer, Sarah Stephenson.
48

1 Also, I have to introduce myself. Cristina Olán, CFMC staff.

2
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Cristina. Now we're going to-
4 - before we adopt the agenda, I would like to highlight some
5 changes on the order. Cristina.

6
7 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Sorry. Cristina, for the record. I also
8 want to say that interpretation is available already. Thank you,
9 Guillermo.

10 11 **Adoption Of Agenda**

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Cristina and thank you, Guillermo. Before
14 the adoption of the agenda, we going to have Janet Coit make some
15 remarks to the group. That's why I ask for everybody to give a
16 little more detail on their roll call to create the best scenario
17 for her, to address the Council. We have also other business that
18 we're going to list in a moment. Today, the other business is going
19 to be a presentation of young fishermen initiative for Education
20 of Young Fisher School in Vieques by Abdiel Connelly. And tomorrow
21 on other business, we are going to have Using DNA Barcoding to
22 Identify Seafood Fraud in Puerto Rico by Natalie Báez and U.S.V.I.
23 Grouper Guides for Distribution to U.S.V.I. fisher by Evan Tuohy.

24
25 And we going to change also the order a little bit, the order of
26 the presentation where-- one second here. I want to make sure I
27 have it correct. The presentation that Laura Cimo going to pass
28 for the first part of the meeting on the second day. I would like
29 the assistance from Liajay to see if I miss anything.

30
31 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Yes. You also have, today at 11:00 AM, we'll
32 have a shift and move up the Review Draft Framework Amendment 2 to
33 Update to the Spiny Lobster Overfishing Limit. That's going to be
34 from 11:00 AM to 11:45, followed by a quick presentation from the
35 Southeast Fishery Science Center with Kevin. And then we have
36 launch. After that, then we have the original agenda of Review
37 Draft Trawl, Net Gear and Descending Devices Amendment with María
38 López. That's for the first day. In the second day-- That's it.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much, Liajay, for the support and
41 all the team for the support on putting this together.

42
43 And I'll need a motion to adopt the agenda or comments. Anything
44 else for other business.

45
46 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Move to accept the agenda.

47
48 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Carl Farchette, second.

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** All in favor say aye.

3
4 **GROUP:** Aye.

5
6 **Consideration of 180th Council Meeting Verbatim Transcription**

7
8 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. The agenda is approved. The next is the
9 consideration of the previous meeting, 180th Meeting Verbatim
10 transcription. I need a motion or comments. Carlos?

11
12 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just one correction on
13 page six, under adoption of agenda, I believe the comment Marcos
14 made about a "short presentation", they put "sharp presentation".
15 So, I believe Marcos meant short presentation. That's all I have.

16
17 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much for all the time reading the
18 transcription and noting that. Like always, thank you very much.
19 Take note and about it, we're going to make the correction. Thank
20 you. I need a motion.

21
22 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Nicole Angeli, move to accept the minutes.

23
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Carl Farchette, second.

25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** All in favor say aye.

27
28 **GROUP:** Aye.

29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** It's adopted, it's accepted. Now we going to have,
31 like we explained before the participation of Janet Coit addressing
32 the Council. Before that, I just want to welcome you again and I
33 want to express our gratitude to be sensitive and to be proactive
34 to the Caribbean issues. I can testify that on the first hand. I
35 really appreciate all the job and the support of the Caribbean
36 over those years, and I want to do that in public. Thank you very
37 much, Janet.

38
39 **Janet Coit Address to the Council**

40
41 **JANET L. COIT:** Thank you very much, Marcos. How is the sound
42 quality? Good? Okay. Thank you.

43
44 Thank you, Marcos. That means a lot to me, and I appreciate the
45 introduction and I'm going to want to thank everybody for the warm
46 welcome. It's a pleasure to be here. There's nothing quite like
47 being in person and having a chance to talk with, and listen to,
48 and have dialogue. Fortunately, I've actually met a lot of people.

1 I met Nelson and Julian in Puerto Rico about a year ago when I met
2 you at the MAFC Marine Advisory Fisheries Committee. I met Nicole
3 Angeli in San Diego where she was representing the Caribbean at a
4 meeting of states and territories. And many others I've had a
5 chance to meet informally and look forward to the occasion this
6 evening, to do that and have some more conversations.

7
8 This morning I wanted to spend a few minutes talking about my
9 priorities and some of the things I believe are also important to
10 you. I'll start by saying that I really relate to those of you who
11 are the state agency, territorial agency representatives because
12 for the 10 years previous to this position I was overseeing and I
13 was actually a member of the New England Fisheries Management
14 Council as I oversaw the state agency in my home state of Rhode
15 Island and was responsible for managing fisheries and handling all
16 the responsibilities of a state agency, which now feels very
17 manageable now that I'm the head of NOAA Fisheries and we're
18 looking at a scope, of course, out to 200 miles from American Samoa
19 up to Dutch Harbor in Alaska here where the issues are so similar
20 in some ways and very, very different. So, I think this Council
21 has a special and unique role, and I know that we have very strong
22 relationships between the NOAA staff from the Science Center and
23 the Regional Office and this Council. I appreciate that spirit of
24 collaboration.

25
26 I think the brilliance of the Magnuson-Stevens Act as having
27 representatives who represent industry at the table with the state
28 and federal representatives where we can really grapple with
29 difficult issues, disagree, agree to disagree, and then move
30 forward in some of the innovative ways that you've dealt with how
31 the federal tools and requirements touch down in the Caribbean,
32 which isn't the same way they touch down in other places, are
33 things that I really admire about this Council.

34
35 So, I wanted to also recognize the Caribbean team from NOAA María
36 López and Sarah Stephenson, and Kevin McCarthy in particular you
37 three for all the work that you do consistently day in and day out
38 here, caring about conservation and fisheries. Already mentioned,
39 Nelson Crespo, Julian Magras and also wanted to mention Ed Schuster
40 as the people who are doing their District Advisory Chair work,
41 which is a really important role.

42
43 And then Marcos, I just want to thank you for your 18 years in
44 total of service to this Council. Your warmth, your optimism, your
45 science background combined with your enthusiasm for fisheries and
46 nature and people have made you particularly effective, I think,
47 as a member and as the Chair, as someone who's engaging the public
48 in a way that we're all responsible for in our service roles. So,

1 I think you're an extraordinary person and leader, so thank you.

2
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you.

4
5 **JANET L. COIT:** I want to thank Miguel Rolón, as well, for his
6 effective work as the executive director. That's a difficult role.
7 As opposed to Marcos, we're not expecting you to go anywhere.
8 Hopefully.

9
10 So just a few minutes on my top priorities, and I really, again,
11 think they align with yours. The first would be grappling with
12 climate change. The changes that we're seeing in the ecosystem to
13 your coral habitats, fisheries that are shifting, and how we work
14 together to understand those scientifically and to be proactive
15 and create more resilient systems, whether that's infrastructure
16 management rules. We see the impact of climate change, sea level
17 rise, intense storms and they really affect our fisheries, and we
18 can see that with all the fishery disasters that we've had
19 associated with some of the hurricanes.

20
21 Part of climate change is reducing greenhouse gas emissions and
22 I've been spending a lot of my time on offshore wind, which is
23 burgeoning and growing off the coast of the Atlantic particularly
24 in the Northeast where I'm from, but I do believe it's coming to
25 the Caribbean. So, I think being proactive about the marine spatial
26 planning the sighting of offshore wind, working with the Bureau of
27 Ocean Energy Management from the Department of Interior, getting
28 to know them upfront and making sure as the territories and as the
29 federal government work on potentially floating offshore wind or
30 other offshore wind in the Caribbean, that we work together on
31 that, right from the start, to make sure that we avoid and minimize
32 the impacts on our living Marine resources.

33
34 Another area of focus and commitment from me is environmental
35 justice and equity and providing access to fisheries. So that's a
36 place where I think there is a lot to be done and a lot to be
37 learned here in the Caribbean. And then really just working on the
38 conservation agenda that is so important in regard to protected
39 resources. Particularly, concerned about the corals here in the
40 Caribbean, and applaud the work that's going on among many
41 institutions to look at how to understand and restore those
42 habitats. And in fact, I know the U.S.V.I. just received an
43 Endangered Species Grant to do work on all the listed corals,
44 looking to assess their status and their abundance and to look at
45 how to restore them. So, we're glad that you're taking the lead on
46 that.

47
48 So, I know you have a ton to discuss. So, I wanted to highlight a

1 few of the things that I've learned about the Caribbean Council.
2 One, is-- I was talking earlier with Andy about innovation, and I
3 really want to applaud the island-based fishery management plans
4 for Puerto Rico, Saint Thomas, Saint John and Saint Croix. I know
5 that was a tremendous undertaking, and I think it's an example of
6 you taking a look at processes and statutes and requirements that
7 maybe don't fit as nicely in the Caribbean and figuring out how to
8 make them fit in a way that works for you. So, I think those
9 island-based plans and that approach really allow for accounting
10 for the different fishing sectors, the different socioeconomic
11 factors, and are a much smarter way of addressing fisheries
12 management. I know it was a heroic effort, a lot of work, and I
13 just want to congratulate you for what I think was a really
14 fantastic step forward.

15
16 Another area that I wanted to highlight was just the continuous
17 effort to improve data collection. I know that's ongoing, it's a
18 work in progress. I was talking to Marcos about some of the
19 challenges around collecting recreational fishing data, and I know
20 that's something of great concern to all of the territories, as
21 well as some of the challenges with the commercial data collection,
22 working with the State and the ACCSP. Do I have that right? But I
23 think as we work on science-based fisheries management, you know,
24 it starts with the data. The work that this Council has done,
25 together with our region and our Science Center, to improve data
26 collection, is something I think you should take credit for the
27 progress you've made. But I know it's still a source of frustration
28 and something that has quite a long way to go.

29
30 I wanted to call out the work that has been done by our Southeast
31 Fisheries Science Center working with all of you on the spiny
32 lobster update, the Southeast data assessment and review of the
33 SEDAR 57 and I know that I enjoyed some delicious spiny lobster
34 last night. It was fantastic. But I know that the stock assessment
35 is kind of the foundation and something that the SSC and that this
36 Council needs to determine catch limits. So, the partnership that
37 we have with all of you on that is critically important.

38
39 I mentioned the recreational fishing. Again, Marcos, I know that
40 everything you do is probably a team effort, but I just wanted to
41 commend your work with the descending devices trying to make sure
42 that people are aware of them, that they're affordable. That's
43 very important for the reducing the mortality and the work that
44 you've done. The Council, I know, matched the grant that you got
45 from our regional office to develop educational and training
46 materials around those descension devices. That's something I
47 think we can learn in other parts of the country with from what
48 you've done here. So, I want to thank you for your strong support

1 for that project.

2
3 I see that we have a couple members of our law enforcement division
4 here. Welcome. I'm glad that you're here. I know you come to the
5 Council meetings but just wanted to flag that I know enforcement
6 issues are top of mind in terms of making sure that the rules that
7 we set are complied with and the partnership that we have on the
8 work of our OLE, which has a tremendous geography to cover and
9 needs to coordinate with the territories in the US Coast Guard, is
10 something that I understand is on your mind. And it's on our minds
11 everywhere. You know, we set all of these rules and standards but
12 if they're not complied with or we can't enforce them, we're really
13 not accomplishing our goals. So, that's something we want to
14 continue to work with you on.

15
16 I mentioned listed corals. I also wanted to mention the queen conch
17 and just put it out there because I know the proposed listing is
18 something of great concern to folks. It's a very important species.
19 It's of great concern, and we want to ensure the sustainability of
20 queen conch, but we also understand its importance for food and
21 for seafood. So, I wanted to simply raise that, we're going to do
22 a lot of work on understanding both the biology and the
23 socioeconomic impacts. The proposed listing at the moment is kind
24 of in the works because it's a proposed threatened listing there
25 aren't specific regulatory measures that are going to come down on
26 folks, but of course, once it's on the endangered species list,
27 there is the expectation that NOAA Fisheries will take action if
28 needed to regulate further. So, I understand the concerns and I
29 think it's something I'm happy to discuss further. I mean, it's
30 the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, this year. A
31 law that was passed overwhelmingly with bipartisan support. and
32 we're proud of a lot of the successes but of course, part of that
33 statute comes with the expectation that we will mitigate and reduce
34 the threats that are imperiling listed species. And when it comes
35 to things like climate change, that's a very difficult thing to
36 do.

37
38 So, I want to continue to, again, support the work on important
39 coral habitat. As we celebrate the Endangered Species Act, I've
40 been through a lot of endangered Species Act issues and continue
41 to focus very hard on endangered whales, on threatened and
42 endangered pacific salmon and, you know, it all comes down to
43 habitat. In the end, if you don't have the habitat, then you're
44 not going to persist and that's one of the things that we want to
45 work with you on. We have significant new funding through the
46 bipartisan infrastructure law. And, you know, working to provide
47 grants to protect habitat and to conserve habitat is something I'm
48 very excited about having the opportunity to do.

1
2 And then I mentioned the equity and environmental justice
3 initiatives. Those are from President Biden on down. Things that
4 we're looking at. Where do we have areas where our statutes have
5 resulted in people not having a seat at the table? Where have we
6 had places where access to the fisheries or public resources is
7 limited? So, and then back to the data that I was talking about
8 earlier, do we have places that don't have the same ability to
9 avail themselves of science, to have the stock assessments? So,
10 one of the things that we're fighting for is more resources to go
11 to the Caribbean for science. So that's part of President Biden's
12 FY24 budget. Our additional funds, I think the budget has -- I
13 have it somewhere here, but I want to say it's \$1.2 million. Let
14 me just check my notes. Yes. To provide additional funding for
15 science and management to support local fisheries management
16 agencies. And I think that's important, both because it would be
17 additional resources, but also, I was at a meeting last week with
18 the house appropriation staff. It gives us a chance to talk about
19 data poor places, and that if we're going to talk about ecosystem-
20 based fisheries management, we need to talk about the basic data
21 that we need to collect and analyze in order to make sure that we
22 are promoting sustainable fisheries. So, it gives us a chance to
23 both advocates strongly for the funding and hopefully to secure
24 additional funding that is earmarked for the Caribbean in the FY24
25 budget.

26
27 Lastly, I wanted to highlight that I'm promoting a national seafood
28 strategy. The seafood that you catch and consume here is
29 outstanding. But part of it is just to try to engage with more
30 people around as we manage fisheries sustainably, as we're proud
31 of what the work that we're doing that it's part of providing
32 protein and delicious food livelihood subsistence to people and
33 never lose that connection with the work that we're doing and the
34 fact that this is food that is providing nourishment and health to
35 people who look to the ocean for their source of protein. I think
36 we want to talk about the work we're doing many different ways to
37 many different audiences and not lose that connection to the fact
38 that this is important food for Americans.

39
40 Finally, I just wanted to again, emphasize that we value our
41 partnership with this Council that we look forward to working with
42 you to continue to grapple with these difficult issues. Marcos and
43 any of you that do a stint on this Council, you know, you learn a
44 lot and when you go off the Council, you continue to be an
45 ambassador and somebody who advocates and is important to explain
46 to the public how they can get involved and how we can do a better
47 job for this critical, critical and consequential work. So, you
48 know, the value of the Caribbean fisheries is not necessarily

1 reflected in the numbers, the landings data, as much as they are
2 and what they mean to you locally and culturally for the food that
3 you put on the table and the lifestyles that you support and
4 sustain.

5
6 So, I will close by saying I'll be here for the morning and for
7 some time this evening and would be happy to entertain some
8 questions now or to have further discussions throughout the day.
9 And thank you again for welcoming me here to the Caribbean.

10 11 **Comments**

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for being here. I'll give the floor to
14 the Council members for questions. Vanessa.

15
16 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Janet, welcome to the
17 Caribbean. And as always, we said the commercial fishermen in here
18 are always open to collaborate with all your questions. So, we
19 think we are going to have a nice lunch today. We can talk in
20 there. Thanks, and welcome.

21
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** And I want to add to my first remarks and
23 appreciation is that I'm being on the Council-- this is what
24 happened when you are around for a long time, right. I'm being on
25 the Council for 18 years or so, and for the last years is where I
26 felt that the doors that need to be open are open and the action
27 is connected to what's being said. And through your leadership and
28 open door and being accessible to the people, not just to be there
29 but really listening and that percolate to the other people that
30 work underneath your office. And they are all kind and open to the
31 conversations and to action. And it is now, not easy, but really,
32 I can see the difference and I don't know if you know that, but
33 this is the best moment in terms of advancing right things for the
34 Caribbean. And this is the way I feel before I leave. And it is a
35 good note to end, and you are a great part of that. Thank you very
36 much.

37
38 Before I get anybody else, Julian?

39
40 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Yeah, Julian Magras, for the record. Thank you,
41 Janet. Excellent presentation and thank you for recognizing the
42 DAP members. On behalf of the Saint Thomas Fisherman's Association
43 and the commercial fishers of the U.S.V.I., you know, I love the
44 area where we are sitting right now. I see great opportunity for
45 us to work with NOAA and its whole team and fill in the gaps that
46 are needed to do assessments and to get all the information to
47 make the scientists jobs a lot easier. So that opportunity, like
48 Marcos says, has been the greatest over the last couple years, few

1 years I would say. And we look forward to continuing the
2 collaboration and working to get the best available data that is
3 needed to do these stock assessments. Because what I see happen on
4 many occasions is we go in to do assessments and we don't have the
5 information to complete those assessments. If we close those gaps,
6 I think it would make the job a lot easier for the Southeast
7 Fishery Science Center and their teams for us to have a positive
8 assessment and get the true count outcomes that are needed for the
9 Caribbean. Thank you.

10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Julian. Thank for your engagement and
12 the engagement of everybody from this Council. Anybody else?
13 Nelson?

14
15 **NELSON CRESPO:** I joined to Julian's words and thanked you very
16 much for your words. I'm pretty sure that now we are in the best
17 moment to work for the benefits of our marine resources. Thank
18 you.

19
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Nelson. Anybody else on the table? No.
21 Thank you very much, Janet, for your remarks.

22
23 **JANET L. COIT:** Thank you. If I could just, again, thank the NOAA
24 Fisheries team because I think the opportunities in this moment
25 they're constantly advocating for resources for the Caribbean, are
26 in large part a reflection of the leadership of Andy, Clay, John,
27 and the attitude and openness that they have as they work together
28 with their excellent team here. So, thank you again.

29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** This is exactly the comment. Everybody from the top
31 to the Council participants have opened doors on every level, and
32 that was not seen as clear as we have been seeing in the last
33 years, and I really treasure that, and I really appreciate it.
34 Thank you all, María, John, and the everybody. Thank you very much.

35
36 Next on the agenda Executive Director Report. Miguel?

37
38 **Executive Director's Report**
39

40 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to be very
41 brief because I want to do something else at this time. I want to
42 recognize Ruth, Daryl and Julian. These are fishers from the U.S.
43 Virgin Islands, Saint Thomas and Saint John. Usually, we do not
44 invite people unless they have a presentation to make but they had
45 a really important meeting with the Southeast Fisheries Science
46 Center, and that's what we sponsored when we talk to Julian about
47 it.

1 We have good news about the descending devices. As you know in
2 other Councils they are working on, or they already have
3 regulations for the descending devices. Trying to see if we can
4 save as many fish as possible when they are under size, etcetera.
5 So, we receive some funding from the office of Russel Dunn, NOAA
6 Fisheries. That funding will be used to acquire the descending
7 devices and distribute to key fishers who would like to experiment
8 with that gear. Hopefully everybody recreation and commercial will
9 be able to use it in any future.

10
11 In addition, we have a video that is going to be put together by
12 Dr. Michelle Schärer. She's a member of our SSC. She's very well
13 known among the fishers, recreational and commercial. So those are
14 two steps in the right direction for the descending devices. And
15 hopefully in the future, the Council will have a regulation to
16 recommend to the Secretary of Commerce regarding this aspect of
17 the fisheries.

18
19 We also are going to engage in a project with Sea Grant. Safety
20 While Diving for Commercial Fish and/or Recreational. That's a
21 partnership that we have with them.

22
23 I also would like to encourage Council members, anybody who is
24 interested, to offer your comments regarding the Southeast
25 Fisheries Science Center strategic plan. As you know, this is a
26 document that is very important, it is a lot of work involved in
27 it. So, if you have not seen it yet, please let me know and we can
28 send it an email with that. But the deadline is the 24th of April
29 for them to have this plan together.

30
31 Also want to join the words of everybody regarding Janet Coit.
32 I've been around for a long time, sometimes I'm older than the
33 devil is. But in recent year, I have found a lot of, let's say,
34 partnerships, real partnership with the Southeast Fisheries
35 Science Center Regional Office and the Washington office. And you
36 have done a lot of work. You understand the soul of the states,
37 and you have been able to combine those two. And at the CC meetings,
38 we have found that we have your cooperation and the openness of
39 your office to be closer to the needs of the nation, through the
40 Council, etcetera. And for that, we are very, really grateful.

41
42 The other day that somebody asked me if I got along with my Region
43 and my Center, because, well, there are some issues and problems
44 in what area. We don't have any problem. And we are three Councils.
45 We have the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and we are happy with it.
46 We are happy with. We used to be happy with Roy Crabtree. Now we
47 are happy with Andy Strelcheck and of course with the Southeast
48 Fisheries Science Center.

1
2 But I want to, in front of Janet Coit, recognize a couple of
3 people. María López and Sarah, because they do a lot of work that
4 we used to do and now is because of them that we are becoming more
5 effective in drafting documents that are needed for the Council to
6 make the decisions that we need. We are always grateful. And Kevin
7 where is Kevin? Right there. He's our scientist and he always tell
8 us, you know, what can we do? Or how to improve the system, how to
9 improve the data collection. I believe that we have a very good
10 team. As Marcos said, that was another way a long time ago. But
11 Bonnie Ponwith, one time, she used to be the Science Director as
12 you know, she and I made a bet because we wanted to share some
13 money. I said, "well, if we help you this year, you can help us
14 the following year" and she said, "I can help you in the next
15 decade." And she did it. The people that came after her they have
16 done an excellent job. You know, when you have three Councils, you
17 have millions of dollars involved in other fisheries, and then you
18 look at the Caribbean, small area, etcetera. But in principle, we
19 are all the same. We are treated the same. And to be recognized
20 such by the NOAA Fisheries in Washington and the two entities,
21 Southeast Fisheries Science Center and the Regional Office is
22 really appreciated.

23
24 And talking about appreciation. This afternoon, we are going to
25 have a special occasion for the presentation of a book that was an
26 idea by this lady to my right, here, Diana Martino. One time,
27 several years ago, before the pandemic, we had an activity with
28 the local fishers and the fishers representing the area here, the
29 Council member, etcetera, and it was a success story because we
30 were able to present one of our chefs a series of dishes prepared
31 with lionfish and others. It was a success story. So, Diana told
32 me, "Why can't we make a book out of this?" I always say no to
33 her, but she's insistent. She kept telling me, "We need to have a
34 book. We need to--" "Okay, we're going to have a book, but we need
35 to have a champion for that book and see we can convince somebody."
36 So, we talked to Alida Ortiz and Alida said, "that's a great idea."
37 You know, Alida is the Chair of our Outreach and Education Program.
38 She's a marine biology, but she had been an educator for all her
39 life. And she took it upon herself to put together the book. Then
40 Alida and I were talking about the benefits of having the book and
41 a President giving an executive order that we should promote the
42 underutilized species, that we should promote the use of local
43 caught fish across the nation. It was not this president by the
44 way, but anyway, it was another guy. And we said, "well, now we
45 can put money into it." And we did it.

46
47 So, at this time, taking advantage of your time here, we would
48 like to officially-- we have to stand. Cristina, toma la foto.

1 Alida, ven pa'ca, please. Pero rápido.
2
3 Okay. Alida is a principal author.
4
5 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Nice to meet you.
6
7 **JANET L. COIT:** So nice to meet. So wonderful.
8
9 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Alida is a principal author of the book, but we
10 have a lot of contributors. We have Wanda Pantojas. Dr. Wanda
11 Pantoja she's an expert on culinary arts, University of Puerto
12 Rico. Juan Carlos Vicéns is the main chef, he's the one who put
13 together the whole thing. But we also have Cedric Taquín. You are
14 going to meet these people this afternoon, this evening, at the
15 Guancha. Corey Magras from Saint Thomas Islands. Carlos Farchette.
16 Carlos told me that he's not a chef, he's not a cook, he's a chook.
17 He invented that word.
18
19 **JANET L. COIT:** He is what?
20
21 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** A chook. It is a mixture of a cook and a chef.
22 None of the two, but one in the middle. He created that word, so
23 I love it. We have, Michael Funk. We have Nicole Greaux, she's a
24 liaison officer in Saint Thomas/Saint John. Sol Carbone, Delia
25 Escribano, Juan L. Gómez and Cynthia L. Gotay. These people were
26 the one who put together the recipes that we have here. The two
27 editors are Diana and myself. So, I want Diana-- And special thanks
28 to Helena Antoun, because when you write a book, sometimes you
29 think that everything is grammatically correct and everything.
30 Then you give it to an editor and crisscross the whole book. So,
31 we are very thankful for that.
32
33 So, at this time, I would like to-- she hates this, but she has to
34 say a couple of things to give the book to the big boss.
35
36 **DIANA T. MARTINO:** Good morning. Janet, this was part of our
37 sustainable seafood campaign, so that people can learn that there
38 are many other species that are really good and that can take the
39 pressure out of the other ones that everybody knows. So, I hope
40 you enjoy -- if you are able to make any of those. I know you will.
41
42 **JANET L. COIT:** Thank you. Thank you very much. That's so exciting.
43 This is beautiful. And I think promoting underutilized species is
44 a win-win and I look forward to it looking at this.
45 Congratulations. [applause]
46
47 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Okay, miren para acá. Say chook!
48 [laughter]

1
2 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. Marcos, no te sientes. Diana, búscate la
3 vaina esa.
4

5 Okay. For those of you who don't know this gentleman here. Marcos
6 Hanke is a charter boat operator. He's a marine biologist. He told
7 us a little bit about it himself before. A marine biologist. I
8 call him a friend, him and his family. He has two beautiful
9 daughters and beautiful wife and excellent family. But he has been
10 working with marine resources through his life. He was born in
11 Brazil. The first time we spoke in Brazil, he was so nice I thought
12 that he was gay, but he wasn't. He came to Puerto Rico, landed in
13 Puerto Rico, and he became a member of our society. So, he got a
14 dual citizenship, I call it, but a dual soul. One in Brazil and
15 one in Puerto Rico. He has been with us for 18 years. Unbelievable,
16 but he did nine years. Three years at a time. Spent some time
17 outside the Council came back three years at a time.
18

19 This year he finishes on August 10th. Probably we will ask him to
20 join the DAPs. So, the institutional memory that he has will be
21 with us, and I'm sure that he will say yes. For that we are really
22 grateful, Marcos. Today we wanted to present to you our reef in a
23 bottle but now it's a [inaudible]. Diana wants to read what we
24 wrote.
25

26 **DIANA T. MARTINO:** Marcos Hanke. In recognition of his excellence,
27 participation, and work as a member and Chair of the Caribbean
28 Fishery Management Council throughout these 18 years of service.
29 Thank you, Marcos. [applause]
30

31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. You guys all know-- one second.
32 I happen to be very informal on my approaches. What I want to say
33 now is something that somebody on this room is probably going to
34 be Chairman or going to be on the leadership position. My message
35 to all of you is what I believe has guided me through life. That
36 is that the world is tired of polarization, of fighting for
37 everything. We need to find common ground because we all benefit
38 from it. And then after we have accomplished those common grounds,
39 then we discuss the complicated parts.
40

41 If you follow those steps, our world, the work on the Council and
42 so on, is going to be way better. I see myself and I try to be a
43 bridgeman to create productive conversation between all of you
44 guys and if there is just one thing that you remember from Marcos,
45 I want to be a bridgeman. Be a little bit of that and that's the
46 key for happiness for everybody. Thank you very much. I feel like
47 this is part of my family, right. With my faults, with my good
48 things or whatever, you guys have the best version of myself, and

1 thank you so much for caring of me, of my family, of my beliefs,
2 or giving me the freedom to express myself and to keep being a
3 child after 54 years of existence. I hope I never lose that. You
4 guys have helped me do that, to be happy, to be effective, to make
5 silly jokes, but to work hard. Thank you very much. [applause]

6
7 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Before we finish, the teacher of Marcos Hanke
8 wants to say something.

9
10 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** This is my pride. Marcos was my student
11 and my biologist. [applause] So, after many, many years, I have
12 him as a chef, as a chief, and I think this was the best student
13 that I ever had. [applause]

14
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, guys. Let's go. Business is on.

16
17 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now we can continue
18 with agenda with the good stuff.

19
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. Let's go. Thank you. On a good
21 note. Next part of the agenda is Update on Amendments to the
22 Island-based Fishery Management Plans, María López.

23
24 **Update on Amendments to the Island-based Fishery Management**
25 **Plans**

26
27 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay. Good morning, everybody. Thank you,
28 Marcos. So, this is a presentation that we do at every Council
29 meeting where-- can you? Yeah, it's coming to the screen in a
30 second. In the meantime, this is a presentation that we do at every
31 Council meeting in the morning just to start the process. It's a
32 review of everything that we have that we are working with right
33 now, the things that still need to be done, the things that are in
34 the Council agenda, and then it has also action items for the
35 Council to address.

36
37 Okay, you can go to the next slide.

38
39 Okay. So, everything that it's-- before I start, everything that's
40 in here that is in red are things that I want to highlight. Okay.
41 The first is just to remind you that since October 13th, 2022, the
42 Puerto Rico FMP, the Saint Croix FMP, the Saint Thomas and Saint
43 John FMP, otherwise known by the Island-Based FMPs, have been in
44 place. So that means that we are currently, we have been operating
45 under island-based fishery management since then. That means that
46 all of the amendments that we are working on are going to be to
47 one or all of the islands.

1 The first amendment that was done to the island-based FMP, this
2 one applied to each one of the islands, is the Generic Framework
3 Amendment 1. It dealt with spiny lobster reference points, and
4 this was based on the first successful stock assessment for the
5 spiny lobsters on all three islands, which was completed in 2019.
6 This amendment was submitted by the Council on September 26th,
7 2022, and it just recently became effective on April 15th, 2023.
8 So, this is our first amendment and it's now effective. And this
9 is the one that has new management reference points and new ACLs
10 that were derived from those reference points for the spiny lobster
11 in all three islands. It also revises the process for evaluating
12 annual landings relative to the ACLs to determine if the
13 accountability measures need to be triggered.

14
15 The next amendment is the Generic Amendment 1 or Amendment 1 to
16 the island-based FMP. This was another one that applied to each
17 one of the islands. This one deals with the definition of buoy
18 gear and its use. As you all recall, it prohibits the buoy gear
19 use for the recreational sector because this is a commercial, gear
20 type. And it allows up to 25 hooks on the buoy gear for commercial
21 fishers to basically represent kind of like the same number of
22 hooks that fishers use in state waters. So, this amendment was
23 submitted by the Council on November 2nd, 2022. The notice of
24 availability of the amendment was published on April 6th, and the
25 comment period on the amendment is open until June 5th, 2023. The
26 proposed rule for this amendment is going to be published soon.
27 Probably within the next week or so. That will provide another
28 opportunity for comment on this amendment.

29
30 The next amendment that the Council is working on is the Generic
31 Amendment 2 to the island-based FMPs: Trawl, Net Gear and
32 Descending Devices. This is also another amendment that's going to
33 be to each one of the island-based FMPs. This amendment, as you
34 recall, may prohibit the use of all trawl gear in the Caribbean
35 EEZ or in the marine managed areas. May also prohibit the use of
36 gillnets, trammel nets, purse seines in the EEZ and may require
37 the use of descending devices when fishing for reef fish in the
38 EEZ. Where we are right now with this amendment. We have a draft
39 environmental assessment, which is the document that evaluates the
40 effects of the amendment. As you all know, we have the amendment
41 and the evaluation all combined into one document. It's ready for
42 the Council to finalize selection of preferred alternatives at
43 this meeting. And if that is something that the Council does today,
44 then this final action may be able to be taken in August of 2023.
45 So, we will be discussing this in the afternoon today.

46
47 The next amendment that we're working on is the Generic Framework,
48 Amendment 2 to the island-based FMP. This is another update to the

1 OFL, ABC and ACLs for spiny lobster. This is based on the 2022
2 update assessment to the SEDAR 57 spiny lobster assessment. From
3 this one, what has happened is that the SSC recommended OFL and
4 ABCs for 2024 to 2026 for each FMP. This is where we are. There's
5 a draft amendment. The draft has been done and the Council can
6 select preferred alternatives at this meeting. Final action may be
7 in August, depending on the actions of the Council today. And this
8 amendment will be discussed this morning.

9
10 The next action is the Amendment 3 to the Saint Croix FMP and to
11 the Saint Thomas and Saint John FMP for New Management Measures
12 for Dolphin and Wahoo. So, this is an amendment that evaluates
13 establishing recreational bag limits, commercial trip limits
14 and/or recreational, and/or commercial size limits for pelagic
15 stocks. What we are bringing today to you, is a split amendment.
16 Before, we had the amendment dealing with, not only U.S. Virgin
17 Islands but for us in Puerto Rico. At the last Council meeting,
18 the Council decided to divide it in two. U.S. Virgin Island will
19 be dealt in a separate amendment. So, this is a document that's
20 going to be discussed today. There are four actions. There's
21 additional guidance that it's needed from the Council on the scope
22 of the actions. The Council can select the preferred alternatives
23 at this meeting, and depending on the outcomes of that, final
24 actions may be in August 2023. And this amendment is going to be
25 discussed this afternoon.

26
27 Next slide, please.

28
29 Okay. Then the Amendment 3 to the Puerto Rico FMP, New Management
30 Measures for Pelagic Species. This is an amendment, as I mentioned
31 before, the pelagic amendment was split into one for U.S. Virgin
32 Islands and one for Puerto Rico. This one was decided to put on
33 hold until additional information could be gathered from Puerto
34 Rico. So, the idea will probably be if the Council is interested
35 to discuss this in August. Again, also considers establishing
36 recreational bag limit, commercial trip limits and/or recreational
37 and/or commercial size limit for pelagic stocks.

38
39 Okay. And then the next actions, I'm not going to call them
40 amendments because we still are not working on those amendments,
41 but these are actions that need Council attention.

42
43 So, we have discussed before the importance of developing a federal
44 permit system. We discussed it the August and December 2022
45 meetings. This had been previously discussed since 2016, and at
46 the time, it was decided that we were going to wait until the
47 island-based FMPs were in place. So, this could be done as an
48 amendment to the island-based FMPs as appropriate. So, this will

1 be discussed at the August 2023 meeting, and there's a need for
2 guidance on the Council on the scope of the action. So, we will be
3 bringing a presentation that will highlight the different paths
4 that the Council can take with the development of a federal permit
5 system. And it's very important for the Council to provide guidance
6 as to where they would like to move with the development of a
7 federal permit.

8
9 Another action that has been discussed in the past is a trap
10 reduction plan for the U.S. Virgin Islands. This one would evaluate
11 compatibility with U.S.V.I. trap reduction program. The Council
12 received an update at the December 2022 meeting. They were pending
13 some actions that they were going to take the U.S. Virgin Islands,
14 and then they will bring that to the Council. This is something
15 that staff can work with the U.S. Virgin Island in terms of the
16 things that are needed, so we can bring that. And we already have
17 that collaboration that we're going to establish.

18
19 Then the last two actions were discussed back in 2021. One is the
20 timing of seasonal area closures for the red hind grouper in the
21 Puerto Rico EEZ. A discussion paper was discussed back in December
22 2021. There were still some actions that went pending. For example,
23 the Council wanted to go ahead and do some informational workshops
24 with fishers. And then we also had some data requests, and those
25 things are pending. Therefore, the staff hasn't received the go to
26 move forward with this. So, this is one of those action that,
27 maybe, the Council at some point may decide if they want to move
28 forward with the action or not at this time, or if they want to
29 gather more information. For example, task the SSC or something
30 like that.

31
32 And then the last action, it's a modification of red hind seasonal
33 closure in the Saint Croix EEZ. There was a task to develop a
34 scoping paper to evaluate modifying the Lang Bank red hind closure
35 to allow fishing for pelagic species during the closure. This is
36 something still pending, additional guidance for the Council as to
37 if they want to move forward with this or not. And the, our staff
38 has been in communication with, for example, highly migratory
39 species staff to discuss some of the background information of
40 this. But this is something that will benefit too, from the Council
41 taking a look and deciding if this is something that they want to
42 move forward with.

43
44 So that's all I have. Mr. Chair, if you want to have some discussion
45 about this or otherwise, you know, everything that was presented
46 in the first page, we're going to be discussing throughout the
47 day. Some of these actions that are still pending, then whatever
48 you decide to do. Thanks.

1
2 **Questions/Comments**
3

4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah, I think I request the Council to reserve the
5 meaningful discussion of this later on, like you suggest. But keep
6 that table on mind because it is good guidance for us to be
7 effective on that discussion. But I need to say something. You and
8 Sarah have been so helpful and proactive with the Council,
9 accepting amendments and things that are great overload of work
10 for you guys to speed up the improvement of the Council in terms
11 of the management tools and all the discussions that we are having.
12 I want to express in public our deep appreciation for your team to
13 step up to the plate. Thank you.
14

15 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos.
16

17 **MARCOS HANKE:** Miguel?
18

19 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. One question to María. From what you need
20 from this Council, is there any action that we can take at this
21 time that you consider could be the easy ones so we can get the
22 Council moving toward the direction that we need to move.
23

24 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** María López, for the record, my recommendation
25 will be when there is appropriate time in the agenda later on, we
26 can bring this table back and then some of the items that are here
27 in red, pending, particularly for the ones that are actioned, the
28 timing of seasonal area closures, the red hind seasonal closure.
29 I think these are decisions that maybe the Council will need to
30 think a little bit about if they want to move forward with those.
31 So, Marcos, I believe you said that you would like to see this
32 later today. So, we will keep this table in a presentation and
33 then we can continue just discussing the rest of the actions.
34

35 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Can you guide us as to the time that we can stop
36 and ask for the Council motion or whatever?
37

38 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yes, I can.
39

40 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay.
41

42 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you.
43

44 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy.
45

46 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. Thank María and team for putting this
47 together. So, in response to what you just asked Miguel, I think
48 what we're going to see is with the April and now August meetings,

1 there's going to be some amendments that obviously are going to be
2 completed and moving into the rulemaking process. So, we want input
3 from the Council as to what we want to prioritize, right? What are
4 we going to work on moving forward? I think a lot of that, if you
5 can think about what's on this list of kind of, why did we put it
6 on hold? why did it stop work for the time being? and do we have
7 enough information at this point, or can we bring that information
8 back at the August meetings? That will then help us to prioritize
9 those actions thereafter. So, we can talk about that further later
10 in the meeting.

11
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, María. Next on the agenda, we have a
13 break and we'll be-- Go ahead, María.

14
15 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Mr. Chair, I think we can move forward with
16 the accountability measure, discussion, and then the break. If
17 that's okay.

18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Go ahead. Andy.

20
21 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, so I'm going to open up about
22 accountability measures and then have Sarah Stephenson give the
23 presentations. Are you ready for that?

24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, I'm ready for that. I'm sorry, I just misread
26 here. Go ahead.

27 28 **2023 Accountability Measures Discussion**

29
30 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Thanks Marcos. So, as you're aware, we have
31 implemented the new island-based fishery management plans as of
32 October of last year. Those established new annual catch limits
33 for each of the islands. In early part of this year, my team put
34 together a report of the landings data for the most recent years
35 of information we have. That's 2021 for U.S.V.I. and 2019 for
36 Puerto Rico. We identified as many as 10 catch limits that were
37 exceeded and so, I was very concerned, obviously, in terms of the
38 implications of that. They have socioeconomic consequences as well
39 as conservation consequences. But as part of our accountability
40 measures, we do have provisions with regard to if the catch limit
41 was exceeded due to data improvements, then we would identify that,
42 and the accountability measure would not be triggered.

43
44 And so, we had asked for input from our Science Center to review
45 the data and information, and Sarah's going to go through that in
46 more detail. But we wanted to walk through this and just explain
47 the accountability measures. We're also working on some Outreach
48 and Education with the District Advisory Panels in terms of

1 accountability measures.

2
3 But I want to, I guess, lead with the take home, which Janet also
4 mentioned, which is the data's improving and that's a good thing.
5 We're paying very careful attention to that. We don't want to
6 arbitrarily trigger accountability measures because of data
7 improvements but there will be some work this Council needs to do
8 to adjust catch limits going forward as that data stabilizes in
9 the future. So, with that, I'll look to Sarah to give the
10 presentation. Thank you.

11
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Sarah.

13
14 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Thank you. Next slide, please.

15
16 So, Andy touched on a lot of this, and I'll just go through it
17 kind of quickly since the-- oh, that does that to me all the time.
18 Okay, I'll just talk really fast.

19
20 So, the FMPs outlined a specific process, the years to use. In
21 these first few years after the FMPs were implemented, just kind
22 of in recognition that there may be a little bit of, kind of like
23 a lag or whatnot. So, they identified that the first year of FMP
24 implementation that we would do ACL monitoring, you would use the
25 most recent single year of landing. So as Andy explained and is a
26 little bit later on the slides, for Puerto Rico, the most recent
27 landings that we have that's complete is 2019, and then for
28 U.S.V.I. is 2021. So, for this year, those are the years that we
29 used.

30
31 Next year we will use another just single year of landings. And
32 then the year after that, which would be the third year of FMP
33 implementation we'll use an average of two years of landings and
34 then thereafter, we'll start using the three-year average, which
35 is what we were using before the FMPs were implemented. And then
36 I just did want to point out that last bullet that there is
37 currently no recreational data information. So, for Puerto Rico
38 where recreational ACLs were set, the commercial ACL will become
39 the ACL for the stock. So, I just wanted to make everybody be aware
40 of that moving forward.

41
42 Next slide, please.

43
44 So, accountabilities for reef fish stocks and stock complexes and
45 for spiny lobster are different than for the pelagic stocks. So,
46 I'll talk about those first.

47
48 If NMFS estimates that landings exceed the ACL, the length of the

1 fishing season will be reduced by the amount necessary to prevent
2 landings from exceeding the ACL in the current year of fishing.
3 So, there are a couple of caveats to that. That AM would not be
4 applied if NIMFS determines that the fishing season reduction is
5 not necessary based on best scientific information available. And
6 then the AM would also not be applied if NMFS determines that data
7 collection or monitoring efforts improved.

8
9 So, any fishing season reduction that is required will be applied
10 the same way that it was before. So, this bottom bullet is not a
11 change from what we had before. The length of time will be
12 estimated and there'll be a closure that starts sometimes early in
13 the year and will end on September 30th. But if we need more time
14 from January 1st to September 30th, then it will be added on starting
15 October 1st and moving towards the end of the year. And the reason
16 it's set up that way is to try to avoid any closure around Christmas
17 time because we heard that that was, you know, a big time for
18 lobster and some of these other reef fish, so that's why it was
19 set up like that.

20
21 Next slide, please.

22
23 So, for the pelagic stocks, which in the U.S.V.I. is just dolphin
24 and wahoo and for Puerto Rico includes those, as well as, a couple
25 tunas, a couple mackerels, great barracuda and tripletail, we
26 established an annual catch target, which is 90% of the annual
27 catch limit. And so, during this monitoring process, landings,
28 they'll be compared to that ACT based on the same process that we
29 just saw in the first slide.

30
31 So, for this year we compare the landings to the ACT for those
32 stocks. If landings exceed the ACT, NMFS in consultation with the
33 Council will determine if any appropriate corrective action is
34 needed. And that was set up because these are stocks new to
35 management, they're pelagic, they go all over. And so, we recognize
36 that corrective action, like a season closure, may not be the best
37 way to manage these stocks.

38
39 Next slide.

40
41 So, as we transition from our previous FMPs to the island-based
42 FMPs, there will be this lag in landings. So, as we mentioned, we
43 use 2019 for Puerto Rico and 2021 for U.S.V.I. And of course, those
44 landings were from a period where we were managing under the U.S.
45 Caribbean wide FMP. So, the reef fish FMP and the spiny lobsters
46 FMP. And so, the ACLs that we have in place now weren't even
47 thought up back then. So, there is this lag. So, what we've
48 specified in our regulations and in the FMPs is that during this

1 transition period, we will compare landings to the new ACLs or
2 ACTs. And our question is, if they are fishing at that same rate
3 in this fishing year, would they exceed these ACLs or ACTs? And
4 then once we catch up to a time period where we are using landings
5 from say, 2023 and later, the question was, did they exceed? In
6 either instance the overage, if there is an overage and it's
7 determined to be from increased catch, the AM would be applied as
8 we saw on the previous two slides. So different for pelagic stocks.
9 And then the fishing season closure for reef fish and spiny
10 lobster.

11
12 Next slide, please.

13
14 So, there's a lot on this slide, but I wanted to show everybody.
15 So, these are the 10 stocks that Andy mentioned that for this year
16 when we compared 2019 landings for Puerto Rico and 2021 for the
17 U.S.V.I. FMPs to their ACLs, the ones that were over. So, you can
18 see in the third column there, the landings that we had. The very
19 next column is the ACL, and the one after that is the ACT. You can
20 see that for most stocks on this list, there is no ACT, there's
21 only one that has one and that's the pelagic stock in Puerto Rico
22 of great Barracuda.

23
24 And so, after we determined that they were above their ACLs or
25 ACT, we sent a memo to the Science Center requesting that they
26 look and see if they could determine why these overages occurred.
27 And so, the second to last column is kind of the short response
28 from the Science Center memo. So, you can see that several of them
29 were due to improved reporting. Some of them were due to increased
30 catch. And those are all the species that we have a zero ACL in
31 federal water. So, we prohibit harvest in federal water, so the
32 assumption is that those landings occurred in state waters.

33
34 And so, there is one on there that needs further evaluation. And
35 so, I'll discuss on the next slide a little bit more detail, the
36 improved reporting and that explanation for great barracuda. And
37 then there's the last column, which is the good news of this slide,
38 which is part of the reason why I agreed to give it instead of
39 Andy is that there's no closures necessary for this year for any
40 of the stocks that there was an overage. So, good news.

41
42 Next slide, please.

43
44 So, improved reporting, what does that mean? It's slightly
45 different for each of the stocks, but I'm going to try to explain
46 this because it's a little complicated. For hogfish and grouper
47 four, which those were the stocks that went over the ACL under the
48 Saint Thomas and Saint John FMP. Grouper five and misty grouper,

1 which is a stock under the Saint Croix FMP and then cubera snapper
2 for the Puerto Rico FMP the improved reporting basically came down
3 to the species were not on the reporting forms during the time
4 period that was used to set the ACL. So, it's a little bit different
5 for some of those and I can go through the table a little bit more.

6
7 For great barracuda, which is that pelagic stock in Puerto Rico,
8 the Science Center suggested that more investigation is required
9 because the reporting forms only have a general category of
10 barracudas, but we are managing specifically the species great
11 barracuda. And so there needs to just be a little bit more look at
12 that to see, is that appropriate? Should this maybe have been
13 lumped all of them together? So, that's the last part of that one.
14 If the ACT is exceeded, NIMFS must consult with the Council to
15 determine appropriate action. For this one the action could be,
16 take a closer look at those, you know, how they're reported and
17 determine if this one need to go back to the SSC.

18
19 So, in the table— Oh, Miguel.

20
21 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yes. Sarah, can you please explain the difference
22 between ACL and ACT and why the barracuda have an ACT? Because
23 that's a question that they asked me.

24
25 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay. So, the ACL is the annual catch limit,
26 and it was set using the ABC control rule, the Acceptable
27 Biological Catch control rule that's in each management plan. Then
28 once the ACL was established, and we did that for all the stocks
29 pelagic, reef fish, bunny, lobster, but for the pelagic stocks,
30 when we were developing the accountability measures for these new
31 species that we're going to start managing, we decided to develop
32 an annual catch target, which the Council set at 90% of the ACL.
33 So, if the ACL was a 100,000, then 90,000 is the ACT. So that ACT
34 is going to be kind of like our trigger. If we compare landings to
35 that, it makes us take a step back and take a look at the stock.
36 The difference is with these pelagic stocks, there's no immediate
37 follow up action, like a seasoned reduction. We're going to take
38 a closer look. We're going to determine why was there a large
39 influx of recruits or juveniles? Was there something else that was
40 outside of the fishery's control that that led to that increase in
41 catch? So, the pelagic stocks all have that ACT. And so, that's
42 our management.

43
44 They also have an ACL. but the accountability measure is tied to
45 the ACT, the target, not the limit. Does that-- Okay. Kevin?

46
47 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** So, Miguel, does that answer the question? Because
48 there's another way to frame that. [crosstalk] say no more.

1
2 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, I explain it to a couple of people, but I
3 wanted to hear from Sarah for the record.
4

5 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay. So, looking at the table the first row
6 you can see hogfish, the reference period of landings that was
7 used to set the ACL for hogfish was 2012 to 2016. But the year
8 that hogfish was officially added to the U.S.V.I. forms was 2016.
9 So, that's why this one falls under improved reporting because any
10 landings that occurred during that reference period were write-
11 ins and so, they might not have captured all the catch for the
12 hogfish. So that's why that one's on the improved reporting.
13

14 So, then all of the groupers, and this is going to apply to the
15 Saint Thomas/Saint John, as well as the Saint Croix because they
16 use the same process. So, they use the landings by species. The
17 2012 to 2016 forms had most species of groupers written on them
18 that we are going to manage. Before that time, all of the groupers
19 were just reported as a lump aggregate, as groupers, but it was a
20 more historical time period. So, what the SSC and the Council did
21 through the FMPs was they looked at the species-specific ratio
22 during that five-year period and they applied it back to the
23 historical landings.
24

25 And so, like I said, most of the species of groupers that we're
26 going to manage under the new FMPs were on the form. But there
27 were some that weren't, some that were added in at a later period.
28 So, for instance there, black, red, tiger grouper, which are three
29 of the four stocks managed in both the Saint Thomas/Saint John
30 Grouper four complex and the Saint Croix Grouper five complex.
31 Those weren't on the form until 2016. So, any kind of species-
32 specific ratio might be a little off when you then back apply it
33 to groupers. And the same thing with misty grouper that that's
34 going to, even though it was on the form, all of the groupers are
35 likely a little off because they were using species specific from
36 that period and applying it backwards. And so, if there was one
37 missing or not really reported, it was write-ins. You're not going
38 to get the best snapshot of that species specific to apply to the
39 historical landings. So, that's why it says the species-specific
40 ratio is likely inaccurate. And so would fall under enhanced
41 reporting.
42
43
44

45 And then last cubera snapper for Puerto Rico. The period used to
46 set the ACL was basically 88 through 2011. There were some known
47 errors with the 2005 landings, so that wasn't used for any species,
48 so that's why it's missing here. But cubera snapper wasn't added

1 to the Puerto Rico catch form until 2014, so it's the same issue
2 of anything that was on in the landings data during the reference
3 period use was likely due to write-ins and wasn't because the
4 species was included on the form.

5
6 Next slide please.

7
8 And with that is the end. So, the next steps for these-- we're
9 going to obviously keep monitoring each year, but now that we know
10 that this has occurred, the Council could revisit ACLs for stock
11 or complexes that include species that weren't on the reporting
12 forms. We know of some because we identified them during this
13 year's process, but more could probably be looked at there. And
14 then also, start a discussion, if you'd like, to determine any
15 appropriate corrective actions, if any are needed, for ACT
16 overages. For those pelagic stocks since they are new. Just start
17 the discussion of, since this is going to be an annual process,
18 what steps could we, as SERO and the Science Center take?

19
20 So, Andy, with that, I'll turn it back to you.

21
22 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. Thanks Sarah. So just a couple things to
23 add and then, certainly, interested in input from the Council.
24 With annual catch limits the goal is obviously to have a
25 sustainable level of harvest. And in this instance, we have a
26 moving target where the data's improving, right? And the catch
27 limits, at least for these species, likely are set too low relative
28 to how the data is collected historically.

29
30 So, what we need, obviously going forward, is then a stable period
31 for landings data where there's not change happening to the
32 reporting in order to set new catch levels that are appropriately
33 set relative to new reporting regime. Right. And in Puerto Rico,
34 I know you're going through a tremendous amount of work right now
35 with ShellCatch and the electronic reporting on the commercial
36 side, and so that's still in flux. I don't know from your
37 perspective, Nicole, where we're at in terms of kind of stabilizing
38 reporting for U.S.V.I. But we just want to raise this because we
39 do see future action. We don't have a timeframe for when that
40 future action might occur at this point, and I think it'll be
41 contingent on when we believe that stability in reporting has
42 finally kind of occurred and when we can reset the ACLs. You know,
43 what we want to obviously do is have a system of functional ACLs
44 and accountability measures so that if in fact the catch limits
45 are exceeded, you know, there's corrective action taken and we
46 don't also trigger them when reporting is just simply improved,
47 like we're talking about today.

1 Then the last thing I'll note is that although we've identified
2 these 10 species that kind of triggered our review, there's likely
3 other species where data improvements have occurred, but for
4 whatever reason, the catch limit wasn't exceeded. And so, I think
5 it's going to need to be more broadly looked at with the Science
6 Center going forward in terms of updating our catch limits under
7 the island-based FMPs.

8
9 So, we just wanted to present this. As I mentioned, we're going to
10 be bringing this to the District Advisory Panels as well to share
11 with them the implications of this. And ultimately, going forward,
12 we'll want to work with the Council to update the catch limits.

13 14 Questions/Comments

15
16 **MARCOS HANKE:** I was just making some notes here. Sarah, do you
17 want any discussion about barracuda to put on record now or later?

18
19 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes. If you know of anything that will help us
20 when we start looking into that it would be appreciated.

21
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. In Puerto Rico, the great barracuda is
23 prohibited by law to be commercialized because of consideration of
24 ciguatera. I went around the room, and I confirm with Nelson, with
25 Wilson, there is a minimum landing of it, usually for bait and for
26 community consumption. For personal use, which is minimum, very,
27 very small. Saying that there are three species of barracuda
28 present in the Caribbean. *Sphyraena barracuda*, which is the great
29 barracuda, *sphyraena picudilla* and *sphyraena guachancho*. The two
30 smaller species are the ones that aggregate in schools that you
31 can see landings for different gears. Usually artisanal is a small,
32 very small-scale fishery that is very good to eat without chances
33 of ciguatera because of the biology and the communities use them.
34 That's what we need to adjust and to understand on the barracuda
35 group fishery. That's the reality that is going on.

36
37 I would like to hear from the DAP if I'm missing anything.

38
39 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nelson Crespo, for the
40 record. Marcos, you said correctly what I want to express. The
41 barracuda is a small-scale target. It is only for some communities,
42 and it is an artisanal fishery. It's not a big market. In the big
43 one, the big barracuda, we only use it when we don't find any other
44 bait for the deep-water snappers then we go for the barracuda. For
45 a few ones, just to complete the one day of fishing. That's all.

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Vanessa?
48

1 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez, for the
2 record. As you said, also, only the smallest one is the one that
3 we use for practically house consumption. It's not commercial and
4 from the point of view of the commercial divers, the only way that
5 they have to kill them is if they are aggressive to the divers.
6 But it's not for consumption, it's only to prevent accidents.
7 Thanks.
8

9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Do you need anything else? Any aspects of it?
10 Miguel?
11

12 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, but the issue is that we deal with numbers.
13 Ricardo, do you have statistics on barracuda and the three others?
14 Have those been shared already, or they're still in the process?
15

16 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** I was looking for the numbers right now and
17 we have about 1000 pounds landed. 1000 of barracudas.
18

19 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** But that's a group of barracudas, you cannot
20 tell them apart yet?
21

22 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Well, we don't have separated species. We
23 just have barracuda, its standard name. We know that we have
24 different species but the great barracuda, which is prohibited, as
25 you said, to be sold for food, is the most fished. Is the species
26 of barracuda that is mostly caught in Puerto Rico and report.
27

28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. This is what the numbers, which is important
29 what Miguel said. Even though in terms of how the fishing is
30 performed, the great barracuda is an accident of when you go for
31 king mackerel, for reef fishes, for pelagics, that you catch them
32 accidentally, versus the little barracudas, which is the
33 guachancho and the picudilla in which the small, very, very small
34 scale fishermen go with sardines and rowing boats and so on, close
35 to the shoreline, to fish on the schools of them. I mean, the
36 approach to the fishery is different. The gear is different. The
37 size of the fish is different. There's a very big distinction
38 between, especially the two species that don't grow very big versus
39 the great barracuda.
40

41 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, Sarah, the question is, does any of this
42 help you in the writing of the document?
43

44 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes. I think where it will be helpful is if
45 this gets kind of sent back as a request to the SSC to look at
46 this stock again, we could include all the discussion here and the
47 rationale, as well as the discussion and the reasoning of why it
48 was included in the Puerto Rico FMP. You know, what category did

1 it fall under? Was it in environmentally important? Was it
2 economically important? Was it, you know, we know it wasn't managed
3 before, but we can take all of that information and present it to
4 the SSC and then they can make the determination of, "should we-"
5 And basically how it's landed, how it's reported, knowing all this
6 information now, would they recommend any changes to the ACL and
7 the ACT?

8
9 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, Mr. Chairman-- Liajay, take notes of that
10 last statement from Sarah and be sure that Graciela incorporates
11 it into the agenda for the SSC that topic. Vance is the Chair now,
12 so he is taking notes also. Then by the next meeting of the Council,
13 in ours, we may be able to provide Sarah some other guidance.

14
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. Ricardo.

16
17 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes, I would like to correct. The barracuda
18 species mostly fish in Puerto Rico and sold are the picudilla and
19 guachancho. My mistake.

20
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Ricardo. Carlos.

22
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Oh, thank you, Mr. Chair. Can I go to that slide
24 where the Saint Croix numbers are? Down, down, down. Right there.

25
26 Okay. I know I mentioned this a few years ago, and I don't know if
27 it's misidentification by the fisher or what's going on there, but
28 I don't see black, red, and tiger and yellowfin grouper at all in
29 the markets. I don't know if the fishers are misidentifying that.
30 1,300 pounds I can tell you I would've seen them. And maybe I can
31 get some clarification from fish and wildlife port sampling if
32 they have identified those species when they sample. But I really
33 don't see them at all in the market, especially the tiger and the
34 black. I see misty, maybe they're misidentifying the misty for
35 black, but I don't see red, and I don't see tiger. And I think
36 I've seen a yellowfin grouper about 12 pounds, maybe about seven
37 years ago at the market. So, I'm not sure where those numbers are
38 coming from.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian.

41
42 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras, for the record. Okay, so, since we
43 are in this slide, I'd like to ask a question, make a comment. The
44 nassau group landings of 3,117 pounds.

45
46 The Nassau grouper has been closed from back in the '80s. It's a
47 no take. So, I know on the form there's a section where they ask
48 us to write-in discards. Has this been the issue where it's been

1 written in as discards and it's actually showing up as landings.
2 And if it is showing up as landings, what enforcement has been
3 done to the individuals that's been showing this landing on their
4 reports?

5
6 So, I think that needs to be clarified. That's one. Can we go back
7 up another slide? So, I'm looking for the one with the dates for
8 the accountability measures. Okay. So, I know, I know-- Okay. We
9 went up one too much. Let's do this one. I have a comment on this
10 one also.

11
12 So, I see we want to use the most recent year of landings, which
13 is 2021 to set new ACLs. The problem with that is that's during
14 the pandemic. And this was put on the record before. You're going
15 to see a difference and hopefully a big difference in the numbers
16 of landing during these times, because our catch was down due to
17 the point that our hotels were closed, our restaurants were closed.
18 So, the only people that was consuming our fish were the local
19 residential people that we were able to get to. So, I think some
20 more discussion on how we're going to be using those landings for
21 comparison should be looked at. Your best year that's coming is
22 going to be 2022 to 2023 because of how the calendar year of
23 reporting is used. I think if we're going to be looking at
24 comparing anything it needs to be prior, I think it needs to be
25 2019, which would get us out of the pandemic area. So, I'm just
26 throwing that out there.

27
28 Can we go at the accountability measures dates. Go the other way?
29 All right. This one here. So, I know also, I see here that we are
30 looking at setting the accountability measures from January 1st to
31 September 30th, but recently in prior meetings, we agreed on
32 September 30th, going the opposite direction. So, I don't think
33 this is correct, so if I could get some clarification on the three
34 issues that I brought forward, that would be great. Thank you.

35
36 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, I will let Kevin answer the question about
37 nassau grouper and I will answer the other two with this question
38 first. The way that you described the AM closure is correct. So,
39 we calculate it from September 30th back until some date that's
40 required to prevent the same overage from occurring. So, for
41 instance, if only two weeks are needed, then it would be, you know,
42 September 15th and it would end September-- It's very -- it's not--
43 -- but that's verbatim from the regulation. So, I probably should
44 have tried to phrase it in a way that makes more sense to you, but
45 you are correct.

46
47 The other question about the years used in comparison to the ACL,
48 we've also recognized in these processes that a lot of the ACLs

1 that are set that are new under the FMPs are very low ACLs and
2 that was due to the process used, so that could be part of it. But
3 using landings from 2021, which was a covid year, theoretically
4 the landings would be low, right? And so, they would be lower than
5 your ACLs. So, when we're doing the comparison, you shouldn't
6 trigger, you shouldn't go above the landings would not exceed the
7 ACLs. What you might be more worried about is what happens in a
8 year, like you just mentioned with 2022 and 2023, when it's going
9 to increase, when fishing gets back to normal following. But those
10 are all things that are now on the record. And that first bullet
11 there that talks about best scientific information, some of that
12 is not necessarily stock assessment related, it's what's happening
13 in the fishery. And so that's where that first bullet is kind of
14 encompassing as well as stock assessments is, what's going on. Are
15 we under a pandemic that has changed everything? So, and then if
16 that answers those two, I'll let Kevin answer your nassau.

17
18 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Alright. Yes, thank you. That clarifies it a lot
19 more for us. And just one other comment that I made here. I think
20 due to the fact that we have gone to island-based fishery
21 management plans, I don't know how difficult it is or not, that
22 when we are doing the slides, if we could just put one island with
23 whatever the issue is, using the same statements that you have
24 there. I think it would be a little bit more easier for us to
25 understand it because looking at the three different sectors there,
26 it makes it a little confusing. I'm just throwing that out. Not
27 that I want to give you more work to do, but you guys are doing an
28 excellent job. Thank you.

29
30 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Well, and hopefully you'll see when we get to
31 the amendments that that's the way we're structuring the
32 amendments. So, for instance, if there's one that's addressing all
33 three FMPs, you can go straight to the Saint Thomas section and
34 just find out what's pertinent to your island. And so, we are being
35 cognizant of that, but thank you for pointing out that it could
36 help for the presentations too.

37
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Sarah. And Janet. Janet wants to make a
39 comment.

40
41 **JANET L. COIT:** Yeah, actually mine is a question. Could you go
42 back to the slide with the numbers? I don't normally get in the
43 weeds, so this may be-- go back to the one that Carlos asked you
44 about. Or forward, sorry. Yes.

45
46 Sarah, so again, this may be uninformed, but you said for the
47 species where there's no harvest in federal waters, that we assume
48 that all those landings are at state waters. I just want to ask a

1 question, maybe for the record, is that just an assumption? What
2 is the basis for that and kind of maybe related to what Julian
3 asked about enforcement? Is that something that we have confidence
4 in?

5
6 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I'll let Kevin take that one too.

7
8 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Hi. So, the fishers can report on the form, did
9 they fish, in the Virgin Islands, within three miles or beyond
10 three miles? in Puerto Rico? Inside or outside nine miles, nine
11 nautical miles? So, when they report that, we just accept that as
12 the way it is. It's not always reported. So, there's a big
13 uncertainty around how much fishing was going on inside or outside,
14 given the large number of unreported or not filling out that
15 section. So, high uncertainty.

16
17 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for the question. Andy.

18
19 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Can Kevin answer really quick the Nassau grouper
20 question?

21
22 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Sure. I'm going to wait until Julian-- he's got
23 a sidebar going. I just want to make sure he hears the answer and--
24 - Okay, I'll try this.

25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, I passed.

27
28 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Hey, Julian, I'm going to respond to your nassau
29 question. So, what we can do-- you were concerned that maybe those
30 are discards rather than landings. What we can do is work with DFW
31 because they still have the forms, right? So, we can identify those
32 trips that reported nassau because in the data set, it comes up as
33 landings, right? Because they're very clear within the data set,
34 but, you know, lots of things happen. So, we can work with them so
35 that they can go back and actually look at the form. We'll tell
36 them which trips they were, and then they can look at the forms
37 and see how it was reported on the form.

38
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** You want to go first, Julian?

40
41 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Thank you, Kevin. Yeah, because it's very
42 important. You see, one of the tricky things on how our CCR reports
43 are, they ask you for a total landing to the end of complete and
44 everything. So even if you have reported, say, 200 pounds of
45 discards, that still ends up in your total number to the very top
46 right-hand corner of that CCR. And I think that's something that
47 needs to be revisited. And the nassau grouper, as an example, it's
48 closed both federal and local, zero harvest. So, I'm glad you say

1 you can revisit that with Fish and Wildlife and see what happened
2 there. And let's fix that problem because this looks bad when
3 you're saying, you got 3,117 pounds of fish being a close species
4 of fish that's not supposed to be caught and knowing nothing was
5 done. So, thanks. Thanks again.

6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** A, follow up, just to clarify the concept of
8 discard. Julian, please. Discard when you are estimating the amount
9 of discard because you did on the water is estimation of the
10 discard or are you weighing the discards, getting the discards on
11 the dock and weighing that. Just for to understand.

12
13 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** It's an estimation that we, the commercial fishers,
14 make. So, what we do on the catch report, the different species
15 that we release, like, say right now we are going through the lane
16 and mutton snapper closure, we would say, "well, guesstimation,
17 we're going to write in release 20 pounds of lane, released 50
18 pounds of mutton" that goes on. But it's a guesstimation of weight,
19 by the fisher, that's put on the catch report.

20
21 There's a section on the lower right-hand corner that you have for
22 discards. So that's written in. So, all the different species,
23 like right now, we are in a sector of the grouper unit four, I
24 think it is, or five, grouper unit five, that's closed, and the
25 mutton snapper season is closed. So, you can see a large variable
26 of species with numbers next to it that have been discarded because
27 it's no take right now.

28
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for the clarification. But it's important
30 to be clear when we talk about numbers, if it is an estimation or
31 not. And I have the chat, but I want to give a follow up to Andy.

32
33 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, this has been a really good conversation.
34 So, I wanted to follow up on Julian's comment earlier, and I think
35 this is the challenge right now with large time lags in the data,
36 right? Because a lot can change whether we're talking one, two,
37 you know, three or more years in some instances. Both from issues
38 like hurricanes and covid to changes in recruitment to the fishery,
39 right? Fisheries are going to be going up or down. And so, the
40 closer we can have the timeframe in terms of when we get the
41 landings data and comparing it to that catch limit, the word
42 relevant is going to be going forward and I know we're all striving
43 to accomplish that. I was going to make a similar comment that
44 several have made about nassau, but I also wanted, I guess, check
45 with queen conch. Is queen conch prohibited in territorial waters
46 in Saint Thomas/Saint John or is that authorized harvest as well.
47 Is that another situation where we might have reporting of a
48 species that's prohibited?

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian.

3
4 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** The queen conch is closed in the Saint Thomas/Saint
5 John district in federal waters, not in local waters. So, the
6 annual catch limit for federal waters is zero, but it can be
7 harvested in local waters.

8
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Anybody else? Kreglo. I was looking for the hand.
10 I knew that I had a hand.

11
12 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** James Kreglo, Saint Thomas Council. Looking at
13 this chart, I see what's the chances, I see the hogfish and the
14 nassau grouper numbers are exactly the same. Is there a chance
15 that it's just a misprint for the nassau grouper and somehow the
16 chart got misprinted? I'm just making a point. I'm just pointing
17 that out.

18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** That's a good point. It has to—

20
21 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** It could be that nassau grouper is zero, but it
22 got printed wrong on the chart.

23
24 **JANET L. COIT:** You should play that number.

25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** Maybe we should use the number for the lotto and
27 make me a millionaire. It's a popular number. Anyway, thank you
28 for the good catch. And I want to tie this to something into the
29 future here, in terms of the data improvement. We going to get
30 into the scenario because these Council is proactive with
31 descending device and there is descending device that can be
32 applicable to trap fishermen and so on. I don't want to go to the
33 details. But going to be very important into the future. This is
34 for the representatives of the government. Maybe have a box, if
35 the descending device is being used by those fishermen for the
36 discards, because the mortality of those discards will be different
37 and that is going to benefit, is going to be good for the fishermen
38 to do, good for the environment, good for the release. It just
39 makes sense to document from scratch if the fishermen are using
40 descended device to release those fish. Andy.

41
42 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. So, James, great catch, nice eyes there
43 on the landing. So based on the memo we have from the Science
44 Center it was 575 pounds of Nassau groupers. So, it was greater
45 than zero, but it was less than the 3000 pounds. Yeah. Thanks.

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Vanessa and Carlos.

1 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you. I just want to make a point of
2 clarification about the queen conch in Puerto Rico. There's in the
3 chat a comment from Ricardo Lugo and it's about those pounds, are
4 they state water landings? So, I will let Ricardo López answer
5 that, please.
6
7 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Sorry, you said Ricardo Lugo in the
8 beginning. Can you repeat the question?
9
10 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Oh, yes. In the chat, the comment of Ricardo
11 Lugo about the landings of the queen conch. We know that in federal
12 waters is prohibited and those number, we would need to clarify if
13 those are state water landings.
14
15 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yeah, it should be state water landings.
16
17 **MARCOS HANKE:** I want to give the word to the chat first, then
18 Carlos. Cristina. Thank you.
19
20 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Okay. What Ricardo Lugo wrote was, "it is
21 a concern with the 203,640 for the queen conch reported. Will be
22 interesting how much in reported in local waters since some of the
23 section in the zone map split in EEZ and local waters. I could
24 understand few pounds reported as an error, but that number is too
25 big and needs to be validated.
26
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. And I want to add a reverse analysis on this.
28 The available grounds on federal waters in Puerto Rico to harvest
29 conch on federal waters, if that's the case, that number, that's
30 the most productive queen conch fisher in the world. Right? Very
31 dense. A lot of queen conch in living in there, which is not the
32 case. Anyway, Carlos.
33
34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, I just didn't want to be misunderstood
35 when I said that I don't see the black, red, tiger and yellowfin
36 landed. I'm not saying that they're not out there because I know
37 there's a scientist from U.V.I. who did a study in Lang Bank, and
38 he's seen yellowfin grouper. They're just not landed. I'm not
39 seeing them in all the selling sites that I've been to.
40
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Carlos. I don't want to keep spinning
42 this. I think we have a very good record. Is there anything else
43 you need from us, Sarah?
44
45 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** No, thank you and sorry about that error.
46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** No, thank you guys for great presentation. Like
48 always. Now we have the break. Let's go for the break and we'll be

1 back in 10 minutes.

2
3 **JANET L. COIT:** I will be back. I have a short call at eleven, so
4 I'll be a little bit late.

5
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah, don't worry. Your seat is going to be
7 reserved.

8
9 **JANET L. COIT:** Okay.

10
11 (Whereupon a brief recess was taken.)

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Hello everyone. Please take your seats. We are a
14 little behind a lot of good conversations on the room, but please
15 take your seats. [loud gavel sound] I love this. I just realized
16 how good it is.

17
18 Cristina, are we recording? Yes. Thank you very much. The next
19 presentation is the Review Draft Amendment. It is going to be
20 presented by Sarah. Sarah, you are welcome to the floor again.
21 Thank you.

22
23 **Review Draft Framework Amendment 2 to Update to the Spiny**
24 **Lobster Overfishing Limit, Acceptable Biological Catch, and**
25 **Annual Catch Limit Based on SEDAR 57 Update Assessment**
26

27 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Thank you. So, we talked a little bit about
28 this this morning when María showed our list of active amendments.
29 And so, this is going to be an update. The first time the Council
30 has seen the draft framework amendment, which is number two, for
31 all three islands, which is going to update the overfishing limit,
32 the OFL, acceptable biological catch (ABC) and annual catch limit
33 (ACL) for spiny lobster in all three islands. And these updates
34 are based on the 2022 update assessment to the 2019 SEDAR 57 spiny
35 lobster stock assessments.

36
37 Next slide, please.

38
39 So, just a little background, the SSC determined that the SEDAR 57
40 stock assessments, there was one for Puerto Rico, one for Saint
41 Croix, and one for Saint Thomas and Saint John, were suitable for
42 management and advice. And so, Framework Amendment 1, which as
43 María mentioned this morning, was just effective this past
44 Saturday, updated the management reference points based on those
45 stock assessments. So not just the three, the OFL, the ABC and the
46 ACLs, but it updated some of our other management reference points
47 like the maximum sustainable yield. So, it updated all of those
48 that we use in management. And it did that based on the model that

1 was used in the SEDAR 57 stock assessment and the ABC control rule
2 that's included in each of the FMPs.

3
4 So, the Framework Amendment is going to, or it did, update OFLs,
5 ABCs and ACLs using a constant catch approach, which means the
6 limits that are set are constant for each year, as opposed to ones
7 that changed or were variable from year to year. So that was one
8 of the decisions that the Council made in that amendment. And that
9 will actually be mimicked in Framework Amendment 2. We're going to
10 just set constant catches, so we don't have to change regulations
11 or ACLs each year. So, they also, at that time, set the ACL at 95%
12 of the ABC. So, the Council said for spiny lobster, for all three
13 islands, their management uncertainty, which we'll discuss in a
14 little bit, was only 5% for spiny lobster. They felt pretty
15 confident that they could manage to the true catch of the stocks.

16
17 So, the amendment set values for 2021 to 2023, and then more
18 conservative values for 2024 and later. And that was based on a
19 recommendation that the SSC had, just in the amount of time between
20 the data that was used in the SEDAR 57 stock assessment and the
21 years that ACLs were being set for. So, they just wanted to be a
22 little bit more conservative. The regulations that were just
23 effective only set values for the year 2023 because the other two
24 were in the past. So, we just set it for this fishing year.

25
26 The Council in that framework amendment intended to request an
27 update assessment by the year 2023 to update OFLs, ABCs and then
28 of course, the Council would update ACLs using the same data inputs
29 that were used in SEDAR 57. So just go in, do a quick update using
30 those same data that were used and generate new OFL and ABC
31 projections, which the Council could then use to set ACLs.

32
33 So, as María mentioned, the Framework Amendment 1 also updated the
34 accountability measure process for spiny lobster. What years of
35 landings we're going to use in comparison to the ACL. So, for
36 instance, with the AMs that I mentioned this morning, there's that
37 spin up process, the using one year of landings, then a second
38 year, and then the two-year average, the three-year average. The
39 framework that was just implemented goes straight to using a three-
40 year average. So, we don't have that spin up.

41
42 Next slide please.

43
44 So, from the last meeting just a quick update. The SSC, at their
45 December meeting, accepted the 2022 update assessment and
46 recommended both variable catch values against ones that changed
47 from year to year and constant catch values, ones that remain the
48 same over the three-year time period for the years 2024 to 2026

1 for spiny lobster for each fishery management plan. At that time,
2 the Council directed staff to begin a second framework amendment
3 to each island-based FMP based on those projections from the 2022
4 update assessment and to update spiny lobster OFLs, ABCs and ACLs
5 using the constant catch. So, in December, the Council identified
6 that they would like to continue using constant catch values as
7 opposed to variable catch. And so that's what the framework
8 contains. And I'll show you those values in a few slides.

9
10 And then, following the December Council meeting, an
11 interdisciplinary planning team was formed to draft Framework
12 Amendment 2.

13
14 Next slide.

15
16 Just a reminder, what that IPT is. It is a group of scientists and
17 other aspects, like law enforcement is on the planning team,
18 economists, data analysts. So, we all get together, and we look at
19 what we are tasked with, and we put forward the best amendment
20 that we can. So, you can see it's comprised of staff from our
21 regional office, from the Science Center and the Council. And so,
22 we met in January, and so I'll be showing you results from that
23 today.

24
25 Next slide.

26
27 So, we did produce a draft amendment, which is in the briefing
28 book. And so, it's number Framework Amendment 2, and it's called
29 generic because it's amending all three FMPs.

30
31 Next slide, please.

32
33 And so, there's three actions included in the draft amendment.
34 They're identical. They just, one applies to each island. So,
35 Action 1 applies to Puerto Rico FMP. Action 2 applies to Saint
36 Croix FMP and action three to Saint Thomas and Saint John. But
37 they all are identical in what they say. And so, there's four
38 alternatives identified, and those are very similar to the
39 alternatives that were presented in the first framework amendment.

40
41 And so Alternative 1 is no action, meaning that the OFL, ABC and
42 ACL for spiny lobster would remain the same as what Framework
43 Amendment 1 includes. Alternative 2 would update the OFL and ABC
44 for spiny lobster for these next three years, 2024 to 2026, based
45 on the constant catch approach selected by the Council and set the
46 ACL equal to the ABC. So that means that there's no management
47 uncertainty. You believe that the catch reported is the true catch.
48 Alternatives 3 and 4 will have the same exact OFL and ABC because

1 they all stemmed from the 2022 update assessment. So, all three
2 alternatives will have the same OFL and ABC. And the only
3 difference is what level of management uncertainty the Council
4 feels there is for spiny lobster in each island. So Alternative 3
5 is going to set a 5% buffer. So, it's going to set the ACL equal
6 to 95% of the ABC until that number is modified. And then
7 Alternative 4 is going to set a 10% buffer and set the ACL equal
8 to 90% of the ABC until modified.

9
10 Next slide please.

11
12 So, just a quick comparison of these different alternatives.
13 Alternative 1, which would not change anything, would be
14 inconsistent with requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act to base
15 management measures on the best scientific information available.
16 So, in this instance, the 2022 update assessment is best scientific
17 information compared to the SEDAR 57 Assessment.

18
19 Alternative 2, and you'll see it here, Alternatives 2, 3, and 4
20 will say the same OFL and ABC values as the other action
21 alternatives. And action alternatives just mean ones where we're
22 changing the management measures from the baseline. The baseline
23 here being Alternative 1, which is what's in place now. So
24 Alternative 2 would have the same values for OFL and ABC as
25 Alternatives 3 and 4. The only degree is in that degree of
26 management uncertainty.

27
28 And so, you can see at the bottom of the slide the definition of
29 what management uncertainty is-- I've mentioned it slightly or a
30 little bit before --the ability of the Council to constrain catch
31 to the ACL, the limit that you set and the uncertainty that you
32 may have in actually getting the true catch amounts. So, there's
33 at least some sources of management uncertainty that have been
34 discussed in the past, late reporting or misreporting or under
35 reporting of catch amounts. And then, a lack of sufficient in-
36 season management, which we obviously don't have hearing that our
37 data is usually not available to use in comparison to ACLs to one
38 or two years after the fishing occurred. And then also, the end
39 season closure authority. So, when we close in federal waters, the
40 state doesn't always close it. It's not required to. We ask them
41 to do it for the benefit of the stock, but they're not required to
42 do it. So those are all areas of management uncertainty. You can
43 think about those for spiny lobster in each island as we move
44 through this presentation and what buffer would you like to have
45 between the catch and the acceptable biological catch. Like what
46 you should be catching versus the limit that you set for each year.

47
48 And so, you can see for Alternative 2, there would be no management

1 uncertainty. The ACL would be equal to the ABC. This would allow
2 for the greatest amount of lobster catch but it would also take
3 the most amount from the stock, remove it from the biomass.

4
5 And so Alternative 3 is the same OFL and ABC. It's going to have
6 a 5% management uncertainty buffer which is a lower amount of catch
7 allowed than number 2, but more than Alternative 4. And so just to
8 remind you, the 95% buffer was selected under Framework Amendment
9 1 for all three islands.

10
11 And then lastly, Alternative 4, the same OFL and ABC as
12 Alternatives 2 and 3, but a little bit more management uncertainty.
13 So, a bigger buffer, 10% buffer. The ACL would be set equal to 90%
14 of the ABC. And so, out of the alternatives, this would have the
15 smallest amount of catch allowed but would leave more lobster in
16 the water for future catch.

17
18 Next slide please.

19
20 So, we're going to go through the actions for each island so you
21 can see the values. This is table 2.1 and the draft amendment
22 that's included in the briefing book. So, it has each management
23 measure under each alternative.

24
25 So Alternative 1, the no action. These are the values that are in
26 the Framework Amendment 1 for spiny lobster for Puerto Rico. And
27 as I mentioned before, Framework Amendment 1 did set two different
28 time periods of reference periods one for 2021-2023, and then more
29 conservative ones for 2024 and later. So, the no action
30 alternative, the values that you see here, are those more
31 conservative values. So, the ones that will be in place in years
32 2024 and later. So, we wanted to compare the new options
33 Alternatives 2 through 3 to not what's in place in 2023, but what
34 would be in place for next year, just because they're more
35 conservative. So, you can see the OFL and ABC for Alternatives 2
36 through 4 are the same. Only the ACL changes and that change is
37 based on whatever perceived management uncertainty the Council
38 has.

39
40 We use the same ones as previously used in both the FMP and the
41 Framework Amendment 1. We use the same buffer, excuse me. But
42 you're free to change the level of management uncertainty. You
43 don't have to use these values here. You could change it if you'd
44 liked. So, these are the values for Puerto Rico.

45
46 Next slide.

47
48 The same exact setup but these are the values for Saint Croix. So,

1 this is table 2.2 in the document. The same, no action based on
2 those conservative numbers that would be in place for 2024 and
3 later. The exact same OFLs and ABCs for Alternatives 2 through 3
4 with only the ACLs changing as you increase your management
5 uncertainty buffer.

6
7 Next slide, please.

8
9 And then lastly the same for Saint Thomas and Saint John. This is
10 table 2.3 in the document. You can just see here it's the exact
11 same setup. So, I won't repeat all that.

12
13 Next slide.

14
15 So, next steps, if the Council is comfortable with these management
16 uncertainty buffers as presented, you could select your preferred
17 Alternative for each island at this meeting, either one action,
18 but probably separate actions would be better. So, select that
19 management and buffer uncertainty for Puerto Rico, for Saint Croix,
20 and then Saint Thomas and Saint John. And then, the IPT could take
21 your selections back and develop Framework Amendment 2 hopefully
22 for final action at the August 2023 Council meeting. Since this is
23 very similar to Framework Amendment 1, since it's based on an
24 update assessment, a lot of the document could be incorporated by
25 reference from our last document. So, it should be a fairly
26 straightforward amendment to work on.

27
28 And I believe that next slide is just questions.

29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Sarah, for a great presentation. That
31 lobster is looking at us. Behave. Questions.

32
33 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos?

34
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Miguel.

36
37 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Not a question, but the hour that we have here
38 between lunch, half an hour. My background music when I talk.

39
40 **JANET L. COIT:** Flash mob.

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Anyway, the question is that the three islands
43 will have available as presented by Sarah and the three DAPs will
44 discuss this. We have the three Chairs here, so I would like to
45 hear from them one by one. When we talk about Puerto Rico, then
46 see what Puerto Rico is talking about. Of course, if I'm a
47 fisherman, I would like to fish as much as possible, and I would
48 be scared whenever I see a number that is coming down rather than

1 up. The issue with the lobster is that most fishers believe that
2 we have lobsters all over the place. We found that in Puerto Rico
3 they're under reporting, but they, at the same time, they're
4 complaining that the ACL is coming down and we have to harmonize
5 all that.

6
7 In addition, we talked today about what will happen if we get to
8 the level that you need to have accountable measures, and you heard
9 this morning that we don't immediately go into accountable
10 measures. We have to find out-- We, National Marine Fisheries
11 Service has to find out what is the cost of that overage.

12
13 Sarah, you have it in order. You have Puerto Rico first, second.
14 Is that kind of the decisions that you want to hear from the
15 Council?

16
17 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** If I may, since we're kind of limited on time.
18 Kevin McCarthy was going to give an update right after this one,
19 because they kind of go together on just updates that the Science
20 Center is working on. So, I would recommend that, unless the
21 Council has any discussion that they want to talk about, management
22 uncertainty buffers, that we then turn it over to Kevin who can
23 talk about just improvements with the process.

24
25 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** The other thing I was going to suggest, Mr.
26 Chairman, is this is very important for the fishery here. So, take
27 as much time as you need, maybe push some other stuff. This is key
28 to the decision-making process that we have for this particular
29 species.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy.

32
33 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, I would encourage that we go ahead and
34 let Kevin speak and hear from him and then we can circle back and
35 discuss the preferred alternatives for the amendment.

36
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. And after the presentation and after the
38 presentation to hear from the DAPs, then we will be in the best
39 position to take a step forward. Kevin.

40
41 **SEFSC US Caribbean Projects - Lobster and Other Work**
42

43 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thank you. Great. So, I'll just dive into it. I'm
44 Kevin McCarthy. I'm the branch chief of the Caribbean Fisheries
45 Branch at the Southeast Fishery Science Center. I'm going to show
46 you the work that the Science Center's been doing. Sort of the
47 outcomes and lessons learned from the from the various lobster
48 assessments. Somebody referred to me a little earlier, I don't

1 remember, maybe it was you who said, "Oh, he's our scientist" I'm
2 going to show you the work of all the scientists that I supervise.
3 They do all the great work. I try to get money and sign time sheets
4 and stuff like that now.

5
6 So, next slide, please.

7
8 So, let's briefly review what goes into a stock assessment. So,
9 there's abundance data, there's biological data and there's catch
10 data, right? So, abundance data are things like fishery, the FI
11 stands for fishery Independent. You'll see that a lot. So, fishery
12 independent survey. So, we have, for example, in the U.S. Caribbean
13 the Reef Visual Census survey. So that's a diver survey that's run
14 with a bunch of partners including the Southeast Fishery Science
15 Center, the University of Miami and various other folks here in
16 the region. But that doesn't do lobster. That is a finfish survey.

17
18 So, then another way we can get at it is from the logbook forms
19 that the fishers report and we can get a catch rate. So
20 essentially, we get a catch per unit effort time series. So, that's
21 how we get at abundance in a stock assessment. Then there's
22 biological data, which is size composition data. So, all those
23 port samplers that come down and ask to measure all your fish,
24 that's where those data are going into the biological component of
25 the stock assessment. And then we also have life history
26 information like maturity and age and growth and that sort of
27 stuff. So, Virginia Shervette, for example, does a lot of that
28 work. One of our partners or collaborators, I guess is a better
29 way to put it, at the University of South Carolina. But there are
30 other folks who do that work as well. And then there's the catch
31 data that we're all familiar with. So, there's the commercial
32 logbook which provides the commercial landings. Recreational
33 landings, as we all know, have been a challenge in the Caribbean.
34 We had an Emirate program in Puerto Rico for a number of years,
35 but that ended during 2017. It was already sort of struggling and
36 then the hurricanes didn't help, and it has not started up again.
37 But we do have some projects going that I'll talk about if there's
38 time.

39
40 Next slide.

41
42 So, what did we have for the SEDAR 57 update assessment that was
43 just finished by Adyan Rios in the fall. We had commercial landings
44 by gear. That's coming out of the logbook data, but we don't have,
45 as I just mentioned, recreational landings. Even when MREP was
46 happening in Puerto Rico, it was only finfish. MREP did not sample
47 lobsters. We have size composition data, again, from the port
48 samplers. Those data are by gear. It's very important to get size

1 information by gear. We'll talk about selectivity a little bit,
2 but different gears, as we all know, can catch lobsters and fish
3 at different sizes. And so, to understand that size composition
4 data, you really have to know something about what the gear is
5 likely to catch. We don't have any fishery independent size
6 composition available, meaning there isn't a diver in the water or
7 some other means of catching lobster that give us an idea of what
8 the size composition of the animals are, that are not necessarily
9 caught by the fishery. And that's important. Especially if there're
10 a lot of big lobsters out there that we don't see at the dock
11 because they're not being landed by the fishers. That's one example
12 anyway.

13
14 So, we did have life history information. We know a lot about the
15 life history of lobsters, as it turns out. So, things like size of
16 maturity, we know about that. We assumed gear selectivity to being
17 dome shaped, meaning that there are animals that are too big for
18 the fishery. Either they don't get in the traps, or the divers
19 don't want to deal with them, or there's not a market for it. But
20 whatever the case there was an assumption that there is big lobster
21 out there that we don't see in that port sampling. And critically,
22 there were no indices of abundance available. We're still able to
23 do a stock assessment without an index, which was good because we
24 didn't have one in this case.

25
26 So, next slide.

27
28 So going back to that earlier diagram. What we had is circled
29 except we didn't have recreational landings and we didn't have
30 that index of abundance.

31
32 So next slide.

33
34 So, what we ended up with, as a result of the SEDAR 57 update, was
35 a small reduction in the OFL, which means a concurrent reduction
36 in the ABCs. But we're hearing from the fishers that there are a
37 lot of spiny lobsters out there. So, what this says is we really
38 need a fishery independent index for spiny lobster. The reason
39 there's an asterisk there is so that I define FI as being fishery
40 independent. So, what that means is we've got some kind of way of
41 getting at the abundance of the lobsters in the water that is
42 independent of the fishery, because fishers are very good at
43 catching lobster, and so we need something independent of that.
44 Because fishers could have high catch rates until there aren't any
45 lobsters there. I don't think that's what's happening but that's
46 the importance of a fishery independent index. It doesn't rely on
47 the dynamics of the fishery for its catch rates. It is more a
48 better reflection of the number of animals in the water.

1
2 So, a high catch rate in a fishery independent index would mean
3 there are more lobsters in the water. A low catch rate would
4 suggest that there aren't as many. So, that reliable index of
5 abundance would greatly improve the stock assessment. We know that
6 because it immediately responds, or much more quickly responds to
7 a change in abundance than just the size composition information
8 in general. And if we have a fishery independent or an index of
9 some kind, we could allow adjustments in the ABCs based on the
10 performance of the index. We wouldn't have to wait for the next
11 stock assessment. But we also believe, at the Science Center, that
12 a cooperative research program, that's the CRP there in that third
13 bullet, a cooperative research with the fishing community, is
14 critical to getting these kinds of data. You all have the boats,
15 you all have the knowledge, and I think a partnership with the
16 scientist at the Center in Miami is the best way to go.

17
18 So, next slide.

19
20 So, giving the importance of spiny lobster and given the fact that
21 everybody's very, very concerned about where the ACLs are, this
22 spiny lobster will be assessed again next year. This will be what
23 we used to call, in SEDAR, a benchmark assessment, meaning we'll
24 have an in-person data workshop that's open to the public. But we
25 also would like to ensure that we've got people coming to the
26 meeting, fishers in particular, but the regional partners, the
27 regional scientists, the DNER and the DFW scientists, contribute
28 to this process.

29
30 We have suggested at the Science Center, and I believe that the
31 Council has agreed that because of the importance of spiny lobster,
32 we ought to be doing stock assessments on them every three years
33 or so. And we could do interim assessments that we can update the
34 catch limits more frequently. So, the important thing to understand
35 here is that the catch limits are not static. We're not going to
36 set an ACL, and that's what it is forever. It's a population of
37 animals. It's very dynamic. Some years there are a lot more
38 lobsters, other years there are fewer and so those catch limits
39 need to reflect the fact that we've got a dynamic system.

40
41 Again, we strongly encourage the fishing community to participate
42 in workshops, and particularly in the SEDAR stock assessment, you
43 can ask to be part of that. It is something that the Council can
44 nominate people to attend, and SEDAR pays for your travel. We also
45 need the SSC involved in addition to the local scientists at the
46 DNER and DFW. It would be great to have someone from the Council
47 join in and see that process. In particular, we're going to have
48 a data workshop that will be in person. It's up to SEDAR to set

1 that up. So, I don't know where it's going to be, but it'll be in
2 the region. It's not going to be in Miami.

3
4 Another thing that the center is looking to do are stakeholder
5 workshops. This would be working with the fishers to understand
6 changes in how the fishery operates and what you all are seeing on
7 the water across time and space. That kind of information can be
8 incorporated into stock assessments. Right now, we don't have any
9 funding for it, but it's something that the Center particularly
10 wants to do. Mandy Karnauskas and some of the folks in our social
11 science group are really interested in doing that kind of work.
12 Many of you have met Mandy before and worked with her. So, there's
13 a great deal of interest in that.

14
15 Next slide.

16
17 So, some of the projects that are happening that specifically go
18 at the data limitation of the spiny lobster indices, or a lack
19 thereof, is a Puerto Rico fishery dependent lobster survey that is
20 in collaboration with the commercial fishers. That'll get its size
21 composition, not just the stuff that is landed, but everything
22 that comes up in the traps. It is a trap study. And abundance
23 information. So, catch rate information. This is a direct result
24 of a fisher-initiated study from several years ago. That study,
25 that fisher-initiated study where you all were recording sizes and
26 amounts of catch, that led to a gear selectivity project and that
27 has since morphed into this larger fishery-dependent survey. So,
28 we've got funding for that. That's right now happening in Puerto
29 Rico but that's something that also we can always use more
30 participants. So, I'll have to talk with our contractor who's
31 running the project because they're constantly looking to get
32 additional people involved. They have an upper limit as to how
33 much they can handle, but it would be ideal to have fishers from
34 around the island. So, I'll have to talk with them to see how much
35 capacity they have for bringing on new people, but I know that
36 they're interested in doing that.

37
38 We receive some additional funding to continue a fishery-
39 independent lobster recruit study. That's also in collaboration
40 with commercial fishers. And I know-- I'm much more involved in
41 this one and I know that we would like to have more fishers
42 involved. It is the goal of the Science Center, from Clay Porch,
43 the director, all the way down to our scientists who are working
44 on these projects, to establish more collaborative research with
45 U.S. Caribbean fishers. I was really pleased to see that the
46 fishers in Saint Thomas in particular are now able to compete for
47 federal projects. So, we now have a way of working with you all
48 more directly. So, we'd really like to get some things going in

1 the Virgin Islands as well.

2
3 Next slide, please.

4
5 Okay, so that was it for lobster. We've got five minutes, so I'm
6 going to push on through. I have another presentation tomorrow.
7 So, if there are questions that we don't get to before lunch, I'm
8 happy to discuss them during the breaks or tomorrow, later this
9 evening. Whenever you'd like to chat.

10
11 So, we've also got some finfish centric projects. One, we're
12 funding a couple of graduate students at the University of Puerto
13 Rico. They're collecting size composition data. They're
14 piggybacking on another project with MER Consultants that have an
15 ongoing port sampling project, also with the University of Puerto
16 Rico.

17
18 We've got additional funding to expand a deep-water snapper survey
19 that's happening here in Puerto Rico as well. Both of those are
20 getting size composition data. The deep-water snapper survey,
21 which is using hook and line and also cameras in the deep water,
22 they've figured out how to-- the cameras are really tricky, but
23 they've figured out a lot of the technical issues around that. So
24 that also is an abundance survey.

25
26 So, what we'd like to do is have this overlap with the dive survey
27 which of course is limited to fairly shallow water so that we've
28 got a finfish survey basically from the shallowest waters out into
29 the much deeper waters where those deep-water snappers occur. And
30 we've got some additional money to collect life history samples,
31 because that can also be a hold up in a stock assessment. If you
32 don't have the necessary life history information, we're really
33 stuck when it comes to trying to do a stock assessment.

34
35 Next slide.

36
37 So, we've also got some port sampling projects. I mentioned that
38 we didn't have recreational data, but we're trying to resolve that.
39 In the U.S. Virgin Islands where we're partnering with division of
40 Fish and Wildlife, they're really doing the heavy lift of getting
41 people out in the field, collecting size composition data and
42 landings data. On our side of it, we're helping with the survey
43 design and with the funding, but we've got port samplers that are
44 going to sample whoever comes to the dock, whoever comes to the
45 boat ramp. If your commercial, they'll be sampled. If your rec,
46 they will be sampled. If you're for hire, they'll be sampled. We're
47 trying to get the entire fishery.

1 We're also working with DNER, they're very much the lead agency in
2 this. We're providing a little bit of support when it comes to
3 survey design and some of the training. But they're focused on a
4 recreational port sampling design, so they'll get size composition
5 and landings from the rec side of the house. In this case, they
6 won't be limited, like the MREP was for finfish only. If they bring
7 it to the dock, we're going to find a way to quantify it. If they
8 come back with a bucket of algae, I don't know why they'd want to
9 do that, but if they did, we'd figure out a way to measure it.

10
11 And on the data management side of the house, we've received some
12 funding to try and improve the sampling efficiency by using
13 artificial intelligence and machine learning. So, we're taking
14 photos of the fish as they're coming in to try and speed up that
15 processing time that the port samplers keep you all held up at the
16 dock by having technology solve some of the problems. So, people
17 aren't busy writing things down, it's all being automatically
18 collected. And so that'll get us at size, composition, and landings
19 information.

20
21 Next slide.

22
23 We've also got our strategic plan. I won't go through all this
24 text here. We've got our strategic planning workshop coming up in
25 a few weeks. That will involve the folks that are listed down at
26 the bottom there, Council staff and SSC, DNER and DPNR, DFW staff,
27 folks from universities, University of Puerto Rico, University of
28 the Virgin Islands, the Regional Office, the Science Center, NOAA
29 Headquarters people, the National Park Service. So, we're getting
30 all the scientists and managers in the building and talking about
31 how we best collect data and the kinds of data that we need to
32 manage the fisheries here in the U.S. Caribbean. So, we did this
33 last year within the Science Center. And recall the Science Center
34 isn't just Miami. We have labs from Galveston, Texas to North
35 Carolina. So, we got those folks who are doing Caribbean work in
36 the same room and tried to get organized, and I think we did a
37 pretty decent job of it. So now we're expanding that to the
38 regional partners.

39
40 Next slide.

41
42 We recently received some funding on a few proposals. These are
43 two examples. Jennifer Doerr and Juan Agar got some money to look
44 at conch. And Adyan Rios and Molly Stevens got some money to look
45 at how we handle the data as it comes in. You know, the collecting
46 the data is one part of the picture, but then you've got to get it
47 in a database, and you've got to be able to extract it from the
48 database and make sense of it and to analyze it. So, Adyan and

1 Molly got some money to automate that process and improve the
2 process of how we handle the data on our side of the equation.

3
4 Next slide.

5
6 And we submitted a few proposals. We've got three life history
7 proposals through what's called the CRCP, the Coral Reef
8 Conservation Program. What we'd want to do is work collaboratively
9 with the fishers to get those samples collected. But we've also
10 got plans to work with Virginia Shervette's lab to get the samples
11 processed and to work with the Southeast Fishery Science Center
12 life history folks in the Panama City Florida Lab.

13
14 So, we've got three proposals in there. And I mentioned this idea
15 of getting local knowledge. So, there's another proposal in to
16 work with the fishers, particularly for the spiny lobster fishery,
17 to collect that local knowledge and get data from the fishers that
18 can be incorporated in future stock assessments.

19
20 So, it's critical and it's recognized by the Science Center that
21 the fishing community has to be involved in this whole process.
22 Not just getting out on the water to collect additional samples,
23 but also getting your knowledge to the extent that we can and
24 incorporating that in fisheries management and stock assessment.

25
26 Next slide.

27
28 Maybe. That's it. Thanks very much.

29 30 Questions/Comments

31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. I have the chat and I read on
33 the chat that Mr. Lugo is requesting emails or telephone numbers
34 to contact to get engaged and participate and to be available to
35 participate on any effort. Which way is the best way to give that
36 information to them, to the fishermen and to Mr. Lugo.

37
38 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** So, I think if they get in touch with me, I can
39 serve as a conduit to the folks that are running those. We've got
40 two consulting firms that are really handling the in Puerto Rico
41 work and we coordinate with them. So, if people get in touch with
42 me, then I can get in touch with those folks who are running the
43 day-to-day operation and you know, because I don't want to
44 overwhelm them and they're not going to see it coming. Right? So,
45 I would, because I made the announcement, I'll serve as the
46 gatekeeper and try and get people involved because we also have to
47 recognize the capacity of the project as well. But I know that we
48 want to get people from around the island involved and there's

1 still room for people to be involved.

2
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Cristina.

4
5 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to share some
6 information, MER Consultants already have sent a promo for the
7 commercial fishermen, especially in this case for trap fishermen.
8 But also, we already keep in contact with them to include divers
9 also. Because most of the lobster in Puerto Rico at the west side,
10 it's caught by the divers. So, we are already in contact with them
11 in the [inaudible] in Puerto Real. I shared with Cristina also to
12 put in the chat the promo and send Ricardo by WhatsApp, the
13 promotion. Thanks.

14
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Ricardo, write another chat note if there is
16 anything else you need from us. Alida.

17
18 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Thank you so much. Kevin, I think that
19 workshop, the conceptual workshop and SEDAR stock assessment is
20 probably one of the best ideas because those are the issues that
21 the fishers ask every time in the meetings and in the DAP. In the
22 Outreach and Education Advisory Panel, we have Adyan Rios as part
23 of the panel. So, if Adyan brings that information to our meetings
24 or if she contacts me at any time, we can facilitate that contact
25 with the fishers.

26
27 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** That's terrific. Yeah, we really need in the SEDAR
28 data workshop in particular fishers there along with all the other
29 folks that I mentioned because we will see patterns in data that
30 are reported by the fishers that if we don't put it in its proper
31 context, we will misinterpret it. Right? So, we'll see, you know,
32 the landings going along and all of a sudden, they'll drop. Okay,
33 what happened there? And the fishers will know. We see this pattern
34 or that pattern. Having that expert testimony for the way the
35 fishery operates is absolutely critical. And we do need—

36
37 So, the SEDAR coordinator, Julie Neer, has been really anxious
38 about getting people. We've got another SEDAR coming up, SEDAR 84,
39 which is yellowtail Snapper in Puerto Rico and Saint Thomas/Saint
40 John and stoplight parrotfish in Saint Croix. We really need to
41 get people nominated to be part of that process because that will
42 happen. That will begin in the summer, this summer. So, we need to
43 get people involved and signed up as recommendations from the
44 Council. And then if they're recommended by the Council to SEDAR,
45 then SEDAR pays for their travel. And they have a number of spaces
46 that they can cover and get people involved in and paid for. So,
47 it would be great to get some decisions maybe at this meeting about
48 who we could recommend.

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Kevin. Actually, you respond to a
3 question about these resources to make sure that the fishermen
4 that are meaningful or that have the expertise can be there. Right.
5 We have a venue for that. It's clear.

6
7 We have to go for lunch and to move the things along, we have time.
8 I think it would be more appropriate to hold the comments, because
9 it's time for lunch, of the DAPs and from that we keep the
10 discussion and probably choose the alternatives for Sarah's
11 presentation on the right context and follow up because we have a
12 little space, because the Scientific Statistical Committee, the
13 Chair, will not need too much time for his presentation.

14
15 Let's go for lunch. And when you come back, we going to hear from
16 the DAPs about this issue. Let's break for lunch. We will come
17 back at one. I'm going to take their advice. Let's be back at 1:10,
18 we'll come back.

19
20 (Whereupon the meeting recessed for lunch on April 18, 2023.)

21
22 - - -

23
24 APRIL 18, 2023

25
26 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

27
28 - - -

29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Please take your seats. Let's start.

30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I'm going to take that away from you.

32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay, guys. Are we recording, Cristina? We're going
34 to start the meeting and we left the follow-up from the previous
35 presentation for the DAP to express themselves about Sarah's
36 presentation followed up by Kevin presentation. Let's start with
37 DAP comments about that. Julian,

38
39 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras, for the record. Well, as far as it
40 pertains to the alternatives that were put up for the Saint
41 Thomas/Saint John District, we are in favor with move in with a
42 0.95 as 95% to the ABC and-

43
44 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian? Excuse me.

45
46 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Yes.

47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Do you prefer if we have the presentation and the
48 text that you're referring to on the screen? Is it possible, Maria?

1 Yes? Keep going on Julian. They're going to pull it up in a moment.

2
3 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Okay. Julian Magras, for the record again. While
4 the presentation is being brought up, I'd like to just add in a
5 few things towards some of the stuff that Kevin said.

6
7 There's a lot going on with the lobster fishery right now. This
8 year we are having one of the best seasons of the lobster run that
9 even some of my fishers have said that they have seen in 25 years.
10 Mr. Daryl Bryan here is present in the room and he's the biggest
11 lobster fisherman in the U.S.V.I. And you know, we have this
12 lobster run that's going on, but we are unable to show what a run
13 that we are having due to the fact that the imports that have been
14 brought into the Saint Thomas/Saint John District from the B.V.I.
15 and other places, has caused us to lose a lot of our sales into
16 the market. And the reason for that is these guys are illegally
17 bringing in these lobsters and they're undercutting the prices in
18 the market. Some of these restaurants are large group of
19 restaurants together, and what they're doing is they're telling
20 each other, they're getting on Facebook and they're saying, "well,
21 listen, we got 800 pounds, 1500 pounds of lobster coming in \$8 a
22 pound. Who's in now?" We are selling right now, our market is
23 selling for \$12 a pound, the commercial guys who's doing it for a
24 living. So, when a restaurant sees that, well, we are saving \$4
25 and a pound, what they're going to do. They're going to get out
26 there and they're going to buy a large amount from these guys and
27 then we are stuck with different options. Let's use Daryl as an
28 example, where he had a five-day fishing week. In many instances
29 this season, he has had to cut back to two days lobster fishing.

30
31 So, you're not going to see those numbers in your CCR reports
32 showing how healthy and productive the fishery is during the
33 season. There has to be some way, somehow that we can capture this
34 information and make it part of the SEDAR process.

35
36 Yes, Kevin has his hand up.

37
38 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Yeah, this is Kevin McCarthy. Julian, excellent
39 point. That's exactly why these abundance projects that we've got
40 going, they're measuring everything that comes up in the trap,
41 right? So, whether or not it makes it to the dock and gets sold,
42 it gets recorded as part of the catch rate, right? So, that's why
43 that fishery-independent aspect or having a way to measure
44 everything that comes up in the trap, whether or not you take it
45 back and sell it, it's still the real catch rate, right? That's
46 the true catch rate and that's why we really need an index of
47 abundance to go with the rest of the pieces of the stock assessment
48 because that will react a lot faster than a change in the size,

1 right? So, we got all that size information and that's great and
2 it's critical to the stock assessment, but it doesn't change with
3 the kind of speed that an index would. And the index, adding that
4 in there, is going to be that extra piece of information that so
5 far, we haven't had that will really inform the stock assessment.

6
7 But you're exactly right. If we rely on just the stuff that makes
8 it to the dock and gets sold, that's not the complete picture. So
9 that's why we've got these other projects going. Because they're
10 directed at getting the real catch rate.

11
12 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Thank you for that, Kevin. You know, I know there
13 are a couple projects that that has been ongoing in the U.S.V.I.,
14 which one of them was a diving lobster project and the other being
15 a trap project. We have a lot of issues with how those projects
16 are being done. Because we feel, the fishers, the lobster fishers
17 feel that they're not gathering the information in the areas where
18 they should be gathering the information due to the fact that in
19 certain areas, certain traps would fish better than other traps.

20
21 So, we're trap in the west a wire trap and excuse my language, but
22 this is what we call it, the pussy funnel, would fish way better
23 in the west of the island. On the east of the island, that trap
24 does not do well, the plastic traps would do better. And then on
25 top of that, we have different times of the year where the lobsters
26 run or walk through. So, if you don't know when that is taking
27 place and you're doing a study, the chances of you not capturing
28 the information that you are looking for, is not going to happen.

29
30 So, you know, I know moving forward we have a lot of ideas and a
31 lot of ideas to come involving the fishermen more in some of these
32 projects and I think it's very, very important because we are the
33 ones with the hands-on knowledge. You guys are the scientists with
34 the book knowledge. I think at the end, our goal is to accomplish
35 the same outcome. So, that's what we would like to see. You know,
36 if we're going to do something, let's do it correct the first time.
37 Stop throwing money away and let's do it right, so that we can
38 really move forward with having a nice data set. And I think the
39 lobster fishery is one of those fisheries right now that we can
40 get a lot, a lot of information and use that as guidance to collect
41 information for other species that we have identified for the SEDAR
42 process or other stocks that we are missing that information. So,
43 thank you for that.

44
45 The slide here is up. Saint Thomas/Saint John OFL, ABC and ACLs.
46 And we would like to see Alternative 3, ACL equals ABC times 0.95%.
47 That's the Alternative that the District Advisory Panel and the
48 fishers of the U.S.V.I. would like to see moving forward for the

1 lobsters. That's my comment. Thank you.

2
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Gerson.

4
5 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** I also agree with Mr. Julian Magras. Gerson
6 Martínez for the record. Alternative 3.

7
8 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nelson.

9
10 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We agree with Kevin
11 presentation and also with Julian statement. I think at this time
12 it's pertinent to read part of my DAP report regarding the lobster.
13 When we were discussing the Island-Based Fisher Management Plan
14 the table from the lobster showed a reduction of the ACL for the
15 next few years. The DAP members wondered why this happened since
16 during the past seven years catches have been abundant with a
17 considerable mix of juveniles and adults. They asked the question,
18 if more of the catches takes place in local water, why are closures
19 being applied in federal waters. Regarding this matter, we
20 recommend the following. A revision of the spiny lobster ACL is
21 necessary considering the biological size data. We recommend
22 evaluating the possibility of obtaining statistics with an
23 independent landing program. We request the Southeast Center to
24 hold our workshop with the existing projects using lobster as a
25 model. We want to know which projects are running the data you
26 need and how fishermen can collaborate. Maybe creating a committee
27 that includes all sectors related to lobster fishing, like divers,
28 pots and trammel netters with scientific participation and direct
29 guidance to contribute to the data of the lobsters ACLs.

30
31 Also, we understand that the participation of Kevin and other
32 people from the Science Center is necessary to do the things right
33 once and for all. I bring that up-- Any time I have a chance, I
34 mention this, and I think it's time that the local government steps
35 up to the plate and attend the issues of the trammel netters. This
36 is the only year that is affecting the lobster in our region. You
37 cannot imagine how many juveniles are killed or end up in the
38 market with the trammel netters.

39
40 I don't know if NOAA can provide or design a task force because
41 the trammel netters are not using all year round. Only in specific
42 season when the surf comes maybe to attend this issue if a
43 provision comes this year. They also killed nurse sharks, snappers,
44 and many species that can end in the market and you cannot imagine
45 the line of that fish you find every time one of the fishermen
46 pull up one of these [inaudible]. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

47
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for bringing this issue again. Any comment

1 from the local government that was called for participation? No,
2 no comment? Okay. I think we have Carlos. Nelson.

3
4 **NELSON CRESPO:** Last comment. We recommend the Alternative 3 for
5 Puerto Rico. Thank you.

6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Carlos, do you want to make a comment or
8 make a motion? Go ahead.

9
10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, I have a motion. Are
11 we going to put up a screen for that or-- should I do the rationale
12 before or after I do the motion? Okay.

13
14 Okay. So, *I move to select Action 2, Alternative 3 to update the*
15 *OFL and ABC for spiny Lobster for the period of 2024 through 2026*
16 *based on the constant catch approach and set the ACL equal to 0.95*
17 *of ABC until modified.*

18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos, that's your language.

20
21 Move to select Action 2, Alternative 3 for which islands? For the
22 three islands?

23
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** No. Okay. Just Saint Croix.

25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** I'm just confirming that it's right on the screen.
27 We are not discussing; I'm just making sure that the motion of
28 Carlos is on the screen. This is for Saint Croix only, right?
29 María?

30
31 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Just to remind the Council that there are
32 three actions in each one of the actions deals with an island. So,
33 I will suggest, like when creating the motion, just to say, "For
34 Action 1, which is Puerto Rico, this. And then another one, "For
35 action two, which is Saint Croix, this one. And so, this is so we
36 are clear for the record.

37
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just a question. Can we not put for action 1, 2,
39 and 3?

40
41 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Depending on if they want to do the same
42 thing. So is that the [crosstalk]

43
44 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Wait, wait. Do it one by one so you don't have
45 to clear for the record. [crosstalk]

46
47 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** We can copy and paste over here so it's ok.
48

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, can I make a quick change here then, since
2 it's going to be an order. *Action 1, Alternative 3 for Puerto Rico,*
3 and I'll just go down the line after.
4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** We are going to address them, Action 1 first. We're
6 going to open for discussion.
7
8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Do you have a second for this motion?
9
10 **MARCOS HANKE:** After we have a second for motion presented by
11 Carlos. Anybody second to open the discussion?
12
13 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Second.
14
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay, we're open the discussion. Go ahead, Vanessa.
16
17 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez, for the
18 record. Based on the discussion and the recommendation of the DAPs,
19 for Puerto Rico we also accept this motion and recommend that it
20 should be applied to all islands.
21
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Vanessa. Anybody else? Yes, James. Go
23 ahead. James.
24
25 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** I'd like to also recommend those and second that,
26 especially Saint Thomas/Saint John.
27
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah. We are discussing now the first one for Puerto
29 Rico, and we're going to keep going down the road to discuss
30 separately.
31
32 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿Marcos? Liajay, quita las otras dos y deja nada
33 más que la-- vamos una a una según lo van haciendo.
34
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy.
36
37 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. So, I'm going to make a couple of just
38 general comments but want to look to Ricardo here and make sure
39 he's paying attention.
40
41 So, I was talking to my team before lunch, during lunch and what
42 we have right now is these buffers for management uncertainty that
43 are fairly small. We have, I think, a lot more uncertainty in the
44 system than we're actually capturing here. For Puerto Rico, in
45 particular, we have uncertainty right now in terms of the catch
46 itself because of delays in reporting and the work that you're
47 doing to improve catch reporting. Then, we have also the potential
48 for the catch limit to be exceeded considerably based on past

1 landings history, and we've seen that at least through 2019, that
2 the catch levels, the landings themselves have exceeded these catch
3 limits, right? So, buffering the ACL and reducing it doesn't
4 necessarily address that. There were concerns raised about then
5 the accountability measures and that we have to close federal
6 waters in order to address reductions in harvests that occur.
7 That's really not an effective mechanism either, because it's not
8 really greatly reducing harvest, because most of it occurs in
9 territorial waters. So then at the end of the day, we really don't
10 have a mechanism to constrain or control harvest relative to the
11 catch limit.

12
13 So, I just wanted to state that in terms of the record because I
14 think it's something we really need to carefully look to address
15 going forward. Maybe not in this amendment, but future action after
16 the next update assessment. But in order for the catch limits and
17 accountability measures to work well, we need them to be set at
18 levels that people trust. We also then need accountability measures
19 that we can work with the territory to implement collectively if
20 in fact we're exceeding that catch limit and it would affect the
21 sustainability of the resource.

22
23 So, I think today what we're doing is kind of consistent with what
24 we did with Amendment 1. I would support that. I would support
25 obviously the recommendations of the DAP, but we have a lot more
26 management uncertainty in this system right now that we have to
27 kind of address and ultimately decide how to deal with in terms of
28 implementing these accountability measures going forward. My
29 concern is, regardless of the level we set the catch limit, we
30 could be exceeding it just based on the landings that are going to
31 come in from Puerto Rico and years to come.

32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Any more comments? Hearing none, we have
34 a motion moved by Carlos Farchette, seconded by Vanessa Ramírez.
35 We're going to open for voting. We're going to go one by one.

36
37 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Nicole Angeli. yay.

38
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Ricardo.

40
41 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Ricardo López. yes.

42
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos

44
45 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Carl Farchette. yes

46
47 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Andy Strelcheck. Yes.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** James.
2
3 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** James Kreglo. Yes.
4
5 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Vanessa Ramírez. Yes.
6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Marcos Hanke. Yes.
8
9 *All in favor. The motion is approved.* Okay. We have another
10 language, another motion presented by Carlos previous suggested
11 language. Can we move to that?
12
13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, the *motion is to select Action 2,*
14 *Alternative 3 for Saint Croix to update the OFL and ABC for spiny*
15 *lobster for the period of 2024 through 2026 based on constant catch*
16 *approach and set the ACL equal to 0.95 of the ABC until modified.*
17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second?
19
20 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Vanessa Ramírez. Second.
21
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** Second by Vanessa. We are open for discussion. Any
23 further discussion on the motion? Nicole.
24
25 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** We support what has been iterated and justified
26 by our District Advisory Panels. We believe that our uncertainty
27 is small, and our management is strong, and we support Alternative
28 3.
29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Anybody else? Seeing no hands up, we're
31 going to go for a vote again. Nicole.
32
33 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.
34
35 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.
36
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.
38
39 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.
40
41 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.
42
43 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.
44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.
46
47 *All in favor. Motion carries.* The next language suggested by Carlos
48 on the screen, please.

1
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** *Move to select Action 3, Alternative 3 for Saint*
3 *Thomas/Saint John District to update the OFL and ABC for the spiny*
4 *lobster for the period of 2024 through 2026 based on constant catch*
5 *approach and set the ACL equal to 0.95 of the ABC until modified.*
6

7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second?
8

9 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.
10

11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, James. Open for discussion. Anybody?
12

13 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Again, we support the justifications provided
14 by our fishers, our fishing community and our District Advisory
15 Panel members in understanding that we believe our lobster stocks
16 are strong and our management uncertainty is relatively small.
17

18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. Any further discussion? Let's
19 go for vote. Let's start from the other side.
20

21 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.
22

23 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.
24

25 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.
26

27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.
28

29 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.
30

31 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.
32

33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.
34

35 *All in favor? The motion carries.* Thank you. Go ahead, Carlos.
36

37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I guess it might be a little too late to mention
38 this, but I was thinking about what Andy was saying. Would it have
39 made a difference to choose for Puerto Rico 0.90? Because the
40 overrun they had was pretty big, so it takes a long time to recover
41 that, and I don't know if it would've made much of a difference.
42

43 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes. So, I don't think it makes a measurable
44 difference in this place because we're not doing any sort of in-
45 season management. We're not closing the fishery if that catch
46 limit is met. Right. And buffering in the event that we don't hit
47 the mark and managed exactly to whatever that catch limit is. And
48 so, in this instance, what would've happened is we would've just

1 had a greater exceedance of the catch limit, assuming landings
2 stay at kind of those higher levels that we're seeing relative to
3 what we're setting the catch limits at. But it's setting we up for
4 then potentially triggering the accountability measures while
5 these catch limits are in place. And that's my concern, is we don't
6 have a good way of addressing that and then constraining or
7 controlling harvest in order to manage the catch limit.

8
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for the question. María? John.

10
11 **JOHN WALTER, III:** Oh, thank you. And I wanted to just comment on,
12 I think where the future is going. And I hear a lot of really
13 positives about where we might be able to go in the future and put
14 our kind of goal post on the 2024 stock assessment. What I think
15 we need to focus on is ensuring that the landings and keeping track
16 of the landings are accurate. I think what we don't want to have
17 our situations where landings might be underreported because that
18 means that we can't actually estimate the productivity of the
19 stock. So, we don't want these catch limits to incentivize
20 underreporting. We want that reporting to be accurate. I think
21 that's where our partnerships with the territories and the
22 commonwealth are really key there in terms of ensuring the
23 integrity of those landings time series.

24
25 And then, in terms of our partnerships with the fishing community
26 is to try to develop indices that are able to track the population
27 and get those improvements into the stock assessment. I think I'm
28 glad to see the update stock assessment advice be approved by the
29 SSC and then be voted on by the Council because I think it sets a
30 path forward, but we all know that the science can be improved,
31 and I think we're working towards that so that that next assessment
32 is accounting for some of the things we're hearing. If there are
33 more lobster, the indices, if we can create them, should show that.
34 And I think that is the path forward and the future is not that
35 far ahead. So, thanks. And I think that this is good news.

36
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. María. I want to make a comment following up
38 on what you said. I was talking to Nelson; I have been talking to
39 lobster fishermen before. Yesterday we had some conversations
40 about the importance of creating index, right? That we are already
41 establishing the formal creation of the new index with the
42 information that are going to arrive to our hands. But on the last
43 DAP, we received requests of participation, stronger participation
44 by the industry on providing complementary added data to make
45 stronger the participation and the data.

46
47 And talking to Nelson, I don't know if we will explore simpler
48 approaches that can be a longer-term approach-- sorry for the

1 repetition there --with the industry, like the number of pounds
2 attached to a validated number of lobsters per report that you can
3 create a long-term index. Because it's not the same many little
4 lobsters versus a few little lobsters and the same amount of
5 pounds. Something simple like that for a long-term analysis will
6 be helpful.

7
8 These are just ideas that the fishing community is exploring to
9 see which way we can create this complementary highlight,
10 complementary or added information to help with the management for
11 the lobster. I would like to hear any comment if this is a crazy
12 idea or is the right path.

13
14 **JOHN WALTER, III:** Happy to have Kevin weigh in there on what would
15 be complimentary and useful information. To my mind, for traps, if
16 you could get some sort of catch per unit effort, so how many
17 lobsters you catch for how many traps were put out, and then maybe
18 consider how long they were fishing for. So, something that would
19 say-- and I think the fishermen know pretty well whether they're
20 lobster are abundant because they know are you having to put out
21 more traps and work harder or let them soak for longer? I don't
22 know. But there's some way that you have an idea of that. How do
23 you translate that into an index that says when the index is high,
24 there's a lot of lobster and when the index is low, there are
25 fewer? And then if we could build that into the stock assessment,
26 which usually you can very easily do, then that actually allows us
27 to reflect what is going on in the population.

28
29 And then as you mentioned, Chair, getting to the size of lobster
30 can actually influence that, because if they're small lobster,
31 presumably they're ones who will eventually be recruiting into the
32 fishery. And if that were able to be kept track of it, we've got
33 a lot of undersized lobster, that's probably a good sign for what's
34 going to come in the future. And if we knew that information, for
35 a recruitment index, that could be valuable. Kevin, I don't know
36 if you wanted to follow up on the things that we could get from
37 the fishery.

38
39 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Yeah, I can add a little bit. So, one of the
40 difficulties that we have is getting a good effort measure, right?
41 One that is meaningful. So, if you just look at per trip, that's
42 not terribly informative because one trip may have fished 10 traps
43 and another trip may have fished a hundred traps. And so just
44 calling all trips the same, that's no good, right?

45
46 So, we've often had difficulty in determining that good effort
47 measure and some conversations with fishers might be really helpful
48 in informing that. Like, what makes for a useful effort measure?

1 Is it number of trap haul? Is it the length of the trap haul?
2
3 Well, those kinds of things, you know, the things that they're
4 keying in on when they want to-- the things that they're thinking
5 about when they're fishing. And then, do we capture that in the
6 logbook data? Which is another whole question. So, we've run into
7 a lot of issues with fishery-dependent data no matter where we
8 are, right? Caribbean, Gulf, HMS, doesn't matter.
9
10 With the logbook forms accurately reflecting the kind of effort
11 that went into catching those lobsters or those fish or whatever
12 it is. So, I think that, again, the expert advice of the fishers
13 at the SEDAR meetings is going to help inform us, you know, this
14 index that we put together from the logbook data, does it make
15 sense in their experience? Because we chose number of traps fished.
16 As our effort measure. Does that make sense to them? So, there's
17 a lot of those kinds of conversations about how the fishery works
18 that will inform the way we use and interpret the data that come
19 out of there.
20
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** This conversation just to illustrate the importance
22 of it, to educate everybody, for everybody to be on the same page,
23 trying to find the best path, what is doable, right? And they're
24 going to hear from the report of the DAP after the meeting. A
25 little follow up on that. Kreglo.
26
27 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** I live lobsters and, in our reporting, -- well,
28 one thing I do, I keep my own logbook, dive by dive, but in our
29 reporting, we have so many dives per trip, how much time? And then
30 also for lobsters, I've always put down the weight of lobsters in
31 the column, but more recently we also have discards. So, what I
32 try to do now is I try to make a notation. For example, if I do a
33 dive and catch 10 lobsters, okay, I maybe have three females with
34 eggs, and I got a short one, so I'll try to make a notation in
35 discards three female and then one short, something like that. So,
36 I know at least diving we've probably got better statistics than
37 in trap as far as catch per unit effort.
38
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** With more details. All, I don't want to get too
40 deep into the weeds, but all this discussion and intention from
41 the Council is very, very loud and clear. The fishermen want to
42 participate and be leaders on the data collection and through
43 participants, not just somebody that provide the data, and that's
44 it. They want to learn about science, they want to be hands-on
45 with all this. Next, we are going to go for-- Carlos.
46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes. I think I'm supposed to give a rationale
48 for my motion, right?

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Well, your participation now, yes.
3

4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah. Okay. So, my rationale was that with the
5 list of management actions implemented in October of 2022, specific
6 to spiny lobster, which were prohibited harvest of egg bearing
7 females, prohibited harvest with spear hook and gillnets, trammel
8 nets, minimum size 3.5 carapace, recreational bag limits that are
9 in place in the EEZ, restrictions on tail weight for imports, the
10 four-tiered ABC control rule that was defined by the SSC,
11 accountable measure closure provisions for spiny lobster and the
12 description of the essential fish habitat for spiny lobster.
13

14 I believe that when it comes to lobster, I think we're doing pretty
15 good. And also, I believe that with the gear selectivity project
16 that's ongoing, we will have better information hopefully by 2024.
17 Although I still have some concerns when it comes to larval
18 disbursements and juvenile retention.
19

20 So that's my rationale. If anybody wants to add to my rationale,
21 feel free, because I'm not a scientist.
22

23 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No. I have a point of order. Whenever you have
24 a rationale like that, it has to be provided at a discussion time.
25 That's what I told Marcos. It's good to have it on the record, but
26 the next time the Chair has to allow you to give your rationale
27 when we are voting for them after the fact, is after the fact.
28

29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for the clarification. We have a healthy
30 discussion and we're just missing this part that I'm happy that it
31 is on the record now. The next item on the agenda, María, is the
32 Review of Trawl Net Gear and Descending Device.
33

34 **Review Draft Trawl, Net Gear and Descending Devices Amendment**
35

36 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yes. Good afternoon, everybody. This is María
37 López with NOAA Fisheries. I'm going to be discussing the
38 Amendments 2 to the Puerto Rico, Saint Croix and Saint Thomas and
39 Saint John Fishery Management Plans, trawl, net gear and descending
40 devices. This is not new. This is an action that was discussed at
41 the December meeting. During this meeting--
42

43 I'm going to go to the next slide, please.
44

45 During the December 22 Council meeting, as you recall, the Council
46 reviewed draft number one of the amendments and selected prefer
47 alternatives for some of the actions. If you can look at this table
48 everywhere that it is in red, and it says "pref", those are the

1 alternatives that you already selected for some of these actions.
2 During the past Council meeting, you also recommended staff
3 restructure the actions by island management area before moving
4 forward, and that's what we did.

5
6 So, the IPT restructured the document into four actions with sub-
7 actions by islands. Four actions, one to three. This is all
8 reflected in the document, the draft document, that is in your
9 briefing books that you had a chance to take a look at, since it
10 was sent two weeks ago.

11
12 So, as I said, there's going to be four actions. Action 1 is going
13 to be Puerto Rico trawl, gillnets, trammel nets, and purse seines.
14 Within that Action 1, we have four sub-actions. Action 1(a) deals
15 with trawl. Action 1(b) deals with gillnets. Action 1(c) deals
16 with trammel nets. And Action 1(d) deal with purse seines.

17
18 This same organization is going to be followed island by island to
19 make it easier to follow the discussion as was requested by Council
20 members. Action 2 is for San Croix trawl gillnets, trammel nets
21 purse seines. Also 2(a) trawl, 2(b) gillnet, 2(c) trammel, 2(d)
22 purse seines. And then, for Action 3 for Saint Thomas and Saint
23 John. Trawl 3(a), 3(b) gillnets, 3(c) trammel, 3(d) purse seines.

24
25 Now the last action it was okay to put it all together, although
26 the decision was made by island because it was the same
27 alternatives for everybody. During the last meeting you all decided
28 that you wanted to choose for the requirement for having available
29 on the boat descending devices for reef fish. So, we'll go through
30 each one of these actions. There's going to be some actions that
31 I would prefer, if for the sake of time, not to go with a lot of
32 detail, unless you want me to go into that detail, because we
33 already discussed it last time and you already made decisions.
34 However at least for when I'm starting the discussion, I'm going
35 to go really quick through what was the rationale for this action
36 and then move to the ones that still need to have preferred
37 alternative chosen.

38
39 So, just as a reminder, Puerto Rico-- I'm going to start with
40 Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico only chose to prefer alternative for the
41 trawl gear, but still has to make selections for gillnets, trammel
42 nets and purse seines. Saint Thomas and Saint John and Saint Croix,
43 they both chose preferred alternative for trawl and gillnets. But
44 given that they were requesting reorganization of the document the
45 Council didn't move forward to the other actions, although they
46 were discussed. And then for Action 4, the descending devices,
47 after the discussion, it was decided for all of the islands.

1 Next slide.

2
3 Just as a reminder, these are the gear types that are included in
4 the authorized gear list in the U.S. Caribbean, EEZ. This can be
5 found in our regulations at 600.725.

6
7 These are the gear types that we are discussing in this amendment.
8 For trawl gear the authorized fisheries in Puerto Rico, Saint
9 Thomas and Saint Croix is for the commercial non-FMP species. It
10 means that trawl gear, at this point, can only be used for species
11 that are not managed by the Council. However, trawl gear, as we
12 all know, is not used in the EEZ. It has never been used only for
13 a couple of instances back in the seventies for research. It is
14 banned in Puerto Rico waters. I don't recall there being a similar
15 regulation in the U.S. Virgin Islands, but we can assume that it's
16 not something that is used over there.

17
18 In terms of gillnet, the authorized fisheries and the EEZ is the
19 commercial FMP pelagic species, which means all of the species
20 that belong to the pelagic group that are managed commercially in
21 our FMPs. The commercial non-FMP species, all those species that
22 are not managed by the Council and also, the pelagic species, which
23 would be included under that, right? The commercial non-FMP pelagic
24 species.

25
26 On a side note, for the gillnet. The use of gillnets is not allowed
27 since 2005 for harvesting reef fish and spiny lobster or for their
28 use in marine managed areas in any of the islands in the U.S.
29 Caribbean. They are allowed for using Puerto Rico waters. They're
30 not allowed in the U.S. Virgin Island waters and there are specific
31 surface gillnets that are used for baitfish in the U.S. Virgin
32 Islands.

33
34 Trammel nets are not authorized for any fisheries, and the same
35 for purse seines. They're not authorized for any fisheries. And
36 trammel nets it's basically the same notes that we have for the
37 gillnets. We have the provisions on our marine managed areas.
38 They're used in Puerto Rico. They're not used in the U.S. Virgin
39 Islands.

40
41 Next slide.

42
43 This is the Statement of Purpose and Need that is included in the
44 amendment. You already reviewed it. The purpose of this amendment
45 is to prevent potential damage to habitats from certain gear types,
46 including essential fish habitat, protect species associated with
47 such habitats, as well as to promote best fishing practices, and
48 enhance the survival of released fish in the EEZ around Puerto

1 Rico, Saint Croix, and Saint Thomas and Saint John. The need for
2 this amendment is to minimize potentially adverse effects of
3 fishing to habitats and associated species, and to minimize the
4 mortality of bycatch species. This is the purpose and need that
5 you all agreed on the last time that we met.

6
7 Next slide.

8
9 Now let's go to Action 1. Action 1 is the Puerto Rico Action.
10 Action 1(a) is modified the use of trawl gear. For this we have
11 the three alternatives. One, is don't do anything. We just retain
12 trawl gear as an authorized gear type, which I mentioned previously
13 is just for the non-federally managed species.

14
15 Alternative 2 will prohibit the use of trawl gears for all fishing
16 in the Council managed marine managed areas year-round. And
17 Alternative 3, which just shows as the preferred, is to prohibit
18 the use of trawl gear for all fishing in federal waters around
19 Puerto Rico. The rationale for decision was to prevent potential
20 impact to sensitive habitats in the Caribbean. That's just the
21 summary of the of the rationale of the decision.

22
23 So, as you recall, there's no evidence that trawl has been used in
24 the past. This is mostly a precautionary action that the Council
25 is taking. When this was discussed in the DAPs, the DAPs showed
26 support for this action.

27
28 Marcos?

29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. I think it'll be better to stop there. Once we
31 present to Puerto Rico, we make a motion, and we keep going by
32 segments. It's going to be clear.

33
34 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** However, you would like to do that. Or we
35 can, at the end of the presentation, I have the same table that
36 tells you what-- I don't think you have to revisit this. You
37 already made a decision on it. So maybe at the end of the
38 presentation, I can go back to the table, and I can tell you where
39 it needs to make a decision and you can just go straight for it.
40 Would that work?

41
42 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah, for me. The rest of the Council, does that
43 work?

44
45 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** But the thing is sometimes you forget about what
46 you said at the beginning, then you rehash the whole discussion
47 again. So as much as possible try to get rid of the things that we
48 need to do at this time.

1
2 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Right. In this case, you don't need to make
3 a different decision unless you would like to. If that's the case,
4 then we can proceed and go ahead.
5

6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. I think it is pertinent not to keep spinning
7 around because we already discussed this and we have rationale on
8 it, is to choose the prefer alternative. The guidance that I want
9 from you, and I think you gave it to us already, which is the
10 easiest and marked clear for the record, way to choose the
11 preferred alternatives.
12

13 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** I think I would prefer to just to do it at
14 the end.
15

16 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay.
17

18 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** That way we don't have to stop and discuss
19 things that have already been discussed. But if you prefer, if
20 somebody wants to stop me while-- okay.
21

22 **MARCOS HANKE:** I think we are all well informed. Keep going.
23

24 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** All right, so I'm going to move forward to
25 the next slide then.
26

27 Okay, so this is just a comparison of the alternatives. Again,
28 this is going to apply for Saint Croix, Saint Thomas and Saint
29 John as well. I'm just going to say it here and perhaps if it's
30 not needed, I won't go back when we discussed the other islands.
31

32 So, remember, the status quo, which is the current situation or
33 baseline, will not change any regulations that apply to trawls.
34 Alternative 2 is the one that will prohibit it year-round in all
35 Council MMAs. The preferred Alternative 3 is the one that will
36 prohibit trawl gear year-round, applicable to all components of
37 the Puerto Rico EEZ. Because it has not been used historically in
38 the EEZ, we could say that these are mostly administrative actions
39 and they're not expected to have any additional physical,
40 biological, ecological, social, or economic effects when you
41 compare it to the baseline. But they could be more beneficial to
42 the physical and biological environment by preventing potential
43 bycatch and/or habitat effects from any future trawling activities
44 in federal waters. And one last thing about that is that
45 prohibiting the use of trawl gear applicable to all fishery
46 components of the Puerto Rico EEZ would prevent future use through
47 a petition, which is something that could occur under the baseline
48 Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, so at the end, it would be more

1 beneficial to the physical, biological, and ecological
2 environment.

3
4 So that's all I have to say for trawl. I'm going to move to the
5 next one. The next slide, please.

6
7 The next action is Action 1(b). Okay. So, this one we have to make
8 a decision on. This is, Modify the Use of Gillnets in federal
9 waters around Puerto Rico.

10
11 Alternative 1 is the no action alternative. Retain gillnets as an
12 authorized gear type for the commercial harvest of federally
13 managed and non-federally managed pelagic species and the
14 commercial harvest of non-federal managed species in federal
15 waters around Puerto Rico, and as a prohibited gear type for reef
16 fish and spiny lobster in the EEZ around Puerto Rico and inside
17 the MMAs. So basically, this is what we have in place right now.
18 Okay? This is not changing anything.

19
20 Number 2, prohibit the use of gillnets in federal waters around
21 Puerto Rico, but this one has three sub-alternatives. Sub-
22 alternative 2(a) is prohibiting the use for all fishing. While
23 Sub-alternative 2(b) is prohibited for all fishing except for the
24 following fish species belonging to the halfbeaks, the gar, the
25 flyingfish. And then I have one more species that was added. It is
26 in red is the goggle eye or the bigeye scad, which is a species
27 that the DAP requested be added as one of the species that they
28 may capture with surface gillnets for bait. A surface gillnet used
29 in the EEZ around Puerto Rico to fish for any baitfish must be
30 tended at all times. Mesh size may not be smaller than 0.75 inches
31 square, or 1.5-inch stretch. May not be used 20 feet from the
32 bottom.

33
34 Now everything that is in red in this sub-alternative was added
35 after you saw this document in December. As I said, the species
36 was added. It is a recommendation-- if you want to accept it or
37 not --from the Puerto Rico DAP because this is a species that they
38 may encounter when they're using in the event they use this type
39 of gillnets in federal waters, which is something not very common.
40 The rest of the text that is included in this alternative, it's
41 similar text that is included for the U.S. Virgin Islands and it
42 mimics what the U.S. Virgin Islands includes in their territorial
43 regulations for the description of bait nets. Okay.

44
45 Sub-alternative 2(c) will prohibit the use of gillnets in federal
46 waters, but only for managed pelagic species as this is something
47 that it was added as a request from the Council at the December
48 meeting.

1
2 Okay, go to the next slide, please. And I'm going to explain this
3 a little bit more.

4
5 As I mentioned earlier some of our regulations said gillnets,
6 trammel nets as well as pots, traps, bottom longlines are currently
7 prohibitive year-round in the seven Council-managed seasonally
8 closed areas. In the areas in Puerto Rico and also in the areas
9 that are in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

10
11 The use of gillnets and trammel nets has been prohibited for the
12 harvest of federally managed reef fish and spiny lobster since
13 2005 due to the potential for guy bycatch. Surface gillnets and
14 trammel nets are allowed for the harvest of other species (for
15 example, baitfish, where baitfish refers to species other than
16 federally managed reef fish) in federal waters, but they must be
17 tended at all times. So, this is what we currently have in our
18 regulations.

19
20 Let's go to the next slide.

21
22 Now, these are bait net regulations in Puerto Rico state waters.
23 And this is just for reference. In Puerto Rico, this fishery uses
24 bottom and surface gillnet (trasmallo ó filete, en español) and
25 trammel nets (mallorquín) which consists of a trammel with three
26 net cloths tied to a line of buoys. Gillnets or trammel nets cannot
27 have mesh size greater than six inches as measured from knot to
28 knot of extension. For trammel nets, the outer cloths may not have
29 a mesh larger than six inches from knot to knot. Additionally,
30 trammel nets used for bait fishing may not be more than a quarter
31 of an inch.

32
33 The regulation from the DNER 7949 permits the use of gillnets and
34 trammel nets, except in inner waters and river mouths.
35 Additionally, it prohibits the use of gillnets and trammel nets in
36 conjunction with diving equipment, except by written authorization
37 from the Secretary for the capture of lionfish.

38
39 I'm just giving you this, so you have a reference of what the
40 regulations in Puerto Rico say regarding the use of nets or bait
41 nets. And just making the distinctions that because they allow for
42 the use of gillnets and trammel net, they have a difference between
43 what they consider bait net versus a trammel net.

44
45 So, in our case, in this case, the Council is not looking to
46 implement or allow the use of gillnets for other species. Just one
47 of the alternatives is allowing for the use of certain surface
48 gillnets for capturing baitfish so that the fishers that use this

1 surface gillnet for baitfish can continue to do so in federal
2 waters. But this is not something that is very common.

3
4 Go to the next slide, please.

5
6 And you have seen this before. This is just a commercial landing
7 with gillnets from federal waters. This may include barracuda,
8 cero and king mackerel, blackfin and litter tunny. What we have as
9 landing from federal waters is way less than in state waters.
10 However, we all know that this is not very accurate, right? Because
11 not necessarily all the time the fishers mark where they use the
12 gear. And this is just to give you an idea of the use of trammel
13 nets in federal waters. You can see that there's basically nothing.
14 Whenever it says confidential, it's because less than three fishers
15 were reporting using the gear. And then there the gear is used,
16 for example, for ballyhoo and some of other species that are used
17 for bait.

18
19 Next slide.

20
21 Okay. without getting to a lot of details, because this is a lot
22 of information, and this is the last slide regarding gillnets. So,
23 Alternative 1, no changes. As I said, it would allow fishers to
24 continue using gillnet for these species. So, you know, it will be
25 beneficial for them in the short term, but it has the potential
26 for long term adverse effects because of effects of gillnets that
27 we have been discussing to populations. Biologically, of course,
28 one of the reasons why the Council wanted to pursue this is because
29 they wanted to reduce or prevent the potential of adverse effects
30 to fish populations that come from the use of gillnets.

31
32 Sub-alternative 2(a), as we mentioned before, no use of gillnet
33 for any fishing. It will be more beneficial than all of the
34 alternatives for the biological and ecological environment because
35 you're banning the use of this. However, for the socioeconomic, of
36 course, if there are fishers that are using these gillnets in
37 federal waters to fish for anything other than what is already
38 prohibited, then they're not going to be able to use it, although,
39 testimony on the DAP and the Council meeting says that this is not
40 really the norm. This one will need a lot of education and outreach
41 for compliance, especially when you are banning something that has
42 been used by some in the past.

43
44 Sub-alternative 2(b), just ban it, not just allow for the use of
45 baitfish. This will be obviously more beneficial than what we
46 currently have because you are preventing the use of gillnet for
47 many of the species and just allow the use of the net with a
48 minimum size mesh and other specifications which are meant to

1 prevent bycatch of other species. And then it will allow fishers
2 to continue using gillnets for fishing for those species in the
3 EEZ. There's some difficulty enforcing because of difference in
4 the species allowing allowed versus in Puerto Rico waters but most
5 of the harvest of bait species are in state waters.

6
7 And then the last alternative we continue to allow for FMP species
8 other than pelagic species. Again, potential for adverse effects
9 because you're still allowing for the use of gillnets, and it will
10 be the most difficult to enforce because enforcement will have to
11 determine what are you using that gillnet for. It will be very
12 difficult to pinpoint that.

13
14 Okay. So that's what we have in gillnets. Marcos, I don't know if
15 you, because this one was a lot of information. I don't know if
16 you would like to make a decision at this point with the gillnets.
17 Okay, let's do that then.

18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** You were going to present for us to choose preferred
20 alternative of all of them, or you going to want to address the
21 gillnet.

22
23 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** I think we should just address Puerto Rico.
24 This one is one of the ones that needed a preferred alternative.
25 So, I would suggest a motion just regarding this particular gear
26 for Puerto Rico.

27
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** What is the suggested preferred motion? I mean
29 alternative.

30
31 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** For Action 1(b). Modify the use of gillnets
32 in federal waters around Puerto Rico. The Council selects and then
33 you can choose any of these sub-alternatives. Andy, go ahead.

34
35 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, so I noticed that Ricardo's not here and
36 you know, I don't know if Vanessa feels comfortable weighing in,
37 but it would be important to have Ricardo at the table for this
38 discussion.

39
40 I did have a question. So, sub-alternative 2(b) provides the
41 exception for certain baitfish. Those are not federally managed
42 baitfish. Correct? We don't have them in the FMP.

43
44 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Can you go one more please? I just need to
45 remember which ones are the--

46
47 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** You can go back to the-- Right there. So, none
48 of those are in our fishery management plan?

1
2 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** No, they are not. But one of the things that
3 we discussed last time is that the Magnuson-Stevens gives the
4 authority to the Council to manage a species based on if the
5 Council thinks that these are needed for the conservation and
6 management of our target species or for the benefit of those non-
7 target species.

8
9 So, it will fall-- I can look it up somewhere in my regulations to
10 see exactly what the exact citation would be. But yes, so that
11 will be why we're making that.

12
13 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** So then as a follow up, and Kate I think is
14 listening. She wasn't able to be at the meeting, but from a legal
15 standpoint, Kate, if we are going to regulate the use of a gear,
16 for example, if we were going to select this as preferred, I'm
17 pretty sure we would have to include these in the management plan
18 as species that we're then managing. But can you confirm or tell
19 me I'm wrong?

20
21 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Thanks Andy. This is Kate Zamboni for the
22 record. NOAA's office of General Counsel. I'd need to do a little
23 bit more research to confirm your belief, but I think that's
24 probably correct. As María noted, there is some language in the
25 Magnuson-Stevens Act that may provide some additional flexibility,
26 but I need to look at that a little further.

27
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Anybody else? As I recall and just seeing the slide
29 there, the sub-alternative 2(b) is the one that have the input
30 from the DAP and from the Council. That's why you have the species
31 that are listed there with the industry feedback and also the size
32 of the mesh that is already established. That was discussed also
33 on the DAP. That makes sense. I would like to hear, before I say
34 what I want to say, from Nelson because this is addressing Puerto
35 Rico. What he thinks about the alternatives? if the sub-alternative
36 2(b), is the one that should be the preferred one. Nelson.

37
38 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Marcos, you are correct.
39 We support the Alternative 2, 2(b)

40
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** I'd like to hear from people from-- because this is
42 for Puerto Rico --from Ricardo and Vanessa, if they have any
43 comments about it.

44
45 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Chair. As we have analyzed this, also
46 we support the same, as Nelson said that precedent, and it's going
47 to be-- if we can't present a motion now or just discussion?

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** No, we are just discussing the text and if you wish,
2 after I make a question to Ricardo, you can present a motion if
3 you want to gimme just one second.
4
5 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Okay.
6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Ricardo, do you have anything to say?
8
9 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** I don't have any comment.
10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Ricardo. Vanessa?
12
13 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** *I would like to present a motion for Action 1(b),*
14 *select Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2(b).*
15
16 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just to be clear is alternative-- you took the text
17 away from-- if I'm correct, please make sure that is correct. The
18 one that has the list of species in red was Alternative (1). Sub-
19 alternative 2(b). This is what you meant, Vanessa. Yes, for Puerto
20 Rico. Can you guide us?
21
22 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yeah. Okay. So, based on the comments that
23 Andy made we have noted the selection of the Council for the
24 preferred alternative. We'll go back and investigate if there has
25 to be some modification of the alternative or if there anything
26 else that needs to be done but we want to ensure that what the
27 Council wants to do, we can put it forward, right. So, we'll get
28 back-- because we still have to go back with this amendment for
29 the IPT to work on it to bring it final, we should be able to bring
30 more information. And if we can find that today, we'll bring it
31 tomorrow.
32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Just a point of order because there is a
34 motion suggested. Is there any second for the motion presented by
35 Vanessa?
36
37 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** I'll second the motion.
38
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay, then we are open for discussion and as part
40 of the discussion María is saying that there are some concerns
41 about the comments that Andy presented. Correct, Andy?
42
43 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. I just want to confirm that we can
44 implement a gear requirement for species that aren't managed in a
45 fishery management plan.
46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** I have a question. We can choose the-- we are
48 discussing the Alternative. We can choose the preferred

1 Alternative this will not preclude us from deciding in the future
2 if that is the right thing to do legally or not, right?

3
4 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, I mean, hopefully we can get an answer
5 between today and tomorrow then if not, we'll take it back to the
6 planning team. If we need to make some modifications before final
7 action, we'd bring that guidance and advice back to you in August.

8
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Is there any problem for us to choose the preferred
10 alternative today?

11
12 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** I don't think so. I think there's some
13 uncertainty in terms of maybe how it's worded and if we needed to
14 modify the wording, we could come back with recommendations to
15 you.

16
17 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Then are there any other comments? Carlos?

18
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I know that we kind of jumped here to action
20 1(b), but for Puerto Rico there's still the Action 1, Alternative
21 3 for trawl, isn't a motion required for that one also? Okay.

22
23 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** So, the question Carlos. Because you already
24 chose a preferred alternative during the last Council meeting,
25 unless you want to revisit it, you don't have to go back. Okay.

26
27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, I'd like to make another comment about
28 1(b) when it comes to ballyhoo and flyingfish and bigeye scad for
29 Puerto Rico. Bigeye scad is really, you know, I can't speak for
30 Puerto Rico, I'm not sure, but bigeye scad in the U.S.V.I. is not
31 found in the EEZ. It's a migratory species that's always found in
32 territorial water. So, I don't know about Puerto Rico though, but
33 I know the ballyhoo and flyingfish are. That's just a comment I
34 wanted to make.

35
36 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Yes, I think we are ready to vote with
37 the record that we have and with the flexibility requested by Andy.
38 Vanessa?

39
40 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes

41
42 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.

43
44 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Abstain.

45
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

47
48 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.

1
2 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.

3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** *There is one abstention and six yes. Motion carries.*

5
6 What is the next step, María?

7
8 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yes. I'm going to continue the presentation
9 because we have two more of the nets in Puerto Rico and then we'll
10 move to the U.S. Virgin Islands. So, Cristina, can you put the
11 presentation, please, again? We should be on slide number 12.

12
13 Okay. So, the next one is Action 1(c). Modify the use of trammel
14 nets in federal waters around Puerto Rico. And Action 1(d), modify
15 the use of purse seines in federal waters around Puerto Rico. You
16 have all seen this before. Alternative 1, is no action. That means
17 that right now trammel net is not an authorized gear type for any
18 fisheries in the EEZ. So, this is more of a precautionary approach
19 taken by the Council to prevent the use for-- through a petition
20 to the Council in the future. Alternative 2, will prohibit the use
21 of trammel nets for old fishing in the EEZ of Puerto Rico. And I
22 put these two together because they were simpler ones. None of
23 them are listed as authorized gear types for any of the fisheries
24 in the EEZ around Puerto Rico. So, alternative 1 what purse seines
25 are listed as, or not listed as, anything for any fisheries in the
26 EEZ of Puerto Rico an alternative prohibits the use of this.

27
28 So, let's go to the second, the next slide please.

29
30 Really quick. Some background. Purse seines are defined as a large
31 wall of netting deployed around an entire area or school of fish.
32 This is as defined by NOAA. Purse seines and trammel nets are not
33 authorized for any fishery in any of the three island management
34 areas, and for purse seines and trammel nets and any other non-
35 authorized gear, as I mentioned, a person could petition to the
36 Council to use these gear types. At that time, the Council and
37 NMFS could take action whether to allow or prohibit the use of the
38 gear. And this is the citation 50 CFR 600.725(v).

39
40 So, let's go to the next slide please.

41
42 Comparison of the alternatives because these gears are not listed
43 as an authorized under any fishery managed or unmanaged this could
44 be considered as an administrative action. There's very little
45 harvest with trammel nets in federal waters. As I show you earlier
46 there were three instances, and they were all confidential. Harvest
47 of any species with trammel nets is mostly a state. It happens in
48 state waters where it is allowed. Effects to the physical,

1 biological, ecological, and socioeconomic environments from
2 prohibiting the use of trammel nets and/or purse seines is not
3 going to be different than what is the status quo, which is
4 Alternative 1, because they're not currently authorized. However,
5 choosing Alternative 2, which is the prohibition, either of the
6 purse seines or the trammel nets or both, could be slightly more
7 beneficial to the biological, ecological environment of Puerto
8 Rico because they further restrict potential future use of these
9 gear types through a petition to the Council, thus eliminating any
10 potential effects from bycatch of undersized organisms or large
11 amount of fish, preventing overfishing and also preventing any
12 effects to Endangered Species Act listed species such as sea
13 turtles, which is one of the problems of the nets.

14
15 Socio-economically landings seems to be constrained to Puerto Rico
16 for trammel nets and there is no significant landings history in
17 federal waters, thus loss of fishing opportunities is really not
18 expected. There should be expected some long-term socio-economic
19 efforts from healthy fisheries.

20
21 Okay. So that's what I have for trammel nets and purse seines, so
22 if the Council is ready to make a decision for Puerto Rico for
23 each one of these action, Action 1(c) trammel nets and Action 1(d)
24 I would suggest the motion to be done separate because there are
25 two separate sub-actions.

26
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Would any Council member like to present the
28 motions? Vanessa, the request was to try to present the motion
29 separately for Action 1(c) and 1(d).

30
31 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** *For the first Action 1(c), Alternative 2.*

32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Action 1(c). "C" as in Carlos. Any second?

34
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Second.

36
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Further discussion? I think the record is--Andy?

38
39 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** so, this would be-- can you go back to the
40 alternative itself? So, this is prohibiting trammel nets, correct?

41
42 **MARCOS HANKE:** Mm-hmm.

43
44 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** So, this would be contrary to what Puerto Rico
45 allows?

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

1 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** So, I'd like to hear, at least on the record,
2 any concerns with enforcement, prohibition in federal waters
3 relative to obviously state waters and consistency in the
4 regulations.

5
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. I would like to provide and talk about the
7 rationale with the trammel nets on federal waters, which is
8 basically a deeper water habitat. It's a tool for people to impact
9 pelagics and the way the net is designed. There is entanglement of
10 turtles and entanglement of other things that have a very adverse
11 implication in terms of the environment, in terms of sustainability
12 of some of the fisheries that we manage as well with other gears
13 and is not used now nowadays. And we want to prevent problems in
14 the future. Miguel?

15
16 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** That's another question. The question is that
17 you are doing this for the EEZ and then you have a different set
18 of regulations in the local government. So, we wanted to hear from
19 Ricardo whether this is a possible action from Puerto Rico to make
20 the regulation compatible or do you think that in the near future
21 or far away future trammel net will not be touched by local
22 government.

23
24 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes. As, as far as I know, the trammel nets
25 are almost not used in the federal waters, so this doesn't change
26 much.

27
28 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** But, again, that's not the point.

29
30 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yeah, I'm getting to that point now.

31
32 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Because for enforcement purposes, if you catch
33 somebody with a trammel net on board, it will be difficult because
34 the person can say, "I was in the EEZ." We don't know what is
35 happening, you know, people come in and out and everything. Even
36 at the Junta de Pesca we discussed this, which by the way we have
37 not received an answer for a year or two about the same issue? So,
38 anyway, because this is for the federal government anyway, if the
39 enforcement is doable and we have the enforcement people here,
40 fine. But if not, it is another piece of paragraph that you have
41 on the document that doesn't go anywhere.

42
43 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes. To the question, if the question is, if
44 it is doable for the law enforcement office, my answer is, yes,
45 it's doable.

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** For the federal people, is there any comment in
48 terms of enforcement with this alternative, if we choose it as

1 preferred?

2
3 **MATTHEW WALIA:** Yeah. Sorry. What's that? Oh. Matt Walia OLE. Yeah,
4 it's doable, we can recommend. But anytime you can make regulations
5 compatible, there's been a lot of discussions on that. It's
6 simpler, it's easier when it's both in state and in federal waters.

7
8 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for your comment. Any further discussion?
9 Yes, I am just making the list. We have Nelson, Julian—no? Nelson
10 and Andy. No? Nelson and Vanessa.

11
12 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Andy, for your
13 suggestion to the local government. I think this is the right way
14 to go. You know, I appreciate all that the local government can do
15 to make a prohibition to this dangerous gear because a part of the
16 lobster it is a gear that has killed, how I said early this morning,
17 nurse sharks, turtles and many commercial species. And this is
18 going to help a lot, also, for the ACL of the lobster on the
19 lobster fishery. I'm support strongly this action.

20
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Nelson. I want to highlight the reason
22 I made my comments on the rationale earlier. Once we talk about
23 federal water, this gear interacting with species on federal water,
24 we are talking about a different species interaction versus on the
25 state water. The rationale behind those interactions is a little
26 different even though the gear, I totally agree with Nelson, it'll
27 be beneficial to coordinate between state and federal, if it's
28 possible. But that shouldn't prevent the federal to move along to
29 do the right thing. Vanessa?

30
31 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Chair. Just one comment for the issue
32 with the state waters. I just want to bring to the record that in
33 2019 already the state had a public hearings and commercial
34 fishermen were invited at that time, thanks to Ricardo Lugo, that
35 was with us via Zoom. He presented the position and at that time
36 we still had around 40 commercial fishermen that use this kind of
37 gears but were practically inside the four, three miles in state
38 waters. That's why we are moving on.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah. Which is consistent with the comments that
41 Nelson brought to the table with what really happened.

42
43 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.

44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Thank you, Vanessa. I think we have a motion
46 there that is second. We are ready for voting. Nicole.

47
48 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes

1
2 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.
3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.
5
6 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.
7
8 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.
9
10 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.
11
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** *Well, all in favor. The motion carries.* María.
13
14 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay. Ready to move on. So, the next Action
15 is Action 2. This is the, all the same actions, but as they applied
16 to Saint Croix. Can you go to the-- oh wait, I'm sorry. You have
17 to make a decision on purse seines.
18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** I'm sorry, I was talking to Carlos, and I didn't--
20
21 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** We have to make a decision on purse seines.
22 You have to make a motion on purse seines it's--
23
24 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** You have the language on the screen. Just say so
25 moved, and--
26
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Vanessa, if you feel like it, can you read or
28 present the motion for purse seines, which is basically the same
29 what we did for the other gear.
30
31 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** For *Action 1(d), Alternative 2*.
32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Action 1(d) as in-- Okay. Any second?
34
35 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Second.
36
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Further discussion? Carlos.
38
39 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, it says to modify the use-- is it modify or
40 prohibit the use?
41
42 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Prohibit. Carlos, this is María. The motion
43 should say "prohibit the use of purse seines." Mm-hmm. Oh, oops.
44 Okay. Yeah, I'll fix it.
45
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** No, no, it's okay. Vanessa, you presented the
47 motion. Do you accept the friendly amendment to the language?
48

1 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.
2
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nicole, do you agree? Perfect. We keep the
4 discussion. Thank you, it is clear on the record. Any further
5 comment or discussion? We're ready for vote. Vanessa.
6
7 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.
8
9 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.
10
11 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.
12
13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.
14
15 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.
16
17 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.
18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.
20
21 *All in favor. Motion carries.*
22
23 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay, Mr. Chair, I'm going to continue to our
24 Action 2. The first action is Action 2(a). Modify the use of trawl
25 gear on federal waters around Saint Croix. You already made a
26 decision as to prohibit the use of trawl gear for all fishing in
27 federal waters around Saint Croix. The rationale for that decision
28 was prevent potential impact to sensitive habitats in the U.S.
29 Caribbean. If you would like us to revisit this action, I will be
30 happy to. Otherwise, I can move to the next one.
31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just to be clear, you have a preferred already?
33
34 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yes. The Council already chose a preferred
35 for this one. If you move to the next slide, Liajay and Cristina.
36 Yep. So, this is the same text and the same thing that we discussed
37 for Puerto Rico. It is exactly the same thing, right? It's not
38 used in federal waters; hasn't been used. It's a precautionary
39 approach taken by the Council. This is exactly the same things
40 that you saw during the last Council meeting.
41
42 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos?
43
44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah. It's the same language change, for from
45 modified to prohibit. Up there it says modified.
46
47 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yeah. Well, the action name is "modify"
48 because when we name the action, we don't know what curse you guys

1 are going to take because Alternative 1 is no change, so we call
2 it "Modify". But the alternative itself should be "prohibit".

3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Any further discussion about changing the
5 preferred or do we stay with the same? If I don't hear anything in
6 1, 2, 3. No? Stay the same? Let's go. Next one.

7
8 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you. Okay, the next one. Next slide
9 please.

10
11 This is Action 2(b), and this is the gillnets. You already made a
12 preferred. However, in this one we're going to have the same issue
13 that Andy mentioned for Puerto Rico because of the species. But I
14 will repeat what you selected as the preferred. As a preferred you
15 chose for all fishing, except for the following fish-- prohibit
16 the use of gillnets in federal waters around Saint Croix for all
17 fishing, except for the following fish species belonging to the
18 halfbeaks, gar, and flyingfish. A surface gillnet used in the EEZ
19 around Saint Croix to fish for any baitfish must be tended at all
20 times. Mesh size may not be smaller than 0.75 inches square or
21 1.5-inch stretch. And this is one thing that was missing from that
22 alternative and it's new. It's also similar to the U.S. Virgin
23 Island Territorial regulations. So, it will make it mostly
24 compatible with what they have is, may not be used 20 feet from
25 the bottom. Because one of the things that you all mentioned that
26 it was important that the nets didn't, not only protect the
27 organisms in the water column, but also, we wanted to protect the
28 habitats as well.

29
30 So, I'm not sure if you have to revote on this one because there's
31 an addition to the text. Miguel, if you can please give us some
32 advice.

33
34 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, no. What I was going to ask you is, do we
35 have the same for Puerto Rico yet?

36
37 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** I'm sorry. I cannot hear you.

38
39 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** If I missed it. Did we adopt the same for Puerto
40 Rico.

41
42 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** No, for Puerto Rico is a little different
43 because Puerto Rico included the big scad, the big-- that one, the
44 goggle-eyed. I cannot pronounce that. But for the Virgin Islands,
45 this is what they have in the regulations, and this is what they
46 wanted to stay with, so there's a difference.

47
48 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Because when we discussed it with Carlos and the

1 others. Especially with the compatibility thing, is it's easier to
2 leave it as is if it's compatible with the local government
3 regulation as they are.

4
5 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** So, Miguel, you're saying that-- yes. So,
6 this one will be, I'm going to say, "partially compatible" because
7 there's a couple different other things that they have in the
8 regulations such as the length of the net and this is something
9 that this Council decided not to address at this time.

10
11 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Exactly.

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** The recommendation then is to choose a preferred to
14 keep the process going and discussion, or no?

15
16 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, what you can do is you follow what María is
17 saying. You can adopt this as preferred and keep it that way. You
18 don't have a limit as to the size of the gillnet. You do have a
19 limit around Saint Croix with the U.S. Virgin Island government.
20 And that's what she's saying. So, if you want, you can make a
21 decision here now or instruct the staff to add anything else that
22 you want. But if you feel that you're ready to have the motion or
23 just keep it as preferred, so be it.

24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian.

26
27 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I just want a little clarification. Maybe I could
28 be reading it wrong where it says, "may not be used 20 feet from
29 the bottom." Shouldn't it say, "may only be used 20 feet from the
30 bottom?" I'm just trying to understand, because it's 20 feet up,
31 so you can't go. I could be reading it around, but that's how I
32 read it.

33
34 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, but what it means is they wanted you to
35 fish in the water column. So, anything below 20 feet is going to
36 be prohibited. Yeah, yeah, I know, I have to read it twice. Yes.

37
38 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** This is María. We can correct the text of the
39 alternative to make sure that it's clear.

40
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Carlos, do you want to say something?
42 No, no. There is no motion on that, we keep going then?

43
44 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Honestly, I don't know if the procedure, if
45 you have to, I will ask our GC if you guys have to reelect again
46 because there's a change in the preferred. If you want to be just
47 clear, let's just vote on it again. Yes, Miguel.

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, it's better to have a motion with the language
2 there, so we'll make it idiot proof.
3
4 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay. So, Marcos what proceeds right now is
5 with action 2(b). I believe that you are going to reselect an
6 alternative.
7
8 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos.
9
10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** For a motion. Yeah, a motion, okay.
11
12 *Action 2(b), Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2(b). Prohibit fishing*
13 *for all fishing except for the following fish species belonging to*
14 *the ballyhoo--*
15
16 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go slow so that they--
17
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Oh yeah, yeah. Okay. Sorry about that. I always
19 forget about you.
20
21 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** If you want to make it easier it will be, a
22 motion to adopt under Action 2, sub-alternative 2(b), as written
23 on the screen.
24
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sub. Sub-alternative 2(b). right.
26
27 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** And then the Chair, once you have the motion,
28 the Chair would say, "well, this is why we do it." So, you don't
29 have to rewrite the whole thing again.
30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** That's your motion?
32
33 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Right. With the same with the same language.
34 Yeah. Right. Same language in 2(b).
35
36 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** You can say, "as presented in the document." And
37 then Marcos, once we have a second, you can say, "The motion will
38 be this, which will have the--" and then you read the whole
39 paragraph.
40
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah. Can we see the language apart just to--
42
43 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Ponlo como estaba, con la moción. Súbelo un
44 poquito para que ellos lo puedan ver.
45
46 Okay, so the Chair-- maybe I can't read it for the record.
47
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** I don't see-- Carlos, can you read your motion and

1 make sure it is stated correctly on the screen, please?

2
3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Well, it was there. Sure, go ahead.

4
5 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** If the Council would like to fix the
6 alternative for clarity for the record regarding what Julian said.
7 Andy has a suggestion.

8
9 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, if you could scroll down to the red text.
10 Keep going. So, it says, "May not be used 20 feet from the bottom,"
11 which to me is very exact, you know, and so I think what we want
12 to say is actually "Must be used 20 feet or more above the bottom,"
13 right? That's the intent really. It's a surface net, it may go
14 below the surface, but we want to keep it off the bottom. So, must
15 be used 20 feet or more above the bottom.

16
17 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Above the bottom. Ponle la palabra "above" antes
18 de "the bottom." Above the bottom.

19
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** That's the language?

21
22 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** And then I think your motion would be changed
23 rather than as presented in the document. As modified.

24
25 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** As modified, yeah.

26
27 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah.

28
29 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Espérate, espérate. Vete a donde dice "presented
30 in the document" "as modified for the document." Punto, punto
31 después de "modified."

32
33 Let me read it for the record as it's supposed to be. Okay. The
34 motion will be Action 2(b). *The Council adopts Action 2(b),*
35 *Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2(b)* as presented in the document—
36 quítale el segundo "as" je je con una "s" después de la 2(b). Antes
37 de "presented". *Presented in the document as modified.*

38
39 Vamos a donde está la coloradita. And for the record, *Sub-*
40 *alternative 2(b) is the preferred Alternative, which reads for all*
41 *fishing except for the following fish species belonging to the*
42 *halfbeaks (Family Hemiramphidae), gar (Family Belonidae), and*
43 *flyingfish (Family Exocoetidae). A surface gillnet used in the EEZ*
44 *around Saint Croix to fish for any baitfish must be tended at all*
45 *times. Mesh size may not be smaller than 0.75 inches square or*
46 *1.5-inch stretch. Must be used 20 feet or more above the bottom.*
47 So that, Mr. Chairman, for the record, is the valid motion.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. As the motion, as Miguel said, is it
2 accepted with the language by Carlos?
3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So moved.
5
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second?
7
8 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.
9
10 **MARCOS HANKE:** The language expressed by Miguel was accepted. Any
11 further discussion? Carlos?
12
13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. I know that there's some concerns with
14 the territorial regulation on the length of Baitfish, but now the
15 way that this is written for the EEZ, if we're not specific, that
16 means I can probably deploy a 4,000-foot net.
17
18 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, but similar to what you did before for
19 Puerto Rico, which personally I think that will never happen, you
20 are dealing only with the EEZ. So just keep it as is. Just vote
21 for the thing.
22
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** María.
24
25 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** So, we have briefly discussed this in the
26 past, if the Council desires to add a length to the bait net, they
27 certainly can do that. You know, this is something that we just
28 bring back to the IPT.
29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** And I think it makes sense to make the step in the
31 right direction. Like your motion is Carlos, and your concern is
32 on the record. And because that decision of the length has to do
33 with the size of the boat, the capability of deploying the gear
34 and other things that probably we don't have the expertise on the
35 table right now to make the decision, but the record is straight
36 that we might need to revisit to add something in terms of how
37 long the net is.
38
39 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos.
40
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Is that fair enough?
42
43 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah.
44
45 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos, may I say something? When we discussed
46 this at the DAPs, the idea was to leave this open as an alternative
47 for the fishers. If you start closing the door to fishers, just
48 because you think about it, it won't work. If you approach this

1 here, with a length, and Virgin Island changes the length, you
2 have to come back again and change it. The way it is now, you have
3 it open. But anyway, it's up to you, whatever you want to do.

4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos.

6
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I agree with what María said and I would urge
8 to the experts in the IPT if it's a concern to them, they'll come
9 up with something.

10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay, we are ready. I think we have a rationale.
12 Everybody accepts the language. I think we are ready to vote.
13 María.

14
15 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Just for clarification then. That means that
16 we have to bring back this whole action again to the IPT and add
17 something for the length of the-- is that what you want? I couldn't
18 understand very well what you were-- Carlos, are you wanting us to
19 revisit this action with the gillnets and add an adequate or
20 alternatives for a length?

21
22 Because if that's the case, I don't think this is what we are-- I
23 mean, what is presented here will not cover your concerns. So, it
24 will have to be revisited.

25
26 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. let me let it go for now. If something
27 happens, then we can always--

28
29 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. And to that point, Mr. Chairman, just go
30 ahead and do this because this is not in concrete and later you
31 may be able to change it. You have time to change it. Remember,
32 what you're doing is preparing a document for the Council to take
33 the public hearings. So, we are first, yes. So probably by the
34 time that we finish this process, we'll have better information.
35 We'll have public input as to the best way to proceed as a Council.
36 I remind you that the agenda is way behind.

37
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. And I think we are dragging our feet here and
39 I think we are ready for to vote.

40
41 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.

42
43 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.

44
45 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

1 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.

3 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.

5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

7 *All in favor, motion carries.* Next item on the agenda.

9 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** No, no, I'm not done. You mean next action.

11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Next participation of María.

13 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Okay. I need to know who second for the
14 record. Who seconded the motion? The recent motion, who second?
15 Thank you.

17 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay. For the essence of time, I would like
18 to request the Council, because we did divide the presentation and
19 the actions are divided in the document by island, right. Saint
20 Croix and Saint Thomas. It's exactly the same actions for Saint
21 Croix and Saint Thomas. For Saint Thomas we will have to choose an
22 alternative for gillnets as well, and trammel nets and purse
23 seines. My recommendation will be to, if you want to go ahead and
24 choose for Saint Thomas for the gillnets, and then choose for Saint
25 Croix and Saint Thomas for trammel nets and purse seines.
26 Otherwise, this is going to take a little bit longer because this
27 is how it is set up in the document.

29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Can you explain because Carlos stepped away.

31 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yes. So, what we have next is Action 2(c) and
32 Action 2(d), which is trammel nets and purse seines. Right. Which
33 is a provision similar as Puerto Rico. There's an Action 3(c) and
34 Action 3(d) for Saint Thomas and Saint John, which is exactly the
35 same. I was going to suggest that if those motions could be done
36 at the same time, however, by island, without having to go through
37 the whole slides for Saint Thomas if they're okay, because it's
38 exactly the same information that was provided for Saint Croix.
39 And then we will have to make a decision for gillnets for Saint
40 Thomas, which can be done now if you want as well. Miguel.

42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** María, can you help with the language? What will
43 be the motion that will combine both so we can put it on the
44 screen. I'm asking you to [crosstalk]

46 **MARCOS HANKE:** We're requesting for suggested language for what
47 you say.

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Combinando las dos cosas que tú dices.
2
3 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yeah. You can have the same language that was
4 used for Puerto Rico for trammel nets and purse seines. I think
5 Cristina and Liajay can just copy that. And then for gillnets, the
6 same language that was just used for Saint Croix and then make a
7 decision on those three.
8
9 And then in the meantime, before that is done, I just want to
10 remind you that on Action 4 you already made a decision, and this
11 is descending devices. So, in descending devices I can go in really
12 quick after we make these motions and then that should be done. So
13 probably within the next eight minutes, this should be done.
14
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** María, please help Liajay with the suggested
16 language for the motion.
17
18 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay, I think we are ready. So just to clarify
19 here, right, in the essence of time, so the Council needs to make
20 a decision for gillnets for Saint Thomas and Saint John. You could,
21 if the Council is interested, can choose the same alternative that
22 was chosen for Saint Croix, which will be what's Liajay has in
23 there. So, you guys take it from here.
24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos, the suggested language. Are you in
26 agreement?
27
28 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes, I am. So, moved.
29
30 Okay. *The Council adopts Action 2(b), Alternative 2. Sub-*
31 *alternative 2(b) presented in the document as modified.*
32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second?
34
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** *For Saint Thomas and Saint John.*
36
37 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** I'll second that.
38
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** And it was second by Kreglo. Further discussion?
40 Hearing none, let's vote.
41
42 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.
43
44 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.
45
46 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.
47
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

1
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

3
4 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Abstain.

5
6 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.

7
8 **MARCOS HANKE:** *One abstention and six 'yes'. Motion carries.* Next,
9 María.

10
11 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay. The next one is trammel nets for Saint
12 Croix. Remember, Alternative 1 is to not make any changes.
13 Alternative 2 is to prohibit the use of all trammel nets in the
14 Saint Croix EEZ.

15
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** *The Council moves to select Action 2(c),*
17 *Alternative 2, as preferred for the Saint Croix District.*

18
19 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** You need to vote.

20
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Did you present the motion? Any second?

22
23 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Second.

24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Further discussion? Hearing none, let's vote.

26
27 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.

28
29 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.

30
31 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Do we not already have this as a preferred?
32 Isn't this already a preferred in the amendment? It says it's
33 preferred in the amendment I'm looking at. Okay. Yes.

34
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

36
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

38
39 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.

40
41 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.

42
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** *All in favor. Motion carries.*

44
45 What else, María?

46
47 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** The same thing for-- that's purse seines. No.
48 The decision has to be made for Saint John for trammel nets.

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos.

3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, for trammel nets, for Saint Croix? Oh, Saint
5 Thomas/Saint John, yeah.

6
7 Trammel nets Saint Thomas/Saint John. *The Council moves to select*
8 *Action 2(c), Alternative 2 as preferred for the Saint Thomas*
9 *Saint/John District.*

10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Second?

12
13 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.

14
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Further discussion? Hearing none, let's vote.

16
17 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.

18
19 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.

20
21 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.

22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

24
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

26
27 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.

28
29 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.

30
31 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay. And the last one purse seines will be
32 Action 2(d) for Saint Croix and Action 3(d) for Saint Thomas and
33 Saint John. And the same thing, purse seines Alternative 2 will
34 prohibit the use of purse seines in the Caribbean EEZ and
35 Alternative 1 is not do anything.

36
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** For purse seines, the Council moves to select
38 Action 2(d) Alternative three as preferred for Saint Croix.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second?

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Wait, wait. You can have both of them.

43
44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** And also, for purse seines for the Saint
45 Thomas/Saint John will be I think that's 3. Okay. Select Action
46 3(d), Alternative 3 as preferred for the Saint Thomas/Saint John
47 District.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just for the clarity on the record, can you read
2 what the motion will say.
3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Just repeat it over.
5
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.
7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. *So, for purse seines, for the Island of*
9 *Saint Croix, the Council moves to select Action 2(d), Alternative*
10 *3 as preferred. And for the Saint Thomas/Saint John District on*
11 *purse seines, the Council moves to select Action 3(d), Alternative*
12 *3 as preferred.*
13
14 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. María, correct me if I'm wrong, we've
15 already selected or preferred for Saint Croix. At least it's listed
16 that way in the document. Unless that's a cut and paste there.
17
18 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Um, it could have been that.
19
20 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Okay. All right.
21
22 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** In the presentation, we can follow the
23 presentation. In the presentation in the table that I showed
24 earlier it says that the trammel nets and the purse seines were
25 not selected because this is when the Council was-- but we will
26 make that correction in the document. Thank you.
27
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second for the motion presented by Carlos?
29
30 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Second.
31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any further discussion? Hearing none, let's vote.
33
34 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.
35
36 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.
37
38 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.
39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.
41
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.
43
44 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.
45
46 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.
47
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** *All in favor. Motion carries.*

1
2 One more and we need a break because people are requesting it.
3

4 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** All right. And then the last thing that we're
5 going to talk about, and I apologize, but you know, we wanted to
6 separate this by island. It's better to have some clarity, even if
7 it's repetitive. Okay?
8

9 We'll tighten it up a little bit more for the next one. Action 4.
10 Requirements for the use of descending devices in the reef fish
11 component of the Puerto Rico, Saint Croix and Saint Thomas and
12 Saint John. You already chose a preferred alternative, which is
13 "require descending device on board a commercial or recreational
14 vessel and readily available for use while fishing for or
15 possessing species in the reef fish component of the Puerto Rico,
16 Saint Croix and Saint Thomas and Saint John Fishery Management
17 Plans. And this is all included in the amendment. I'm going to
18 read it for the record.
19

20 For the purpose of this requirement, a "descending device" means
21 an instrument to which is attached a minimum of a 16-ounce weight
22 and a length of line that will release the fish at the depth from
23 which the fish was caught or a minimum of 60-ft. The descending
24 device attaches to the fish's mouth or is a container that will
25 hold the fish. The device must be capable of releasing the fish
26 automatically, by the actions of the operator of the device, or by
27 allowing the fish to escape on its own. Since minimizing surface
28 time is critical to increasing survival, descending devices shall
29 be readily available for use while engaged in fishing.
30

31 This is the information that you received last time. If the Council
32 agrees and doesn't want to make any more changes, then this is the
33 last action.
34

35 **MARCOS HANKE:** I think we are very clear that this is the intent
36 of the Council. Thank you.
37

38 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Mm-hmm.
39

40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Anything else?
41

42 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Nope. Just we will bring this document, we
43 will make the clarifications regarding the gillnets and the species
44 of baitfish, listing the species of baitfish on the alternative,
45 as part of the management. We'll have to look into that. And then
46 once we have that said, we will bring it back to the Council for
47 further review. Okay. And we will be bringing the document back in
48 August for your consideration. Thank you.

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** We're going to go for a break, but just before very
3 quick, Julian.
4

5 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Just a quick question for María. Is this voluntary
6 or is this mandatory?
7

8 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** So, the Council it's basically requiring that
9 old fishers have that descending device on board in their vessels
10 when they're fishing for reef fish only. So, Marcos, I think you
11 want to probably talk a little bit more about how the Council is
12 envisioning pursuing this? This is something that is also a
13 requirement in the South Atlantic and in the Gulf.
14

15 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.
16

17 **MARCOS HANKE:** The requirement is to have on board, but readily
18 available. At this point, the way that it is written it relies on
19 the expertise if the fish have barotrauma, which species it is, or
20 whatever, the way you're going to use it, if you need to use,
21 because not all the fish require the use of descending device.
22 Right? There is some flexibility in there. If that's your concern,
23 I want to hear what you have to say.
24

25 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** But Marcos, if I may, what Julian is thinking
26 is, you know, if you read the paragraph, it's voluntary to use it,
27 but it's mandatory to have it on board so that's what he's asking.
28 It's kind of if I want to be a fisherman, I will have to have all
29 my regulations this way, I have everything on board, but I never
30 use it.
31

32 So, at this time, probably when you will come back from public
33 hearings and we survive the public hearings, we can inform the
34 Council of what happened with this. But I think that Julian's
35 question is your main to the issue here is whether this language
36 make it, when you translate this into a regulation, whether it
37 will be mandatory or voluntary to use the device.
38

39 I mean, the language is okay as the intent of the Council. You
40 don't have to change it. It's just that the question is to clarify.
41

42 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian.
43

44 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** So, from what I'm gathering from my peers here in
45 the audience they're saying it's too generic. It needs to be a
46 little bit more clarified to make sense.
47

48 And is this going to be for commercial and recreational or just

1 commercial? So, we need to ensure-- we don't have a problem with
2 doing it. We were in favor of the descending devices to be on
3 board. I agree it's not everyone that's going to be using them,
4 but you never know, depending on what type of fishing you're doing,
5 that you're going to catch one of these species that needs to be
6 descended.

7
8 So, I agree with it being but I, just-- the language there, from
9 what I'm gathering, is not clarified enough. Thank you.

10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** María.

12
13 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yes. So, Alternative 2 says, "Require the
14 sending device be on board a commercial or recreational vessel and
15 readily available for use while fishing or possessing species in
16 the reef fish component."

17
18 One of the things that the Council mentioned is that this needs to
19 be together with a very, very intense education and outreach
20 campaign. Because there's many questions that fishers have. They
21 want to know if this is something that applies to them or not. So
22 that's something that the Council will work on and it's already
23 working on to bring this out.

24
25 And of course, this still has to go for different periods of
26 comments, of public comments. And there's plenty of time for all
27 of us to prepare educational materials, which are a lot of
28 materials out there that are available that the Council can also
29 use to ensure that there is compliance with this.

30
31 I hope that answers your concern, Julian.

32
33 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mr. Chairman, can we vote? Can we move to another
34 screen? Did you finish?

35
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Chat. Oh, Sarah.

37
38 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Hi, this is Sarah Stephenson. I don't want to
39 go back, but I just wanted to point out for the purse seines, the
40 alternative that should be in the motion should be Alternative 2.
41 There is no Alternative 3.

42
43 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, we made the correction accordingly for the
44 record.

45
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Sarah. We all need a break very soon.
47 I already clarified with Ruth. I was explaining to her that this
48 language comes from the South Atlantic and the intention of the

1 language and this go to public hearing and so on, whatever, we
2 still have opportunity to modify if it's needed, I think it is a
3 great language and we are on the right path.

4
5 You have everything you need from us, María? Yes. Let's go for a
6 break. We'll be back. We'll be back in five minutes. Seven and a
7 half minutes.

8
9 (Whereupon a brief recess was taken.)

10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Please take your seats. Let's start the next
12 presentation, we just finished with María. On this part, which is
13 the next presentation, the report from the SSC, I just want to
14 take the opportunity to welcome Vance Vicente as Chairman of SSC.
15 Thank you for stepping up to the plate and being there for science
16 and for the fishery of Puerto Rico and the U.S.V.I. Thank you so
17 much.

18
19 I understand that there is no presentation at this time, which is
20 totally understandable because you just were assigned to this
21 position.

22
23 **VANCE VICENTE:** Okay, thank you very much.

24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** And the next presentation is Ecosystem. Sennai? I'm
26 not seeing-- is he around?

27
28 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, he went to the bathroom. He went to the
29 restroom because I kept him on the break talking.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Let's do the DAP reports to advance and come
32 back to Sennai in a moment for sake of time. Julian.

33
34 Are any of the DAP members ready? Go Nicky. Go first.

35
36 **District Advisory Panel Reports**
37 **St. Croix, USVI—Gerson Martínez, Chair**

38
39 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair. My name is
40 Gerson Martínez, and here's my report for the District Advisory
41 meeting. Seven members attended. One abstained. The Saint Croix
42 District Advisory Panel was presented with the geographic area and
43 responsibility for Saint Croix Island-Based Fishery Management
44 Plan. Included in the discussion were the changes from the U.S.
45 Caribbean wide plans to the importance of managing species that
46 are directly targeted by each island district.

47
48 Also included in the discussion were all regulations that were

1 included in the island-based plan, such as queen conch, spiny
2 lobster, snapper, grouper complex and aggregate bag limits for
3 recreational fishers. Included from the old plan was the closed
4 season prohibition, take species and annual catch limits.

5
6 We also discussed the status and current actions of the Council,
7 such as Framework Amendment for spiny lobster, Framework Amendment
8 for buoy gear, and Amendment for trawl and net gear and descending
9 devices. We also discussed pelagic management measures for the
10 dolphin and wahoo, possible modification of red hind seasonal
11 closure area and for the Saint Croix EEZ and the possible
12 development of a federal permit system.

13
14 A few members mentioned the need for compatible regulations and
15 members discussed having separate annual catch limits for
16 commercial and recreational whenever the recreational data became
17 available. The District Advisory Panel members had a healthy
18 discussion on a new species included for management, including
19 discussing trip limits, size limits, bag limits, and the
20 recreational and commercial sector. In the end, the DAP voted in
21 favor, with one 'no.' They voted to include the size and bag limits
22 for the recreational sector, but not for commercial sector.

23
24 The members also recommended the use of circle hooks instead of j-
25 hooks for the pelagic fishery. For outreach and educational the
26 DAP recommended introduction to commercial fishing to the junior
27 high school level and the distribution of posters and materials to
28 promote fishing at tackle shops and marinas.

29
30 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Nicki. Julian.

33
34 **St. Thomas, USVI—Julian Magras, Chair**
35

36 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras, for the record. Okay. We had a
37 meeting on March 8th, 2023. We did have a quorum. We did have the
38 presence of Federal Enforcement, Alex Terrero, which was very
39 positive. We haven't had any enforcement present at our DAP
40 meetings in a very long time. We look forward to hopefully having
41 both federal and local at our next meeting.

42
43 One of the outcomes on recommendations was that we needed more
44 presence from the Division and Fish and Wildlife staff. Later in
45 the day, we had the presence of Chief of Fisheries, Sennai Habtes
46 that came in to clear up some of the questions that we had earlier
47 in the day. So, with that said, we had presentations that was done
48 on the Island-Based Fishery Management Plans for Saint

1 Thomas/Saint John by Dr. Graciela Moliner. And we had a
2 presentation of the Outreach and Education Committee by Dr. Alida
3 Ortiz.

4
5 It was a very good meeting. There was a lot of discussions and one
6 of the recommendations that came out for the outreach and education
7 was it was put forward by a couple of our members that we need to
8 create a book on species identification, biology, regulations,
9 etcetera, for all areas, commercial and recreational for resource
10 users. So, this book would be able to be put on like the day
11 charter yachts that are going out, or weekly charter boats that
12 are going out so they can understand the species and regulations
13 that are in place. We have done a lot of work with placemats for
14 the restaurants and education for some of the restaurants. What
15 we've seen is that has been positive, and we need more of that to
16 happen. I think this book would be a very positive because it can
17 be placed in different areas and all of these charter vessels,
18 which they could understand what we do and what we protect. So,
19 they could also help us in protecting the resources.

20
21 We had some heavy, heavy discussion about the dolphin and the wahoo
22 for Saint Thomas/Saint John. We had a motion that was placed
23 forward by the committee where we would like to see the dolphin
24 and the wahoo be removed from being managed by an annual catch
25 limit and be managed in the recreational by a size and bag limit
26 and in the commercial by a size limit. There's a lot of different
27 rationale for this, but this is a species that is passing through.
28 They are only passing through our waters for very, very limited
29 amount of time. In the Saint Thomas/Saint John District, for the
30 information that we have in the books, our ACL numbers are very
31 low, and we see a problem where those numbers can be exceeded,
32 especially with the new licenses that were given out this past
33 registration for new commercial guys coming into the industry on
34 the hook and line sector. So, it's a concern and if it is not
35 possible for the dolphin and the wahoo to be removed from being
36 managed by an annual catch limit, we are recommending that the
37 Council put any accountability measures aside until we can collect
38 enough data to set an annual catch limit that can really represent
39 the commercial sector and the recreational sector.

40
41 The problem with the recreational sector is we do not have a
42 recreational fishing license in place at this present time. And
43 from what was said at that meeting, that license will not be in
44 place until, hopefully, the middle of 2024. So therefore, we're
45 looking at requesting a four-to-five-year leniency on the closure
46 of this species or any accountability measures until such time
47 that we can collect enough data if, once again, it cannot be
48 removed from being managed by an annual catch limit.

1
2 So that was the main, main discussion at the meeting. We did have
3 discussions about the lobster and Island-Based Fishery Management
4 Plan, but all what we did earlier today, that covered all of that.
5 So, I wouldn't waste time and present that back on my report. So,
6 I'm open up for questions and discussion, especially on the dolphin
7 and wahoo aspect. Thank you.

8
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Julian. We are going to finish with
10 Nelson, and we go back to the discussions and questions. Nelson.

11
12 **Puerto Rico—Nelson Crespo, Chair**
13

14 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the past meeting of the
15 Puerto Rico DAP, which I consider was one of the best in a long
16 time, several recommendations were made to this Council.

17
18 It's came to the light that in the past spiny lobster closure, a
19 new site from Puerto Rico, NotiCel, published in its headlines
20 that Puerto Rico would not have lobster until October, that they
21 could not be fished, bought, or sold. This caused a great confusion
22 in restaurant and refused to buy it as they thought it was an
23 illegal act. The market of lobster was affected until the situation
24 was clarified.

25
26 We suggest that when it's time to apply accountability measures,
27 to use a simple and clear language to prevent it from happening
28 again. We also recommend to the Outreach and Education Advisory
29 Panel to issue a press release when these closures arise.

30
31 Another issue related to lobster was the ACLs table where it shows
32 a reduction on the ACL for the next few years. The DAP wondered
33 why this happened if during the past seven years, catches have
34 been abundant, with a considerable mix of juveniles and adults.
35 They also questioned if most of the catches take place in local
36 waters, why closures are applied in federal waters. Regarding this
37 matter, we recommend the following. A revision of spiny lobster
38 ACL is necessary considering the biological size data. We recommend
39 evaluating the possibility of obtaining statistics with an
40 independent landing program.

41
42 We request to the SSC and the Science Center to hold a workshop
43 with the existing projects using lobster as a model. We want to
44 know which projects are running the data you need and how fishermen
45 can collaborate. Maybe creating a committee that includes all
46 sectors related to lobster fishing, like divers, pots and trammel
47 netters, with scientific participation and direct guidance to
48 contribute to the data of the lobster ACLs. We understand that the

1 participation of Kevin and other staff from the Science Center is
2 necessary to do the things right and not waste more time.

3
4 In another matter, we recommend reviewing again the common names
5 of the species and how they are named by region. An example of
6 this is the Skipjack, this species is not the same as the albacore.
7 In Puerto Rico, we call the skipjack 'vacora' and it's very
8 important to clarify it since, in the past, Puerto Rico was awarded
9 that it had fished a large part of the albacore's ACLs of the U.S.
10 when this species is not found in our waters.

11
12 Another recommendation to the Outreach and Educational Advisory
13 Panel is to study the possibility of making a catalog or an
14 identification book of species in the Caribbean, and once it has
15 been drafted, consult with all the DAPs so they can make their
16 comments and recommendation. It was also recommended to create a
17 fact sheet of what the Bajo de Sico area is in term of regulations,
18 and once that is done, send it to the DAPs for review and
19 suggestions.

20
21 We recommend creating a workshop for DAP members, especially for
22 the new ones, on management regulations, this way, it will be
23 easier for them to participate and give recommendations. This could
24 also serve of future benefit as they can guide the fishing
25 community for the areas correctly. It could be a workshop like
26 PEPCO or something similar.

27
28 Following the same line, we recommend to this Council to write a
29 letter to the DNER recommending that all fishermen with a beginner
30 license, before aspiring to obtain a full-time commercial
31 fisherman's license, must take the PEPCO workshop as a requirement.
32 Also, we recommend the same for the recreational fishers with the
33 new workshop that Helena Antoun is offering--I think it's the
34 PEPPER -- for them when they are coming to take the navigation
35 certificate.

36
37 It's hard and frustrating to see the disaster that occur this past
38 Easter week in La Parguera where hundreds of boats were anchored
39 damaging the ecosystem that is supposed to be protected by NOAA
40 and the local government. That did not end there. Two manatees
41 that are protected by the federal government were killed. One
42 recreational vessel ran over two commercial fishermen who were
43 returning to port and had to be taken to the hospital with serious
44 injuries, and damage caused to their working vessels, with the
45 luck that another boat was nearby and able to take the registration
46 number because they did not stop and ran away. It's time to address
47 these issues seriously and at least with the limited resources
48 available, try to put some order to this situation that day by day

1 is growing like a snowball.

2
3 Regarding the issue of fishing nets, we recommend that the use of
4 trawlers be prohibited in federal waters. It is recommended to
5 leave open fishing for ballyhoo, goggle eye fish, flyingfish and
6 species used as bait in federal waters with the gillnet. We believe
7 that this is necessary to create a support group when describing
8 the fishing nets, so they are more in tune with the reality to
9 avoid possible confusion in the future.

10
11 In other business, we discussed a concern of the fishing community
12 from the West side of the Island. It turns out that in an
13 intervention by the federal authorities with a charter boat in
14 Bajo de Sico, they advised the captain that it is prohibited to
15 catch rainbow runner during the six-month closure period of the
16 area because this species is classified as a reef fish. We all
17 thought that this species was classified as a pelagic and when
18 talking to divers, they told us that they have never seen rainbow
19 runners at the bottom, but they have seen them in the water
20 columns. This species was captured mostly in Bajo de Sico and
21 around the water of Desecheo Island in the water column, either by
22 trolling or with life bait. This is a great important species for
23 commercial fishing. Keeping the rainbow runner as a reef fish could
24 cause the pressure fishing increase around the waters of Desecheo
25 Island, which could consequently cause the possibility that in the
26 future this species could be in danger. For this reason, we
27 recommend moving the rainbow runner from a reef fish to a pelagic
28 fish. Thank you.

29 30 **Questions/Comments**

31
32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** John.

33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you.

35
36 **JOHN WALTER, III:** Thank you, Nelson. There was a lot in there.
37 Actually, all of the reports from the DAPs are very valuable and
38 I'm wondering if there's a written version of it because I didn't
39 catch all of it and so much of it went by fast, but there's a lot
40 of details that I think are important. Could you submit the written
41 version to the briefing book for all of the DAP reports, because
42 I, maybe I missed them because I think it helps us to then follow
43 up with one of the topics and see what we could do about that.
44 Because I think it touches on science topics, it touches on
45 management and then it touches, it looks like on some other issues
46 as well. And I thank you for that very comprehensive readout.

47
48 **NELSON CRESPO:** Yes, sure. Liajay has the paper already.

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. I think the request is super pertinent because
3 the DAP, what they can support the work of the Council is
4 tremendously important. We need to register and to have those
5 written on record and available for everybody to see it and to
6 benefit from it. I think that's a good point that you guys should
7 be ready for it. Miguel?

8
9 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yes. Just send it to Cristina and it will be
10 part of the record.

11
12 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** I've already received the document from
13 Liajay, and I will include in the briefing book.

14
15 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. Well wait until they send each one of the
16 emails because they add a little bit more information.

17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Alida.

19
20 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Yes. I did participate in the meetings
21 with all the DAPs, each one of the Islands and what Nelson said,
22 we have already included it in the report that I'm going to make
23 tomorrow. I will request the Council to approve what they want.

24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Because of time and this your opportunity, I want,
26 because there is a lot of things brought to the table, I don't
27 want to miss anything. I'm going to go one by one.

28
29 Julian, which issue you want the Council to address or to move
30 forward or to analyze. A specific one.

31
32 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras for the record. Well, I think right
33 now the most important issue that we have standing is the issue
34 with the mahi and the wahoo. We would like to know, if at all
35 possible, that we can remove these two species from being managed
36 by an ACL and to be managed recreationally by a bag and size limit
37 and commercially by a size limit with mandatory reporting for both
38 sectors. So, the powers that be, if you can let us know if that is
39 possible and then from there, I will give my next statement.

40
41 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos.

42
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

44
45 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. You and I talked a little bit about it
46 before. So, we are going to send a communication to Kate on those
47 two questions, our legal counsel, and then probably at the August
48 meeting, we will be able to provide you with the information that

1 we need to move forward. We are going to also discuss the dolphin
2 and the wahoo here, so probably we'll knock on your door for
3 comments when we get to that in the agenda.

4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** And, Julian, just because we are going to consult
6 with Kate, is there anything else to be consulted?

7
8 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Well, the second part of it, if those two species
9 cannot be removed from being managed by annual catch limit, it's
10 the accountability measures issue that we would like to be
11 addressed, if can be. So, you know, it's on the record what we
12 want. Thank you.

13
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Andy.

15
16 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, and certainly Kate can weigh in as well.
17 So, I guess a couple things. One is we just added this right to
18 the management plan through the Island-Based FMP. So, there was a
19 rationale record as to why they're in need of federal management
20 and that happened seven months ago, right? In terms of official
21 rule making.

22
23 So, the Council, if they wanted to remove it, would have to come
24 up with a justification of why it's no longer needed of federal
25 management, right? And I think it's probably premature to decide
26 that even if you didn't remove it the Magnuson Act requires federal
27 fisheries to have an annual catch limit and accountability measures
28 with limited exceptions and there's very limited exceptions with
29 regard to what could be excluded from annual catch limits. So,
30 under federal fisheries law, you would have to have the annual
31 catch limits and accountability measures and could also impose
32 other management measures at that time.

33
34 In terms of the accountability measures, I mean, certainly would
35 look to Maria or Sarah, but right now they're fairly generic with
36 regard to setting the catch target and not really triggering
37 specific accountability measures. So, I think those are up for
38 discussion revision based on what we continue to learn about these
39 pelagic species going forward.

40
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Nelson.

42
43 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think in our case, I
44 support Julian's statement regarding the mahi, and I think it's
45 better to consider a size limit between 20 and 24 inches for the
46 Dorado. I think it's very important Marcos to attend the issue of
47 the rainbow runners. This fishery is really important in the West
48 coast of Puerto Rico. It's a big market right now, and we are

1 really concerned about this issue. For me, that's the most
2 important topic because regarding the lobster is attended already,
3 and I think we are good with that.

4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. I'll go back to the Rainbow Runner.
6 Katherine Zamboni.

7
8 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the record, Kate
9 Zamboni, NOAA's office of General Counsel. Just wanted to address
10 the question about removing dolphin and wahoo from federal
11 management. Andy summarized it perfectly there. It's basically the
12 same process that the Council would undertake for determining
13 whether to add a new species for management. So, there would have
14 to be findings made and a record to support that these species are
15 no longer in need of federal management. Again, as Andy said, as
16 long as they are part of the FMP and federally managed there really
17 does need to be an ACL. There isn't really a process by which you
18 can just set one aside, but it sounds like the ACL is not currently
19 constraining the catch. So, I don't know that that's, that's
20 necessary to pursue further. You can let me know if you have any
21 other questions.

22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Eddie. [Laughter]

24
25 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Gerson Martínez, for the
26 record. I think it's very important that I bring across this
27 thought. We have been trying to take off the effort from the reef
28 by protecting the reef resource and if we take away the ability to
29 catch pelagic in a dangerous or un-- I don't know if I-- I don't
30 want to say the wrong words --in a way that brings back that
31 pressure on the reef, then we are going to be defying the purpose
32 of protecting the reef and the species that are more important
33 than fishes that are passing through. Because pelagics just passed
34 through our waters, but the reefs are here, the reef fish and the
35 reef structures are here to stay.

36
37 So, in my years of fishing since 1993, I've noticed, I was one of
38 the fishermen that normally when the polices were running, I
39 stopped targeting reef fish and I move into pelagics and if we do
40 that, if we move back to put in that effort back to the reef, then
41 we are not going to be doing our homework and protecting our reefs
42 and the reef fish that are more important than those pelagics.

43
44 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah. Thank you. I think we will be addressing the
45 dolphin and this issue, and there is a path already stated by
46 Miguel to address your request and the concerns into the future.
47 But at this meeting later with the presentation of Wess, we're
48 going to discuss this a little more. María, about the rainbow

runner was very loud and clear and I identified something that we can be proactive with the rainbow runner issue. Can you say something about it?

MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER: Yeah. So, in terms of the species the Council can always recommend, perhaps, task the SSC, for looking into the species and see if it merits a reclassification from the reef fish to the pelagic group based on the information that they are able to gather and then report back to the Council.

And then after that report back, then the Council can decide if they want to add it into one of the actions as a, if it's merited, to reclassify it as a pelagic species. Based on all the testimony that we have heard today, some information that is included in the Fishery Management Plan and the information that the SSC may be able to gather, then you guys can recommend it be included as a measure in a future amendment, but one amendment that is already on the works, for example.

MARCOS HANKE: I did my assignment. I consulted with Council members of Puerto Rico and the DAP, and I was on the DAP meeting, and I would for them to hear what just you say, to include on the agenda of the SSC, the discussion of the rainbow runner, to move them from reef fish to pelagic. Nobody in opposition to. Okay. So be it. Go ahead.

MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER: Just a clarification, this will be for this upcoming meeting of the SSC.

MARCOS HANKE: That's correct.

MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER: Okay. Thank you.

MARCOS HANKE: We have a pending presentation from Sennai.

Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management Technical Advisory Panel Report

SENNAI HABTES: Yep. Good afternoon, everyone. Just an update on the EBFM Technical Advisory Panel and I'll keep it brief because I know we have a lot of things to get through. We will be meeting in three weeks from May 1st to May 5th, along with the SSCs. At that meeting, we'll be doing the drafting for the outlines for the EBFM for the Fisheries Ecosystem Plan.

During that time, we hope to have everyone in attendance to allow us to create an outline. I will also introduce our panel to the technical writers that we have been able to hire thanks to partners

1 that are working with us on developing the Fisheries Ecosystem
2 Plan for the EBFM. Our hope is to have a completed framework for
3 the Council to preliminary review after it goes to the SSC by the
4 end of the year. That will be drafted in part by the technical
5 writers as well as myself and the co-Chair of the panel.

6
7 In addition to that, we have had two presentations that have been
8 given by partners on Lenfest, that was J.J. Cruz Motta as well as
9 Tarsila Seara, one at the National SSC meeting and another that
10 was a webinar provided by them for the Lenfest Ecosystems Group
11 that just happened last week. They have completed all of their
12 conceptual models and compiled all of that information and that
13 will be provided to the technical writers for drafting in the FEP.
14 So that's where we are at this point with the development, the FEP
15 and the EBFM TAP. We are looking forward to the joint meeting with
16 the SSC and hope for it to be very productive.

17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for a very informative short report.
19 Thanks so much. The next presentation, no questions. The next
20 presentation is Sarah about dolphin and wahoo.

21
22 **Review Draft Amendment 3 to the St. Croix and St. Thomas/St.**
23 **John Fishery Management Plans to Develop Management Measures for**
24 **Dolphin and Wahoo**
25

26 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay. We strategically placed this one after
27 the DAP reports because what they said will be relative, pertinent,
28 to this discussion. So, I'm going to just give a quick update of
29 Amendment 3 to the Saint Croix FMP and the Saint Thomas and Saint
30 John FMP, which would establish new management measures for dolphin
31 and wahoo.

32
33 Next, please.

34
35 So, from the December meeting, if you remember, we had this generic
36 amendment, so all three FMPs. We gave a presentation on that draft
37 amendment. We reviewed a list of data and information needs that
38 the planning team had. We discussed some of those in-house such as
39 the seasonality of the species. We reviewed commercial landings
40 data. Again, we didn't have any recreational landings data for the
41 U.S.V.I. We did review some for Puerto Rico from 2000 to 2016 for
42 these management measures.

43
44 And then, we reviewed draft options for size limits, recreational
45 bag limits, and commercial trip limits. At that time, the Council
46 recommended splitting the Puerto Rico FMP out and so, what we're
47 left with is the Amendment 3 to the two individual U.S.V.I FMPs.
48 And another amendment to the Puerto Rico FMP will come at a later

1 time.

2
3 Next, please.

4
5 So, the restructured draft amendment is going to look very similar
6 to what María presented. We split it out first by island and then
7 by species.

8
9 So, there's four actions, one for dolphin in St Croix, one for
10 wahoo in Saint Croix, and then dolphin in Saint Thomas/Saint John,
11 and wahoo in Saint Thomas/Saint John. Under each of those actions,
12 you have the A, B, and C sub-parts to establish either size limits.
13 Right now, it's structured to size limits for both sectors, so
14 it's just for all fishing. To establish recreational bag limits is
15 the (b) of each of the action numbers. And then commercial trip
16 limits is the (c).

17
18 Next slide, please.

19
20 The draft purpose and need that was included in the original draft
21 amendment pretty much just came right over, except now it's only
22 pertinent to the Saint Croix FMP and the Saint Thomas and Saint
23 John FMP. The words that are in red, size limits, recreational bag
24 limits and commercial trip limits. That's what we currently have
25 in the amendment and if that gets modified here today, staff will
26 come back and modify the purpose and need as applicable.

27
28 And similarly, the need, the second bullet point here, the need
29 for the amendment as of right now, is to develop conservation and
30 management measures for dolphin and wahoo to ensure undersized
31 individuals adequate time to mature and reproduce and then,
32 consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the National
33 Standards, to protect against overfishing or prevent annual catch
34 limits from being exceeded, while achieving optimal yield. And so,
35 that second couple points kind of go towards the bag limits and
36 the commercial trip limits.

37
38 Next slide, please.

39
40 So, during our IPT meeting that was had between the December
41 meeting and now, the IPT had a couple additional questions, which
42 really came down to why do you want these management measures? It
43 was pretty clear from the rationale for the size limits, why you
44 might want that when we hear of fishing of undersized dolphin on
45 the sargassum mats that come through. But they really wanted to
46 know what the problem is, especially now that we've split it out
47 and these are specific to the U.S.V.I. What was a problem? Or is
48 there a problem from recreational fishing of these species and

1 then also commercial trip limits.

2
3 And so, you can see here the kind of idea for why you might
4 implement some of these measures. So, for size limits, they're
5 generally based on biology of the species, and you put them in
6 place to make sure that the fish have enough time to reproduce
7 before they're removed from the fishery. Recreational bag limits
8 are generally used to prevent over harvest of recreational ACLs,
9 which we don't have for the U.S.V.I. or extend the fishing season,
10 which for the U.S.V.I. currently is all year. And then they're
11 also used to reduce harvest levels or discards or comply with
12 jurisdictions or reduce enforcement issues.

13
14 So, those are some issues to keep in your head to think about as
15 we move through this presentation. And then for commercial trip
16 limits, they're generally used to slow the rate of harvest, again,
17 to extend the commercial season, which right now is all year or to
18 reduce the risk of ACLs being exceeded, and those would be
19 commercial ACLs.

20
21 Next slide.

22
23 So, we took those questions of, why these issues may be needed?
24 Why are these management measures needed? to the DAPs, which you
25 heard the report out. And forgive me if I get any of these bullet
26 points wrong, but the Saint Thomas and Saint John DAP
27 recommendations that are kind of specific to these three management
28 measures were, no commercial trip limits due to the seasonal nature
29 of the fish. They're only there for a short time, so we don't want
30 any restrictions. Size limits for both sectors commercial and
31 recreational and that's, again, to protect the reproductive
32 capacity of the stock. And then, they did recommend recreational
33 bag limits, and this was a per species, so one for dolphin, one
34 for wahoo, not an aggregate, to address the lack of recreational
35 data available and the potential overharvest of the species from
36 that sector. Again, there are no recreational catch limits, so
37 this could be a way to kind of constrain that sector.

38
39 They did suggest more conservative catch limits or bag limits,
40 five dolphin per person per day/30 dolphin per vessel per day, two
41 wahoo per person per day/ or six wahoo per vessel per day. And so,
42 you'll see those in the draft amendment. There was enough time to
43 get those updated for your consideration. And so, I'll point those
44 out later.

45
46 From the Saint Croix DAP no commercial trip limits. Again, due to
47 the seasonal nature of the fish. They wanted no limitations on the
48 size of the fish. That should say for the commercial sector, they

1 did recommend it for the rec sector. And then, recreational bag
2 limits.

3
4 And they didn't have specific numbers that they recommended. They
5 asked that maybe the Saint Croix FAC, which hadn't met at that
6 time, maybe consider that and give feedback to them that that could
7 be brought to this meeting for the Council consideration.

8
9 Next slide, please.

10
11 So, this is a big high-level overview of the four actions with the
12 three sub-parts, with all of the alternatives that were kind of
13 prepared or developed for these species. So, you can see in the
14 first row, Saint Croix dolphin for size limits, which is the (a),
15 there are three alternatives. No size limit, a 20-inch fork length
16 size limit, or a 24-inch size limit. And that is going to be the
17 exact same recommendations alternatives for dolphin in Saint
18 Thomas and Saint John and that's because it's based on the biology
19 of the species. So, you can see in the third row there the same
20 exact numbers.

21
22 And then Action 2, the second line, wahoo in Saint Croix, has no
23 size limit for wahoo, a 32-inch size limit is the second
24 alternative, and then Alternative 3 is a 40-inch. And again, those
25 same numbers are repeated in the last row, Action 4, which is Saint
26 Thomas/Saint John wahoo.

27
28 The middle column, the (b) the recreational bag limits, the first
29 row, Saint Croix dolphin, there's no action. Do not establish
30 recreational bag limits. Alternative 2, 10 dolphin per person per
31 day, not to exceed 32 dolphin per vessel per day, would be
32 compatible with new regulations that are adopted by the U.S.V.I.
33 that aren't implemented yet, so there would be compatibility there.
34 And then 3 is to be determined because at the time of preparation
35 of this document, there wasn't a more conservative or an
36 alternative that was proposed by anybody. So, that that could be
37 developed, or it could just be removed, and you stick with the two
38 alternatives.

39
40 Then the next one down, in the (b) column, Saint Croix wahoo is a
41 similar kind of thing. No bag limits, 4 wahoo per person per day,
42 20 wahoo per vessel per day, which would be compatible with the
43 U.S.V.I. new regulations for recreational fishing. And again, that
44 "to be determined" for Alternative 3, you could add something, or
45 you could strike it.

46
47 So, in Saint Thomas and Saint John you have the same, Alternative
48 2, that's compatible with the U.S.V.I. for both species. And then,

1 as I mentioned, the Saint Thomas/Saint John DAP did recommend
2 numbers. And so, they're in here in red because you as the Council,
3 have not seen them yet, but we put them in there for your
4 consideration.

5
6 And then the last column is commercial trip limits, which both
7 DAPs recommended not developing. And so, if the Council would like
8 to develop, you could come up with numbers that you recommend or
9 you could provide rationale as to why you think that those are
10 needed and send it back to the IPT and the IPT could develop
11 numbers. I would just point out the little asterisks there that if
12 we do want to develop those, we would just also need to identify
13 what unit those trip limits are in. Are they in numbers of fish or
14 in pounds of whole weight?

15
16 Next slide, please.

17
18 So, I'm going to go break those down a little bit one by one,
19 starting with size limits for dolphin. You'll see here that this
20 is applicable to Action 1(a), which is Saint Croix and Action 3(a),
21 which is Saint Thomas/Saint John. But since they're size limits,
22 they're based on biology, it's the same number.

23
24 So Alternative 1 is no size limits. All dolphin that's caught could
25 be kept. And this again, applies to both sectors, commercial and
26 recreational. The Council, if you choose, you could split that out
27 and have it be pertinent to just one sector.

28
29 Alternative 2 would establish the 20-inch fork length minimum which
30 corresponds to about 50% of the females being mature, meaning that
31 they're capable of reproducing before they're removed, or they
32 have reproduced before they're removed by the fisheries.

33
34 And then, Alternative 3 would establish a larger fork length
35 minimum which corresponds to about a hundred percent of the
36 females. So, all the females theoretically would have spawned
37 before they're removed from the fishery. And the rationale here,
38 which is in black font because it's pretty solid, is to ensure
39 that undersized individuals have time to mature and reproduce.

40
41 Next slide, please.

42
43 And so, just looking really quick at the effects of those two
44 actions, both of the action alternatives, meaning establishing a
45 size limit, would have more biological benefits than the first one
46 because they would return smaller dolphin to the water, which would
47 give them more time to mature and reproduce, which in turn would
48 provide long-term economic benefits through a healthier fishery.

1 So, on the flip side, Alternatives 2 and 3 could have short term
2 negative socioeconomic effects if fishers prefer to, or just catch
3 smaller dolphin and want to be able to keep those. So that could
4 impact them in the short term, potentially in the long term, but
5 more of a short-term effect as they get used to the new regulations
6 and just move on.

7
8 So, Alternatives 2 and 3 could have more regulatory discards
9 because now there's a size that has to be thrown back and as we
10 heard at some of the DAP during the discussion, sometimes these
11 fish swallow the hook hole, and so if you have to throw them back,
12 they're dead and so that could increase dead discards. So, we would
13 just want to kind of consider that. Obviously, if you pick a bigger
14 size limit, more fish are going to be thrown back unless there's
15 nothing but large fish out there. So, both Alternative 2 and
16 Alternative 3 would require rulemaking, which is this amendment
17 here to implement the size limits. They would probably require
18 additional education and outreach, and they could create
19 enforcement issues if the state does not adopt compatible
20 regulations.

21
22 Next.

23
24 So, this is going to look very similar for wahoo because it's the
25 same concept. Alternative 1, no size limit, all wahoos could be
26 kept. Alternative 2 is the 32-inch fork length, which corresponds
27 to about 50% of the females being mature. And then, Alternative 3
28 is a 40-inch fork length, which corresponds about all females being
29 mature. And again, the rationale was pretty clear, it's to give
30 undersized individuals time to reproduce.

31
32 Next slide.

33
34 And then similarly, the effects of the action are going to be very
35 similar to the dolphin. They're almost identical. Actually, I don't
36 see anything that's different. So, they pretty much are the same
37 considerations that you want to think about as they were for
38 dolphin. Same impact to the fishers, same benefit to the biology
39 of doing this.

40
41 Next slide, please.

42
43 So now we move on to recreational bag limits, and this is for
44 dolphin in both Saint Croix, which is Action 1(b) and Saint Thomas
45 and Saint John, which is Action 3(b). Alternative 1-- oh.

46
47 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Sarah, excuse me. I was confirming with the Chair
48 here would it be possible to stop and then the Council discuss the

1 size limit and then continue. Or do you prefer to continue and
2 finish and come back?

3
4 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** It's up to you. I don't have a preference. Okay.

5
6 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. Because I was thinking, Mr. Chairman,
7 perhaps deal with the size limit and then continue with the rest.

8
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** I am super ready to discuss this. I think the
10 Council is ready to discuss this and let's start with the size
11 limit discussion. Carlos.

12
13 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mr. Chairman, before you jump into the whole
14 thing. we have a presentation by Wessley, Dr. Merten, this
15 afternoon. In a nutshell, what he's proposing is a 20-inch size
16 limit for the hippurus, for the dolphin, the big one. And also, I
17 was going to mention just for your consideration, the Flyingfish
18 Dolphin Wahoo Working Group of the WECAFC is going to meet in the
19 fall this year.

20
21 One of the few things that that the countries agree on based on
22 their biology, the socio-economy, etcetera, the dolphinfish is the
23 size limit. So, I believe that that's the first thing for your
24 consideration, whether that would be good or not.

25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. We all received the email with a letter that
27 Wess sent to us with very important information. Carlos.

28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Motion?

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** No, no. Discussion. Discussion.

32
33 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, no, no. Wait, wait.

34
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** You can do a motion if you want to.

36
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah. I got it.

38
39 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, going back to the very first one, which is
40 size limits for dolphin in Saint Croix and then dolphin in Saint
41 Thomas and Saint John. And here's your three alternatives that are
42 applicable to that species in both islands.

43
44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I can just cover both islands one time. Okay.
45 So, I motion to establish Action 1, Alternative 3. Establish a 24-
46 inch fork length minimum size limit for dolphin in federal waters
47 for the Saint Croix, Saint Thomas/Saint John District. Okay. Oh--
48

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mira, tiene una piedra para tirarte.

2
3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sorry about that Liajay. So, are we going to
4 open up a page? Sarah.

5
6 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I just have a question to clarify. Is that a
7 size limit that would apply to both sectors, to all fishing.

8
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Sarah and Carlos? Just a comment because I heard
10 from the DAP of Puerto Rico, he probably has a suggestion to make.
11 Go ahead, Nelson.

12
13 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** But Marcos, this is for the U.S. Virgin Islands
14 at this time only.

15
16 **MARCOS HANKE:** That's the question. Let Nelson make the question
17 and create a record. Anyway, Nelson, let's wait for them to finish
18 and I'll give you the floor.

19
20 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, *move Action 1(a), Alternative 3*
21 *establish a 24-inch fork length minimum size for dolphin in federal*
22 *waters for the Saint Croix, Saint Thomas/Saint John District. For*
23 *all sectors, right, commercial and recreational.*

24
25 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.

26
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Discussion? Nelson.

28
29 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nelson Crespo, for the
30 record. I suggest that Puerto Rico be included in that motion.

31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Do you have your rationale for it?

33
34 **NELSON CRESPO:** Oh, definitely. A 24-inch mahi is about a five
35 pounder, six pounders, no more than that. Restaurant don't want to
36 buy small mahis. Why? Because the filet is too thin and it's not
37 attractive for the consumers. They prefer, instead of buying the
38 small mahi, they prefer to buy the mahi that comes already filet
39 from outside and packaged already portions that is cheaper and
40 faster to cook. So, it is an action to protect the fishery. I'm
41 totally convinced that 24 inches is a good size to be included.

42
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Just a reminder besides that, we don't want
44 mahi to be converted into a deep fry fish small size, and we don't
45 want, with the sargassum influx, extended pressure into the
46 juveniles that has been happening for the last 11 years. I have a
47 question for you, Sarah. The request from Nelson can be addressed
48 now or what do we need to do?

1
2 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, I was going to point out that we still will
3 need to develop an amendment for the pelagic species for Puerto
4 Rico. We've identified the species at the last meeting, so we know
5 which one, and dolphin is one of those. When we were showing the
6 slides with all of the actions and asking the Council to think
7 about priorities, that's something that maybe tomorrow, at the end
8 of the day, we could present you with that same slide and say,
9 "okay, here's the Puerto Rico one. Do you want that to be a higher
10 priority than say a different amendment?" And we can, it'll be in
11 the record now that that's a recommendation, so when we get to the
12 dolphin size limit, we already know that that's what we're going
13 to recommend.

14
15 So, I don't want to say it can't go in here, but it should wait
16 and go in the Puerto Rico amendment and the Council can determine
17 priority.

18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for your guidance. I would like to hear
20 from, if there-- the thing is that I have been in all those meetings
21 and the intention of the Council about the minimum size, and the
22 industry, It's loud and clear. Right? And if there is a way that
23 is legal and is correct to include now, because the rationale and
24 the language that you presented apply a hundred percent to Puerto
25 Rico, right? It's just a procedural thing. I want to know from
26 Legal Counsel if there is any problem with including--

27
28 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** It's not a matter of legal stuff, it's a matter
29 of the work that the staff and IPT is doing. Right now, they
30 already have the essence of what the Council wants. So let them do
31 the work. Here they completed for the U.S. Virgin Islands the
32 action for the dolphin and wahoo.

33
34 Sarah is very clear that in the case of Puerto Rico in the
35 documents, they would like to have the same consideration for the
36 dolphin, the minimum size. So, rest assured that that will be
37 included in the document. But what Sarah is also saying is that in
38 the case of Puerto Rico-- and remember these are the different
39 island-based FMPs, that's the reason and the rationale why they
40 were approved. Each one is different. But in this case, they have
41 the same common goal of having the size limit. And they also have
42 a preferred size, which is 24 inches. So, already Sarah has that
43 element of information and when she presents that document to us
44 with the Puerto Rico side, they will have the list of the priority
45 species, when the dolphin is touched on, they will say, "okay. We
46 also have the 24 minimum size for the dolphin" But let her finish
47 the work.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Cristina, you have somebody on the hands up.

2
3 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Katherine Zamboni.

4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Katherine.

6
7 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Katherine Zamboni,
8 for the record. NOAA, Office of General Counsel. Yeah, it's
9 primarily an organizational issue to try to keep all the actions
10 related to the islands together.

11
12 But I just want to remind the Chair that there's been no vote on
13 what the preferred alternative would be for Puerto Rico. So, I
14 don't know, if you want to give staff that direction in the future
15 document of what the preferred alternative would be, it would be
16 appropriate to take a vote on that before moving on.

17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just to be clear, a vote on the recommendation and
19 the suggestion that Nelson brought to the table, which is the 24-
20 inch minimum size.

21
22 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Correct. For Puerto Rico. And you still
23 need to vote on the motion. Well, you've got multiple motions going
24 on right now, but I think you still need to vote on the motion to
25 make Alternative 3, the preferred alternative for Saint Croix,
26 Saint Thomas and Saint John. And then you could then entertain the
27 motion from Nelson to identify a similar alternative as preferred
28 for the future action regarding Puerto Rico.

29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Andy.

31
32 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, and I wanted to look to Sarah and María.
33 So, Kate covered my first comment, which is making a separate
34 motion to add that action and select it as preferred for Puerto
35 Rico. But from a staff perspective, María and Sarah, is it easier
36 to add it into this document or would it be easier to bring back
37 a separate document?

38
39 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I would say that's depending on as we move
40 forward, maybe what Puerto Rico might want to do for dolphin or
41 wahoo with the rec bag limits and the commercial trip limits.

42
43 So, if they want to do the exact same or they're okay with the
44 alternatives as presented for the U.S.V.I., then I think we could
45 make this an amendment for dolphin and wahoo and all three FMPs
46 and that would be fairly simple because the rationale would be the
47 same. And then at a later time we could do another pelagic
48 amendment if the Council wants it for the other pelagic stocks

1 that have been identified. So, we could do that, if that makes
2 sense.
3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** It truly makes sense. Let's finish then with what
5 we are doing. I'm sorry to interrupt, but it's important to bring
6 Puerto Rico to the discussion because it's important, right? We
7 are part of the island-based too.
8
9 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** I guess we all agree on that. The problem we're
10 talking about is the procedure. So, you can vote on this one, get
11 it on the screen, and then the intention of the Council for Puerto
12 Rico is that the dolphin will have a-- and we haven't talked about
13 wahoo yet --the dolphin will have the same measure. Marcos, tienes
14 a Andy.
15
16 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy.
17
18 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. My suggestion would be vote this up.
19 Let's get through this amendment as it's written today and present
20 it to us and then if we need to make decisions about how to include
21 Puerto Rico or bring back a separate document, we can do that at
22 the end.
23
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Let's do so. Any further discussion on this motion?
25 Carlos?
26
27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah.
28
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** We are discussing the motion of 24 inches still.
30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah. Okay. So, I think I want to include this
32 rationale here. Go ahead. I keep forgetting.
33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead.
35
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, the rationale for this Action will allow
37 female dolphinfish to reach full maturity with the ability to
38 release more eggs compared to the alternative two 20-inch fork
39 length and studies show that dolphinfish can reproduce from 16 to
40 18 inches. A proven Action 1(a), Alternative 3, will translate to
41 millions more eggs in the water before the species is harvested.
42
43 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿Lo escribiste, Liajay? No, no tienes que
44 escribirlo. We're kidding.
45
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Any further comments we need to speed up.
47
48 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I got a question here.

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Question. Carlos.

3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I thought, isn't this supposed to be Action 3,
5 not 3(a)?

6
7 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I just had her fix it. So, you're selecting
8 Alternative 3, which is 24 inches in both Action 1(a), which is
9 Saint Croix dolphin, and Action 3(a), which is Saint Thomas/Saint
10 John dolphin. Okay.

11
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Are you clear with the motion and language? Okay.
13 No further discussion, I am not seeing any hands up. Let's vote.

14
15 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.

16
17 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.

18
19 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.

20
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

22
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

24
25 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.

26
27 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.

28
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** *All in favor. Motion carries.*

30
31 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay, this is Sarah again. Once she's done
32 typing, we can do the same exercise for size limits for wahoo.

33
34 This would be Action 2(a) and Action 4(a).

35
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, for wahoo. *Motion to accept Action 2(a)*
37 *alternative-- well, no, you already put that up. Okay.*

38
39 *Establish a 32-inch fork length minimum size limit for wahoo in*
40 *federal waters for the Saint Thomas/Saint John and Croix District.*

41
42 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second for the motion.

43
44 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Second.

45
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** Open discussion. No discussion. Let's vote. Andy,
47 Julian, and Carlos.

1 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Go ahead. I'd like to hear from Julian first.
2 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Well, I just have a question that was just asked
3 to me by my colleagues. We see that this is the size limit, is
4 there a different motion that will address the bag limits? Okay,
5 thank you.

6
7 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes. So, my question for Carlos. I heard the
8 rationale for dolphin in terms of avoiding, obviously, undersized
9 fish. We selected the preferred as a hundred percent maturity,
10 right? for Dolphin, but we're selecting the size limit that
11 corresponds with fifty percent maturity with wahoo. So that's
12 obviously great, it's a good step in the right direction. But is
13 there any reason to select the smaller size limit for wahoo based
14 on your experience fishing in U.S.V.I. versus the 40-inch size
15 limit?

16
17 **MARCOS HANKE:** The rationale is that the way the fish is used and
18 fished there's a different yield and a different use. For example,
19 you can stake the wahoo at that size. It's going to be a valuable
20 product into the market on that size. Which is a different scenario
21 on the rationale for the mahi, on the smaller mahi, because it's
22 a filet fish. There are others, but that's the main one. We have
23 Julian.

24
25 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** The Saint Thomas/ Saint John District requested a
26 40-inch size minimum size limit for the wahoo. So, if Saint Croix
27 wants the 32, I think it needs to be two separate motions. Thank
28 you.

29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** It's fine. Okay. Andy, you were going to follow up.

31
32 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** We'll just have another question now for
33 Nicole, but I'll make the comment that I would support either size
34 limit in this instance, the 32 inches obviously provides size of
35 50% maturity, so we are protecting at least some portion of the
36 fish that are going to be undersized and not mature enough to
37 reproduce but would ask Nicole, what challenges does a size limit
38 for Saint Croix being different from Saint Thomas/Saint John
39 present the U.S.V.I.?

40
41 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yeah. Thank you for the question, Andy. We would
42 support having consistent fork length measures in both districts
43 for enforcement purposes. We currently have one, NOAA OLE. We have
44 approximately six officers in each district. It's very difficult
45 for us when we're in the middle of our waters to be looking at
46 where you're catching fish for the enforcement issues. I just don't
47 think-- and we also have fishers that fish in both waters. And so,
48 I would just put that to everyone. We want to do what's best for

1 the resource and we additionally recognize that we have consistent
2 issues with a lack of capacity for enforcement and management
3 actions.

4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos.

6
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I mean, I can probably simplify this by changing
8 this, the 32 to 40. We know that wahoos are not as abundant as
9 mahis are. So, the bigger the fish, the more they have a chance to
10 reproduce at maturity. If that's not a problem, I'll change it.

11
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** One second. Gerson wants to add something.

13
14 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** I can't remember the specific numbers that we
15 discussed on the DAP meeting. I don't know if Miguel can recall
16 those numbers, but it was close to the 40 inches because they were
17 using numbers that when they do tournaments, those were the numbers
18 that were legal to keep when they were doing those tournaments. So
19 maybe we can look back into the DAP minutes and figure out, because
20 the motion was made to use those exact numbers. I cannot say 40
21 for certain, but those meeting minutes have what the DAP discussed
22 on accepting.

23
24 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** They also discuss what is the minimum they have
25 in the Virgin Islands. You have a size limit for wahoo in the
26 Virgin Islands?

27
28 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** No. I'm not sure, but I know they have a 32-
29 inch minimum size for mahi in tournaments.

30
31 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So that's my point, that in wahoo, as far as I
32 know, you don't have a size limit at this time for wahoo.

33
34 Okay. That the point that you don't have that. So, if we follow,
35 then you have to look at the correct language from the presentation
36 that Sarah put together and see where you could--

37
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Sarah.

39
40 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I believe I remember from that conversation
41 that they talked about 36 inches. I can verify it from my notes,
42 but you are free to suggest an alternative size than the two that
43 were presented here. So, for instance, if I verify, and the DAP
44 recommended 36, and if both DAPs are more okay with that, then
45 that could be added as an alternative and you could select that.
46 So, if you like, I can go check.

47
48 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. But the other thing is that you have to

1 add a language as to why you're choosing that. It's not to pick a
2 number out. So, for example, the ones that you approve already is
3 that this size will protect 50% of the females. These other side
4 will protect a hundred percent of the fish. That's what you need,
5 that's the information that you need for your rationale.

6
7 So, my suggestion is that we allow the people, the staff to find
8 the biology or the information, the biology of the animal and that
9 percentage, you do the same thing that you did with the dolphin,
10 but the intent of the Council is to establish the size limit for
11 wahoo, as big as possible, to protect the spawners. And then it
12 will be anywhere from 34 to 40.

13
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just a point of clarification. We are discussing
15 the motion that was presented and second as part of the discussion.
16 And there is a language being suggested change in terms of the
17 number and you are the owner of the motion.

18
19 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. But, Marcos, point of clarification. The
20 motion that you put together was 36 and then he decided to change
21 it, so we started doing that.

22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** 32. Andy.

24
25 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, I mean, so we haven't voted on the
26 motion, so just as a point of order, if you wanted to change it
27 from 32 to 40, you're welcome to do that, but you need to get your
28 seconder to agree to that change as well. Yeah, yeah.

29
30 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah. Director Angeli made a very good point
31 here. We have fishermen in Saint Croix that go to north of Saint
32 Thomas to fish. So, to have a different size limit in both
33 districts is going to be very problematic. So, I would go ahead
34 and agree with a 40-inch. *Change to 40-inch for standardization.*

35
36 **MARCOS HANKE:** And Vanessa, do you agree with that change?

37
38 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes, I agree.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. We can keep the discussion. Is there any
41 further discussion on the motion? John.

42
43 **JOHN WALTER, III:** Mr. Chair, I guess one question I might ask
44 some of the DAP Chairs about whether there are small fish landed
45 and what the mortality of those fish might be. And one of the
46 concerns is we think that these are all good measures to protect
47 fish, but if there is a substantial mortality either from the
48 fishing experience or after release, you wind up not achieving

1 that protection that you want. And so, that's just something that
2 I think needs to be discussed, because we can-- and maybe I'd like
3 to hear-- from my experience with wahoo, if the fishery is a
4 trolling based fishery, those small wahoos often are somewhat
5 drowned by the time they come back in. And so, I don't know if
6 mortality is an issue, and I just wanted some conversation there.
7 Thank you.

8
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. There is two very general lines in terms of
10 what happened with the wahoo fishing. Typically, there is two ways
11 of fishing for wahoo, drop-off wahoo fishery that are larger
12 wahoos, fast trolling and so on, that you do catch a smaller wahoo,
13 but it is not the target. The hooks are not for that and so on. We
14 are talking about bigger fish.

15
16 But we do have mix with the mahi, on floating debris and weed
17 lines, schools of very small wahoos. But because you're trolling,
18 fast trolling, you are normally using lighter tackle and so on.
19 The way the fishing is performed is much more manageable. You don't
20 drown the wahoo. The wahoo is going to get to the boat alive,
21 right, on the smaller scale.

22
23 I don't think because of the fishing style and the way we fish
24 here in the Caribbean, that's of big consideration versus Bahamas,
25 for example, and other places where the wahoo fishing is a little
26 different than what we have here. Julian?

27
28 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I just want to make a comment as it pertains to
29 the size. Once you pick a nice size of a fish of 40 inches, if you
30 run into a school of fish switches on the size, you're not going
31 to stay there trying to catch undersized species, both the wahoo
32 and the dolphin, you're going to move on. You're going to try to
33 go to somewhere where you can catch a legal-size fish, which can
34 be landed for your market. So, your mortality rate is going to be
35 low. You're not going to stay there killing fish, hoping that a
36 big one is going to come in. You're going to move on. That's the
37 practice of the commercial fishers. Thank you.

38
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Gerson.

40
41 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** For the record, I went through some information,
42 and I do agree with my friend Mr. Magras about the 40 inches.

43
44 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** So just to confirm with staff, this should
45 say, "select Alternative 3" because that's 40 inches. Correct?
46 Okay.

47
48 I'm going to actually speak in opposition to the motion. I

1 supported the original motion of 32 inches. I applaud the DAPs in
2 terms of what they're trying to accomplish with the 40-inch size
3 limit, because that's certainly a huge step for conservation. But
4 I'm concerned about release mortality. Having a lot of release
5 mortality, even though it might not be substantial, I've just been
6 doing some quick literature search and it could be as much as 25,
7 30%. And so, I think taking a little bit more of an incremental
8 step of going from no size limit to a 32-inch size limit and seeing
9 how that performs is really important before we take a larger leap
10 to the 40-inch size.

11
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Your suggestion is a stepwise approach into the
13 minimum size. I am using here a conversion table for wahoo with
14 the fork length of 40 inches, which is 13-pounds and 14-ounce fish.
15 Just to put numbers in terms of pound, what it means for a 40-inch
16 wahoo. which is not a very big wahoo.

17
18 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos, the other part is the consideration of
19 the biology of the animal. I was checking, actually the web page
20 of NOAA and when you are talking about 40 inches, the wahoo, in
21 order to save 50% of the females, it has to be 50 inches long. 40
22 inches is less and fork length, of course, is close to that.
23 According to that. And if you are talking about feet is 3.3 feet.

24
25 But what Dr. Strelcheck is saying now is that if you are-- the
26 goal is to protect as many as possible so they can spawn again.
27 So, if you make it too big and you have a mortality too high for
28 those that you discard, then probably having a smaller fish that
29 is able to reproduce at least once is better for the stock than
30 going to a big one, assuming that they are going to survive when
31 you turn it back. And that's the kind of thing that you need to
32 balance.

33
34 I don't think that you will have the exact answer to that question,
35 but at least you know in the direction that you could be going.
36 So, one hand you have 40 inches that will have 30% mortality. So
37 out of a hundred you lose 30 animals. In 32, if you have less
38 mortality, then you will lose less. And then between 32 and 40,
39 you'll be saving a lot of fish too.

40
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. And to the point of, Andy. Andy, the 32-inch
42 wahoo fork length, is six pounds. I don't remember ever catching
43 a six-pound wahoo. Right. And I don't think we are doing much
44 addressing the request and the spirit of this measure creating a
45 minimum size by putting something out there because of the gear.

46
47 What I said before, we are talking about 10 knot hooks, [inaudible]
48 islanders that barely fit on the mouth. You have to open the mouth

1 and put the hook on the six-pound wahoo, that is not the reality.
2 You're not going to have a lot of that. Right. I just want for
3 that to be clear, that's why I'm not so much concerned about the
4 release waste or mortality that we're going to lose a lot of fish
5 and release that fish because we are not going to catch that much
6 of that class of six-pound wahoo.

7
8 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. And I appreciate that, Marcos, and I
9 will be the first to admit, I'm not an expert when it comes to
10 wahoo fishing in the Caribbean. Right. That's why it's great to
11 hear from all these fishermen around the table. My concern isn't
12 so much the 32-inch fish being six pounds. It's the 37, 38, 39-
13 inch wahoo that's going to have to be discarded and go to waste
14 and have that release mortality.

15
16 **MARCOS HANKE:** Vance, then Julian.

17
18 **VANCE VICENTE:** Yeah, I'm looking here at Adams and Adyan Rios
19 study Life History Compilation of Caribbean Fisheries and looking
20 at the dorado, the dolphin, mahi-mahi, c. hippurus and the length
21 at maturity is 450 millimeters, which is 17 inches. 511 individuals
22 we're analyzed from Florida and LM was 450 in Florida. For North
23 Carolina it was also 458 millimeter, 17 inches. Just for the
24 record.

25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Vance. Julian.

27
28 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I am here doing a little research as well, and it
29 clearly states that a wahoo can grow up to eight feet, 156 pounds
30 through they are commonly between 3.3 and 5.4 feet long. So, if
31 you take the 3.3, we're right there at 40 inches, it is immature
32 fish. And the males can start reproducing at 34 inches. So, if we
33 say 32 inches, the males still are not ready to start reproducing.
34 So, I'm just going off of the information that is out there. I
35 understand Andy's concern about mortality, but the fishers are
36 asking to put the protection out there at 40 inches. We are the
37 ones that are willing to give up the smaller size fish for what we
38 think would help our fishery. I don't think there is going to be
39 any high mortality rate.

40
41 As far as the concern comes to enforcement with the difference of
42 the islands. It's going to be an issue no matter what because we
43 have gone to Island-Based Fishery Management Plans. So, Saint Croix
44 is going to have different regulations than what Saint Thomas and
45 Puerto Rico are going to have. So, what enforcement needs to do is
46 they need to step up their game in doing their jobs. But you asked
47 us to partake and give suggestions in what we can do to help the
48 resources, and this is what the group of fishers, both

1 recreational, commercial, divers, have requested to what they
2 think can help the fishery. Thank you.
3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Sarah.
5
6 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, as your motion stands right now, you've
7 selected Alternative 3, which was the 40 inches for wahoo in both
8 Saint Croix, which is the 2(a) and Saint Thomas/Saint John, which
9 is 4(a) and this is for all fishing again, correct? Yeah. So, are
10 you still good with that?
11
12 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Go ahead and vote on it.
13
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** You stand on the motion, right?
15
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah.
17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** And we had a lot of discussion. I think we are ready
19 to vote.
20
21 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.
22
23 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.
24
25 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** No.
26
27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.
28
29 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.
30
31 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.
32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.
34
35 *Motion carries. One no and six yes.* What is the next discussion?
36
37 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Well, so then I would also, if we're thinking
38 of adding Puerto Rico FMP to this amendment, or vice versa, would
39 Puerto Rico vote or accept one of these alternatives as presented?
40 If not, we can come back with alternatives for Puerto Rico, or we
41 don't have to include wahoo for Puerto Rico.
42
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** I will feel comfortable consulting directly to the
44 Puerto Rican people on the table if they want to pursue to create
45 the discussion for Puerto Rico, the minimum size and the similar
46 discussion.
47
48 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez, for the

1 record. I think that we should take the recommendation of the DAP
2 also, and we should take the same actions. I don't know if we can
3 include it right now, or we must leave it for tomorrow or for next
4 meeting.

5
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** And you agree with the concept?

7
8 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes. And practically the same size also applies.
9 Okay. Ricardo?

10
11 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yeah, I agree completely with Vanessa.

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nelson.

14
15 **NELSON CRESPO:** Yeah. I support Vanessa's statement.

16
17 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, all the Puerto Rico representatives have the
18 same intention and we're going to follow your guidance whatever is
19 the best way to proceed.

20
21 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay. So next time we bring this amendment back,
22 you'll have size limits for all three FMPs with preferred
23 alternatives identified and fully analyzed.

24
25 And the reason why we're not adding the motion up here is because
26 the IPT needs to see this and discuss it. I was just wanted to
27 make sure that the alternatives that were presented for the
28 U.S.V.I. were acceptable for Puerto Rico and that you would, if
29 you could, identify a preferred alternative.

30
31 So next we can look at the recreational bag limits on the slide,
32 and you can do the same thing. If you have motions prepared,
33 recommend those.

34
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos. Liajay, be ready for the motion.

36
37 We have a time with translation. We need to try to be super
38 effective at this time to finish this discussion and to move all
39 the presentations for tomorrow. We are going to start at 8:30
40 tomorrow.

41
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** What?

43
44 **MARCOS HANKE:** Keep going.

45
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, *I move to have, for bag limits on*
47 *dolphinfish, Action 1(b), Alternative 2.*

1 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** For a reminder. Alternative 2, which is 10
2 dolphin per person per day, or 32 dolphin per vessel per day would
3 be compatible with the new U.S.V.I. regulations once they're
4 implemented. You can see here the rationale on the screen is in
5 yellow, and I just wanted to make sure if you could, during the
6 motion discussion just talk about rationale for why you would
7 endorse a recreational bag limit for dolphin in the U.S.V.I. And
8 it could be the same rationale, or it could be separate per island,
9 but just, in your own words, provide a rationale, please.
10
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sure. Do I have to put the motion up there?
12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Please. I will request the cooperation of the
14 Council to try to be as objective and effective with the time, for
15 sake of time, with this discussion. And remember all the discussion
16 that we had on the past not to start over again.
17
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Are you ready? Oh, okay. I'm sorry. So, to
19 establish a recreational bag limit of 10 dolphinfish per person
20 per day, not to exceed 32 dolphinfish per vessel per day, whichever
21 is less. last to establish recreational. Yeah, that's it. She just
22 got it.
23
24 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿Carlos, está bien?
25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** That's the language, Carlos? Can you read it for
27 the record?
28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Alright, *to establish a recreational bag limit*
30 *of 10 dolphinfish per person per day not to exceed 32 dolphinfish*
31 *per vessel per day, whichever is less.* Right.
32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second?
34
35 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Second.
36
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Open discussion. Ricardo?
38
39 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes. It's kind of two questions. The first
40 one, is there a formula for that bag limit? How do we get that
41 number?
42
43 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No se oye bien. Tienes que pegarte al micrófono.
44
45 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Kind of two question. Ricardo López, for the
46 record. Is there any formula for that number of bag limit? How did
47 we get to that number? That's the first question. And the second
48 one is, if we are limiting the size of the dolphinfish to big

1 dolphinfish, does that change the size of the bag limit or are we
2 going to keep those numbers?
3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** We have a second from Nicole just making sure. Okay.
5 Do you want to address—Miguel.
6
7 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Esperate. Liajay and Cristina, can we go back to
8 the slide that Sarah put together about the rationale behind the
9 size limit, bag limit and the trip limit. This goes to Ricardo's
10 question. No, the one that-- no, más para arriba. Es la que es más
11 general que te dice pa' qué diablos tú quieres cada cosa.
12
13 Okay. This goes to Ricardo's question. These three can go together
14 or separate, depending on the goals and objectives that you may
15 have. So now you have a size limit that you are recommending, but
16 still, you want to prevent overharvest of recreational annual catch
17 limits. The first one ensures the reproductivity, as you know, the
18 second one goes to the overharvesting, and the third one is also
19 similar.
20
21 So that's why it is important for the group to decide whether the
22 bag limit is important or not, or I mean, acceptable or not. Also,
23 you need to talk about the-- in the case of the bag limits, you
24 land at the dock in Puerto Rico or at the dock in U.S. Virgin
25 Islands, you don't land at a foreign vessel somewhere in the EEZ.
26 So, if you don't have compatible regulations, it will be kind of
27 difficult to enforce.
28
29 If Puerto Rico, for example, have a bigger size bag limit, no
30 problem. But if they have a smaller one, then you have a problem.
31
32 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yeah. Still for me, 10 huge dolphinfishes
33 per fisherman in a boat is a lot. To me that's a lot. You know, we
34 are not talking anymore about the small one. We're talking about
35 the huge one because we are regulating the size.
36
37 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** But what's your point? You want a bigger bag
38 limit or the smaller bag limit?
39
40 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Smaller.
41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** How much smaller?
43
44 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** I don't know. How much do we need if we are
45 recreationally fishing? If I'm going in a boat and I'm not looking
46 for fishes to put some fuel in my boat, I'm just recreational, I'm
47 not selling the fish. How many big fishes do I need? 1, 2, 3 is a
48 lot for one person. If we are five together, maybe two per person

1 is enough. That's my criteria.

2
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Ricardo, Sarah.

4
5 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** What I was going to say is, so the alternatives
6 here were 10 per person, 32 per vessel, and then another
7 alternative that could be proposed. And if you would like to
8 propose something for Puerto Rico since now that's going to be
9 part of this amendment, I think you could do that. You could come
10 up with numbers and if the Council agreed and if the fishermen
11 supported it, I think we could add that as a different alternative
12 for Puerto Rico. You wouldn't have to have the same one.

13
14 This one is compatible with U.S.V.I. regulations, so it'll just be
15 a little bit easier for enforcement while still reducing the
16 unlimited catch that is currently available for dolphin right now.
17 I know Puerto Rico has a bag limit, so you're already one step
18 ahead as far as kind of controlling what the recreational fishers
19 can catch. So, please, if you have some numbers that you would
20 like to put out for us to consider, please do so.

21
22 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Thanks for the answer and for the
23 opportunity.

24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Ricardo. Any further discussion before
26 we go to the vote?

27
28 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** I will want, if maybe some member of the DAP can
29 make us like an example of their recreational in Saint Croix and
30 Saint Thomas for the mahi and wahoo. Because I'm in the same line
31 as Ricardo, if we make the exercise in the fishing in Puerto Rico,
32 we know that there is going to be a lot of fish in there for a
33 house, but they are the expert in Saint Croix and Saint--

34
35 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** But let's, this is only for the U.S. Virgin
36 Islands at this time, and what they're doing is they already have
37 this in the books for the U.S. Virgin Island. So, what Sarah has
38 done is just to make compatible regulations in the EEZ. Puerto
39 Rico is another [inaudible].

40
41 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes. Thank you. But I will love to hear from
42 Julian and Martínez if they are okay with this number.

43
44 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** According to the DAP meeting, we had a while
45 back with all the Fisheries Advisory Committee in Saint Croix,
46 that was a big issue in determining these numbers. So, I agree
47 with 10 and 32, but as I said, I'm only one person, I'm just
48 bringing forward the information that was discussed there. Because

1 a big issue that we came into was whether that person who's going
2 out for that day can cover the expenses. Because if you want to
3 eat fish, you still have to spend 3.79 a gallon to go out. So that
4 was the issue, the amount of money they spent to go out and
5 everybody agreed to 10 and 32.

6
7 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** And, Vanessa, some of the members on the
8 recreational sector, they wanted a bigger quota.

9
10 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Okay.

11
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Any further rationale or are we ready to vote.
13 Julian.

14
15 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Well, I have a question for DFW if it could be
16 answered either Director Angeli or Sennai Habtes. So, what's the
17 recommended numbers for the new recreational license that's
18 supposed to go into place in 2024? Because I think what's happening
19 here is we are trying to have the same numbers that are working in
20 federal waters to also be in compliance with territorial waters as
21 it pertains to these two pelagic species. Because the DAPs had
22 come up with a different number and I heard Mr. Ricardo's comments,
23 which makes a lot of sense, where you're going to be catching a
24 larger fish, so why do they need to have such a large number? From
25 hearing from my counterpart from Puerto Rico also, he has a concern
26 with the number of fish that's going to be allotted to one
27 individual and the maximum number at the end. So, is the
28 recreational license complete? Can that number be changed for
29 U.S.V.I. territorial waters? And what are those numbers? Thank
30 you.

31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nicole.

33
34 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yeah, thank you for the question, Mr. Magras.
35 The recreational fishing rules and regulations were adopted,
36 signed into rule and regulation on October 7th, 2022. We are waiting
37 to implement those rules and regulations until we have a licensing
38 platform and all of the components necessary to fully roll out the
39 recreational rules and regulations.

40
41 I'm going to read the regulation for the dolphin and wahoo. There
42 is a combined recreational bag limit of no more than 10 dolphinfish
43 or wahoo per person per day, not to exceed 32 per vessel per day,
44 and not to exceed four wahoo per person per day, or 20 wahoo per
45 vessel per day.

46
47 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Thank you.
48

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Ricardo.
2
3 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yeah, I would like to share with our friends
4 from U.S.V.I., what Puerto Rico has as regulation for the
5 recreational fishermen. For example, for Dorado, I mean for the
6 dolphinfish we have five individuals, five fish per species, per
7 fishermen per day, or a quota of 10 in total for the boat. That's
8 a lot smaller than 10 per person. And that's for the dorado, for
9 the dolphinfish.
10
11 For the peto, we also have a regulation, which is smaller than
12 what we were--
13
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** Ricardo. I'm confused. We have, how many mahi per
15 angler? Five? Can you repeat, please? Slow.
16
17 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes. Of course, I will do that. It says
18 fishing mahi, wahoo or sierra per quotes. In the case of sierras
19 and wahoos, the limit is five individuals per species. Okay. Is
20 either five wahoos or five dorados or five Sierras per fisherman
21 per day or a quota of 10 fishes per boat per day, whichever is
22 less.
23
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Ricardo.
25
26 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Okay.
27
28 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** This is Sarah. María and I were looking at the
29 regulations and I believe what Mr. López just read was for wahoo
30 and mackerels combined. There is a five per species per day, but
31 for dolphinfish it's 10 dolphin per person per day, or 30 dolphins
32 per boat per day, whichever is less.
33
34 When we brought this amendment in December and we had the
35 management measures in there for the Puerto Rico FMP, the
36 alternative for the recreational bag limit, one alternative was to
37 be compatible with the DNER regulations, the 10 and 30. And the
38 other one that was in there was a recommendation that was made by
39 the Puerto Rico, DAP, which I believe was five dolphin per person
40 per day or 15.
41
42 So, we had that in there for Puerto Rico, we could, if we're
43 putting dolphin and wahoo back into this amendment, we can put
44 those back in for consideration from the Puerto Rico constituents.
45
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead Ricardo.
47
48 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yeah, thanks for the clarification.

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. At this time, everybody is overwhelmed
3 and trying to put the best information on the table and it's
4 totally understandable. Thank you.

5
6 This is part of the discussion and I think we are ready to vote.
7 Vanessa.

8
9 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Abstain.

10
11 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** No.

12
13 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.

14
15 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

16
17 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** I will abstain.

18
19 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.

20
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

22
23 *We have four "yes", two "abstentions" and one "no." Motion carries,*
24 *by majority.*

25
26 We are going to stop because we had a fisherman from Vieques that
27 is going to present. Unfortunately, very unfortunately, he cannot
28 present today because of sake of time, but he will stay with us
29 and do it very early in the morning, tomorrow at 8:30. We're going
30 to start 8:30 tomorrow to allow the fisherman that came all the
31 way from Vieques to present to us, Abdiel.

32
33 Miguel already spoke to him, Cristina. María.

34
35 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** So, Mr. Chair there was a presentation today
36 at 4:15 to 4:45. it was an update on the Island-Based FMPs
37 Biological Opinion, which was something between PRD and NOAA
38 Fisheries and we made the decision that it will be fine if we can
39 present it in August because it's not something that is time
40 sensitive given that we are running a little behind schedule, if
41 you're okay with that.

42
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

44
45 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you.

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Anything else Miguel?
48

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** We were supposed to have a closed session, but
2 we don't need it because I reviewed DAP vacancies and all that and
3 the only thing that we need to do at this time, to reappoint Jason
4 Cope to the SSC. We can leave the other stuff for the August
5 meeting.
6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** To reappoint you mean?
8
9 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Motion to reappoint Dr. Jason Cope to the SSC.
10 Julian.
11
12 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** At this time before we close, I had a letter that
13 I would've liked to read. It's a very small letter to read into
14 the record. And if I may, Mr. Chair.
15
16 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Eso es para mañana. That is for tomorrow.
17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** It's possible to do it tomorrow, or does it need to
19 be today.
20
21 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Well, if you're not having the after session today,
22 tomorrow morning, it's fine.
23
24 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. Tomorrow morning.
25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** Please. Thank you. Miguel?
27
28 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** We need a motion to appoint Dr. Jason Cope to
29 the SSC, reappoint.
30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** We cannot hear you, Miguel. The name of the person.
32
33 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Jason Cope.
34
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Oh, yeah. *Motion to reappoint Jason Cope to the*
36 *SSC.*
37
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second?
39
40 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Second.
41
42 **MARCOS HANKE:** All in favor say aye.
43
44 **GROUP:** Aye.
45
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** *He is appointed.*
47
48 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Then the vacancy is

1 another that we are going to discuss in the next meeting in August.
2 And we are finished.

3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. We're going to adjourn now. There is
5 nothing pending. Ready to adjourn. I'll remind everybody that there
6 is an activity tonight of alternative species, I'll see you all
7 there for underutilized alternative species.

8
9 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. On the screen you have the-- you can put
10 it in your GPSs. It's the Dinner La Guancha, Ponce. Tablado La
11 Guancha, Ponce.

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** The meeting is adjourned. Thank you all, see you in
14 a bit.

15
16 (Whereupon the meeting recessed on April 18, 2023.)

17
18 - - -

19
20 APRIL 19, 2023

21
22 WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

23
24 - - -

25
26
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Good morning, everyone. It's 8:34 AM second day of
28 the 181st CFMC Council meeting. We have some presentations and
29 things to address from yesterday, but we're going to start with
30 the video that a young fisherman, a leader of the young fishermen
31 from Vieques, will present to us very quick because this is one of
32 the things that we have been requesting is to promote the
33 engagement of the young fishery into the fishery.

34
35 Let me introduce to Abdiel. Please state your name and before the
36 video, a little brief presentation and let's go.

37
38 Actually, I am on speed mode, which means that I didn't make the
39 roll call, you have to wait a little bit. Let's make the roll call.
40 Let's start here with Cristina.

41
42 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Good morning. Cristina Olán, Council
43 staff.

44
45 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Buenos días. Liajay Rivera García, Council
46 staff.

47
48 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Buenos días. María López, NOAA Fisheries.

1
2 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Good morning. Nicole Angeli, Virgin Island
3 Division of Fish and Wildlife.
4
5 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Morning. Carl Farchette, Vice-chair, CFMC.
6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Good morning, Marcos Hanke.
8
9 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Miguel Rolón, Council staff.
10
11 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Andy Strelcheck, NOAA Fisheries.
12
13 **JOHN WALTER, III:** John Walter, Southeast Fishery Science Center.
14
15 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** James Kreglo, Council member Saint Thomas
16
17 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Vanessa Ramírez, Council member, Puerto Rico.
18
19 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Good morning. Sarah Stephenson, NOAA Fisheries.
20
21 **MIGUEL BORGES:** Good morning. Miguel Borges, NOAA Office of Law
22 Enforcement.
23
24 **MATTHEW WALIA:** Good morning. Matt Walia, NOAA Office of Law
25 Enforcement.
26
27 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Good morning. Kevin McCarthy, Southeast Fishery
28 Science Center.
29
30 **JOHN MCGOVERN:** Good morning, Jack McGovern, NOAA Fisheries.
31
32 **NELSON CRESPO:** Good morning, everyone. Nelson Crespo, DAP Chair,
33 Puerto Rico.
34
35 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Gerson Martínez, DAP Saint Croix.
36
37 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras, DAP Saint Thomas/Saint John. Good
38 morning, everyone.
39
40 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Good morning, Alida Ortiz, Outreach and
41 Education Advisory Panel.
42
43 **VANCE VICENTE:** Vance Vicente, SSC Chair.
44
45 **SENNAI HABTES:** Sennai Habtes, Virgin Islands Division of Fish and
46 Wildlife and EBFM TAP Chair.
47
48 **RUTH GOMEZ:** Good morning, Ruth Gomez, Saint Thomas Fisherman's

1 Association.
2
3 **DARYL BRYAN:** Good morning. Daryl Bryan, Saint Thomas Fisherman's
4 Association.
5
6 **JANNETTE RAMOS-GARCÍA:** Good morning. Jannette Ramos-García,
7 Puerto Rico Sea Grant program, OEAP Panel member.
8
9 **GABRIEL POSI:** Buenos días. Gabriel Posi, Municipio de Cabo Rojo.
10
11 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Wanda Ortiz, Sea Grant Puerto Rico y
12 Universidad de Puerto Rico en Mayagüez.
13
14 **MARÍA DE LOS A. IRIZARRY:** María Irizarry, Council Staff.
15
16 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** That's all, Mr. Chairman.
17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just state your name for the roll call.
19
20 **ABDIEL CONNELLY:** Good morning. My name is Abdiel Connelly.
21 Fisherman from Vieques.
22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** The mic is yours. Let's start with your
24 presentation.
25
26 **SAMAR Sea school - Abdiel Connelly**
27
28 **ABDIEL CONNELLY:** Thank you.
29
30 Good morning. My name is Abdiel Connelly. I'm a fisherman from
31 Vieques and today I'll be talking about the sea adaptation program.
32 But first I'd like to properly introduce myself. I was homeschooled
33 since an early age. The see was one of my classrooms introduced by
34 my grandfather and father. Understanding the see became my passion.
35 Eventually, it became my job at the age of 15 until I left to study
36 Marine Transportation in California. But it wasn't only after three
37 years that I came back to where I felt I belonged.
38
39 It has been believed that to be a fisherman you need to pass
40 heritage or to take from our ecosystems but there's a way that we
41 could make this a healthy fishing by not only scuba diving fishes
42 that is normally practiced. I'd like to enforce that we can also
43 adapt to the water by making a healthy art of fishing, fishing
44 with the water. Thanks to all these beliefs, fishing has been
45 decreased also our fisheries have been decreased, but fishermen
46 have turned to be more normally elders and major people.
47
48 I started sharing what my lifestyle was in social media to try to

1 motivate the young to get out there and know where we are and
2 appreciate where we're from, and that this is an opportunity that
3 we all have. I believe there's a way that we could work in harmony
4 with the water and make this a healthy way of fishing, adapting to
5 what we live nowadays and not what we've been living, in the past.
6 That's why we moved to make a school program working directly with
7 the kids to develop a movement of these young fishermen and use
8 this to our advantage, that the young are not fishing, and create
9 this new way for fishermen to adapt to what we live nowadays, kind
10 of a fishing evolution.

11
12 We go through all the risks, the preparations to get in the water
13 first, which is stuff as basic as swimming, preparing our own gears
14 and mainly educating of our ecosystem so we can move with it not
15 on top of it, so we can have a healthier tomorrow. This is, I
16 believe, the opportunity we were all given, it is to get to know
17 where we are. By getting to know where we are, we get to know and
18 appreciate where we are from. And when we appreciate and know where
19 we are, we're going to protect it. So, I believe this is our first
20 step. To keep growing, we hope that we can make this a step that
21 we could be used all around. Right now, we currently have-- what
22 I have is an 18-foot boat, my personal gears, but we aspire for
23 more. We aspire to make this a reality. We aspire to make this
24 even a university, one that we don't have in Vieques. Thank you.
25 Any questions?

26 27 **Questions/Comments** 28

29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. The uniqueness of what you're
30 doing is-- I had the opportunity to talk to you yesterday. Your
31 mindset is, from scratch, to do it right. To educate the kids, the
32 regulations, to educate them about the new opportunities,
33 including development of market for the alternative species, which
34 is totally related to what we did yesterday at the activity with
35 the consumption of alternative species. I think this Council should
36 be paying attention to you and should support you in any way that
37 is possible, your effort in Vieques. Especially because it is an
38 underserved community in Puerto Rico, it is isolated from the main
39 island and it has its uniqueness, especially uniqueness in habitat.
40 There is no place in Puerto Rico with the mosaic of habitats and
41 fishery grounds that Vieques has.

42
43 If there is a perfect scenario for development of deep water,
44 squid, swordfish, coastal pelagics and other alternative species,
45 the model should be considering Vieques as the pilot or the first
46 venue to start that. After that, it just can grow around the
47 island, the rest of the island, Culebra and other places. Miguel.
48 Gerson.

1
2 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Thank you. I want to applaud what Mr. Abdiel has
3 been doing there. There is always-- Gerson Martínez, for the
4 record. There is always a hero in a fisherman's mind, a person
5 that guides us to become who we are today. And I really appreciate
6 what you have been doing for these young people in the island of
7 Vieques because if you don't train them to find a way to support
8 themselves and their family, they going to always go to the wrong
9 direction and end up in jail, dead, or doing bad things. What you
10 are doing is very beautiful. 'Te aplaudo por eso' because we always
11 look for a hero in our life and you are one of those. In the
12 future, when you grow old and you grow a white bear like me,
13 somebody's going to look up to you and say, "that's the guy that
14 teach me to fish. That's the guy that teach me to maintain my
15 family." That is very good what you're doing, and I want to give
16 you an applause for this.

17
18 **ABDIEL CONNELLY:** Thank you.

19
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy and Miguel.

21
22 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Andy Strelcheck, NOAA Fisheries. Thank you for
23 the presentation really inspiring in terms of the work that you're
24 doing. One comment I wanted to make is we have a Marine Resource
25 Education Program here in Puerto Rico and I think there's real
26 opportunities to work with you and the work that you're doing in
27 terms of young fishermen and education in the partnership with
28 that Marine Resource Education program. So, we will get your
29 contact information and definitely would like to connect with you
30 with regard to that program.

31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, either Vanessa and myself, we are in that
33 group, but we would appreciate if it came from you and we, Vanessa
34 and I, we can follow up on it for sure. You have to be there. It's
35 going to be at another venue. Miguel and Vanessa.

36
37 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** After you, Vanessa. I follow you.

38
39 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you. Vanessa Ramírez, for the record. Well,
40 I have to congratulate you for your initiative in Vieques. As
41 Marcos says, we are going to have an MREP coming soon for the East
42 coast. Usually in the next May we are going to be around bringing
43 some information for all the commercial fishermen and new fishermen
44 especially. So, I hope that we keep in contact, and I will see you
45 in May. Thanks.

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Miguel.

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿Tienes a alguien en el chat, Cristina?
2
3 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Okay. Michelle Schärer. What is the
4 deepest you can dive safely to catch seafood?
5
6 **ABDIEL CONNELLY:** Well, personally, I don't try to commercial fish
7 below 90 feet, but to dominate 35 feet and 40 feet, I think you
8 could be able to be a consistent commercial fisherman.
9
10 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. And before I hand the word to Miguel,
11 because people don't know who is your champion, who inspired you
12 to get into fishing?
13
14 **ABDIEL CONNELLY:** My grandfather introduced me to the water. He
15 had an education program in Vieques, which me, without realizing,
16 ended up enjoying and being in the same view that maybe he had.
17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel.
19
20 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Que diga el nombre del abuelo.
21
22 **ABDIEL CONNELLY:** It is Charles Connolly.
23
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Everybody knows him. Miguel.
25
26 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** I met your grandfather a long time ago. Never
27 thought of having the grandchild here in front of us. I met you
28 through Jannette Ramos and there are several things that we cannot
29 help you with, but others we can. Help you with the material for
30 education and everything.
31
32 So, for the next step-- and thank you again for coming and taking
33 your time to come here. Alida, Jannette, Diana and I will meet you
34 or talk to you later on and see where we can help with your project.
35 And also, if you want to expand, disperse your project to other
36 areas, we can contact other champions.
37
38 I believe that the generation change, something that you mentioned,
39 40 to 60 is the average age, but the average age of fisherman
40 Puerto Rico is over 55. So, it is really, really encouraging to
41 see young people like you teaching other young fishers to come in.
42 We have a fisher that we met that was the Chair for a few seconds.
43 He's 11-year-old fellow from Saint Croix. One of my heroes by the
44 way. And I believe that the Council will continue working toward
45 developing more opportunities for youngsters, especially education
46 about the role of a fisher within the ecosystem. The role of a
47 fisher as an entity to promote safe fishing, sustainable fishing,
48 etcetera. So, we are going to be talking to you soon, this month.

1 **ABDIEL CONNELLY:** Appreciate it.
2
3 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** John quiere decir algo.
4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** John.
6
7 **JOHN WALTER, III:** John Walter, Southeast Fishery Science Center.
8 Yes, Abdiel, I really appreciated chatting last night about spear
9 fishing, and I think one thing that really resonated was the
10 movement of younger fishermen into the fishery and how that's
11 necessary because you need recruitment into a fishery and probably
12 given the changes that are going to occur with climate change,
13 with environmental change, that you need people who can adapt. I
14 think that's where younger fishermen have that adaptability that
15 you can see new markets, you can see as a new species comes in,
16 that there's a market for it. I think that's where it's valuable
17 to have that and that otherwise our fisheries won't recruit if
18 there aren't new people getting into it and our youth getting into
19 it. So, I think that's something that kind of resonates across
20 almost all of our fisheries where they're often aging and need new
21 people to get into it. So, I applaud the effort. Thank you.
22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, John. Thank you, Abdiel. We wish to have
24 way more time to make many questions. I invite you to stay around
25 as much as you can. I know that you have to go back to Vieques, to
26 your place, today, but please keep this conversation with him on
27 the breaks in the meantime that he's around. Thank you. Thank you
28 very much.
29
30 **ABDIEL CONNELLY:** Thank you.
31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Now we are going to go for the presentation that
33 was left from yesterday, from Sarah? I'm sorry. Okay. From Laura
34 Cimo Update on Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission
35 Spawning Aggregation and Queen Conch Working Group meetings.
36
37 Hello, Laura, good morning.
38
39 **Update on Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission Spawning**
40 **Aggregation and Queen Conch Working Group meetings.**
41
42 **LAURA CIMO:** Good morning. Can you hear me, okay?
43
44 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, we can. You can proceed. Thank you very much
45 and welcome.
46
47 **LAURA CIMO:** Okay, perfect. Sure. Thank you. First of all, let me
48 make sure I've got everything ready to go because I think, in fact

1 if it's okay, I actually was hoping-- Cristina, would you mind
2 basically putting the presentation on screen?
3
4 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Hi Laura, this is Liajay, for the record.
5 We are your presentation to the screen, so allow us a minute.
6
7 **LAURA CIMO:** Sure, no worries. Great. Cristina, is it okay to
8 start?
9
10 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Yes.
11
12 **LAURA CIMO:** Okay, perfect. And if it's okay, Cristina, maybe I
13 can just let you know when to turn to the next slide. Is that okay?
14
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah. Cristina.
16
17 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** There you are Laura.
18
19 **LAURA CIMO:** Okay, perfect.
20
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** She can turn the slides for you, don't worry.
22
23 **LAURA CIMO:** That'd be wonderful. Thank you so much. Well first of
24 all, so my name is Laura Cimo and I'm from the NOAA Fisheries
25 Office of International Affairs Trade Commerce. And I'm here to
26 give some updates related to the Western Central Atlantic Fishery
27 Commission or WECAFC. The focus on my presentation today will be
28 primarily to provide some updates from two recent working group
29 meetings that were held in mid-March.
30
31 And next slide, please.
32
33 Okay. So, as we've presented for WECAFC at several of the previous
34 Council meetings, I won't go into a whole lot of detail on the
35 background, but just wanted to share a couple reminders that WECAFC
36 is a regional fishery body under FAO and that basically the purpose
37 of the organization is to provide non-binding recommendations and
38 guidance for the conservation and management of living marine
39 resources in the wider Caribbean. And although the recommendations
40 are non-binding, of course, we feel like it's really important to
41 have participation in the organization so that we can promote the
42 sustainable fishery management of our shared resources throughout
43 the Caribbean. And just one more note is that we are among 34
44 members of the organization.
45
46 And next slide, please.
47
48 During my presentation, I'll focus on, just like I said, I

1 mentioned there's two working group meetings that were recently
2 held. So, I'll just give a little bit of background on the Spawning
3 Aggregations Working Group and then share some updates from the
4 meeting of that particular working group. Then I'll provide a
5 little bit of information on the Queen Conch Working Group and
6 share some outcomes of that particular meeting. And then finally,
7 I'll share some other updates that are likely going to be of
8 interest to the Council.

9
10 Next slide, please.

11
12 So, the Spawning Aggregations Working Group of WECAFC was
13 established in 2012 at our meeting in 2014. Just as a reminder,
14 this actually is a joint working group. It's a joint working group
15 between WECAFC, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council, the
16 Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization or OSPESCA
17 and the Regional Fishery Mechanism, or CRFM. And there's been a
18 lot of work that's been conducted by this organization, the working
19 group in particular, but just wanted to highlight a couple things
20 that I think are noteworthy.

21
22 First, that is that the working group has supported the development
23 of a 10-year communication strategy. That was endorsed by the
24 commission at its meeting in 2019. Second, that the working group
25 supported and contributed to the development of a Regional Fish
26 Spawning Aggregations Fishery Management Plan. That's focused on
27 fish spawning aggregations of nassau grouper and mutton snapper.
28 And although this FMP is focused on those particular species, I do
29 want to mention that this will provide a useful framework for the
30 management of other species that aggregate to spawn. This
31 particular plan was just endorsed by the commission at its meeting
32 in 2022.

33
34 The United States has been extremely active in the working group.
35 There's the participation of both the Council and NOAA Fisheries
36 and we've been very supportive of its work. At the most recent
37 working group meeting NOAA Fisheries provided a presentation that
38 showed how U.S. management and protection of species that aggregate
39 to spawn in the Caribbean are consistent with this regional plan
40 that was endorsed. And we also shared some information on the
41 implementation of some recent recommendations that were adopted by
42 the commission to conserve fish spawning aggregations.

43
44 I do want to also make one quick note that we feel it's really
45 important to have participation of these Caribbean at this meeting
46 given the implications for some of the transboundary management of
47 species.

1 And next slide, please.

2
3 Next, I'd just like to highlight some important conclusions of the
4 recent meeting, which took place in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The
5 meeting which was held in a hybrid format was graciously hosted by
6 the Council and of course, we supported that meeting. There are 10
7 countries that were participating, although most did participate
8 virtually, and we were lucky to have broad representation by NOAA
9 Fisheries at the meeting. María López, Kevin McCarthy, Orian Tzadik
10 and I were there. And I do want to take this opportunity to thank
11 the Council and my NOAA colleagues, both, for their support and
12 participation in the meeting.

13
14 We had a really packed agenda. We had a lot of updates and
15 information on pending work in the region to both assess and
16 conserve fish spawning aggregations. But just for purpose of this
17 meeting, I'm going to highlight just a couple that I think are
18 important. First, that is that at the meeting the members basically
19 reviewed the implementation status of the Regional Fishery
20 Management Plan in sought to identify any gaps. And the gaps that
21 were identified included a need to have better knowledge about the
22 management plan. Also, there was a need to have better information
23 about the location of fish spawning aggregation sites. And finally,
24 there was a recommendation that we really need to have basically
25 better measures to protect those sites.

26
27 Participants also received an update on a key component of the
28 communication strategy, and that is a two-year trilingual public
29 education campaign that's titled Big Fish. The campaign,
30 basically, is designed to protect fish spawning aggregations with
31 a focus on Nassau grouper and mutton snapper by raising awareness
32 of aggregations and the importance of their protection for species
33 conservation. This campaign will be officially launched in August
34 of this year with the international release of a one-hour film.

35
36 I do note that we're lucky, we found out just this morning, it
37 looks like the film will have a release in the states actually as
38 early as next week. And also, there's some other education outreach
39 materials that have been developed or are in the process of
40 development under this campaign and they include everything from
41 posters, short films, podcasts, there's radio kits, public service
42 announcements, booklets, and also a platform that'll be used to
43 share the resource and materials. These communication tools are
44 geared at fishermen, decision makers and the general public. And
45 in case you haven't seen the short films yet, I did provide a link
46 on the slide where you can find it on the NOAA Fisheries website.
47 But just to note that these resources are also available on the
48 Council website. I really appreciate the Council making these

1 available. Certainly, if you haven't seen them, I would encourage
2 you to look at the materials. They're very informative, they're
3 well done, and the footage in the short film in particular is just
4 incredible.

5
6 Next slide, please.

7
8 So other key outcomes of the meeting include an update of the
9 working groups the work plan that basically would include some new
10 activities that were determined to be done in the intersectional
11 period. And this new work will include several pilot projects
12 that'll be conducted in Belize, The Bahamas, and Cuba. And the aim
13 is to compile information on fish spawning aggregations of nassau
14 grouper and mutton snapper to improve our understanding of the
15 species status. There were also several recommendations that were
16 adopted by the working group at this meeting, and they'll be
17 considered by the full commission at its meeting later this fall.
18 And these recommendations include the establishment of a fish
19 spawning aggregation coordination committee, which will basically
20 focus on advancing implementation of the regional plan. There was
21 also a recommendation to prioritize nassau grouper and mutton
22 snapper for the purposes of data collection reporting in WECAFC.
23 And finally, there was also a recommendation on the use of
24 descending devices as a best practice for basically releasing deep-
25 water species to hopefully increase their post release survival.

26
27 And next slide, please.

28
29 So, next I'll provide just a brief overview of the Queen Conch
30 Working Group. This working group was also created in 2012, and
31 this is also a joint working group. This is between WECAFC, the
32 Council, OSPESCA, CRFM, but another partner is the Convention on
33 International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
34 or CITES. CITES plays a particularly important role in this
35 particular working group since queen conch is listed in appendix
36 two under the convention.

37
38 There's been a number of activities that have been conducted by
39 the working group since its creation, but just want to highlight
40 a few here. First, was the development of a Regional Queen Conch
41 Conservation Management Plan which was endorsed not only by the
42 17th conference of the parties to society, but the 16th meeting of
43 the commission in 2016.

44
45 Sorry. My apologies, I'm in a conference room and the lights went
46 out. Also, another outcome of the meeting that was important and
47 actually something that the working group has been focused on for
48 quite some time is establishment of a Queen Conch Statistical

1 Scientific and Technical Advisory Group. That group is comprised
2 of a number of experts with multidisciplinary expertise, and they
3 provide guidance on a number of priorities and issues. Also, the
4 working group has supported the development of several tools and
5 resources to facilitate CITES's implementation support sustainable
6 fisheries management, and also to improve our trade monitoring.

7
8 And similar to the spawning aggregations working group the United
9 States has played a really active role in this particular working
10 group. At each of the meetings NOAA Fisheries presents basically
11 its implementation of the Regional Fishery Management Plan and any
12 recommendations that have been endorsed by this particular body.
13 And again, we just want to emphasize how important it is to have
14 to U.S. Caribbean participate in these meetings.

15
16 Next slide, please.

17
18 Okay. So, the most recent meeting of the Queen Conch Working Group
19 was held back-to-back with the Spawning Aggregation Working Group
20 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Again, this meeting was hosted by the
21 Caribbean Fishery Management Council with support of NOAA
22 Fisheries. There was similar participation in this meeting in the
23 similar delegation among the us. And several key outcomes of the
24 meeting that I do think are important to highlight is that we had
25 a discussion of the status implementation of this regional plan.
26 And then the aim, we've done this at every meeting, is to basically
27 monitor progress and just identify any continued gaps that need to
28 be addressed.

29
30 So, at the meeting we identified several gaps and some needs that
31 need to be addressed. The first is that there was a need to improve
32 our landings data and apply some recommended regional and national
33 conversion factors to hopefully facilitate the standardized
34 reporting of our trade and production statistics.

35
36 Also, there was a recommendation that we need to have an enhanced
37 understanding of local consumption of queen conch. And also,
38 there's identified need to develop guidance for the making of non-
39 detriment findings as required for the export of queen conch under
40 CITES. The CITES secretary at the meeting provided several updates
41 on projects that are aimed at ensuring the sustainable harvest and
42 trade of queen conch. And there was also an update and readout of
43 some decisions that were made on queen conch at the 19th meeting
44 of the conference of the parties to CITES in November of 2022.

45
46 And then finally the queen conch working group learned of an
47 exciting pilot project in Jamaica, which is aimed at improving
48 landings and effort data in artisanal and industrial queen conch

1 fisheries. And the hope is to help determine stock exploitation
2 and determine some sustainable annual quotas.

3
4 Next slide, please.

5
6 So, several outcomes of this meeting included also an update to
7 the group's work plan to reflect some new activities. The working
8 group also proposed several recommendations that will be
9 considered at the next commission meeting in the fall. These
10 recommendations include improving the reporting of landings data
11 by processing grades and the application of some recommended
12 regional and national conversion factors. Also, to advance the
13 development of a genetic toolkit to help track illegal queen conch
14 in trade. And also, to improve data on socioeconomics, which would
15 include an understanding of local consumption and trade at the
16 national level. And then finally, to investigate and consider
17 climate change and its impacts on queen conch and the fishery.

18
19 And next slide, please.

20
21 And now I'd just like to share a few other updates I hopefully
22 will be of interest to the Council. That is that the Moored Fish
23 Aggregation Working Group is meeting actually this week. And the
24 aim of this meeting is basically to finalize the development of
25 several documents. First, is to finalize a draft MFAD Management
26 Plan for the wider Caribbean. Also, to finalize a guide for
27 improved MFAD catches and basically, assessment of the impact of
28 catches on those stocks. And also, a manual for MFAD governance.
29 Just to note that these documents were considered at the last
30 working group meeting, and they had been considered at the last
31 commission meeting. The United States had provided input into their
32 development and was very supportive. Unfortunately, however one
33 particular member the European Union expressed opposition and
34 basically wasn't willing to accept the documents, so they requested
35 an additional meeting. And so, we're hoping that the meeting this
36 week will hopefully finalize these documents and they'll be
37 considered at the commission meeting in the fall.

38
39 And speaking of the commission meeting in the fall, basically the
40 dates have been set for September 6th to the 8th of this year. And
41 then finally, we want to give an update on a topic that we've
42 raised at the Council several times. And that is that we have
43 finally secured funds for the first meeting of the Flyingfish-
44 Dolphinfinh Working Group. And actually, that meeting is scheduled
45 to take place hopefully in June 2024. The exact dates and location
46 will be determined, hopefully fairly soon. And we do want to
47 express our extreme gratitude to the Council who has graciously
48 offered to host this meeting with support of NOAA Fisheries Office

1 of International Affairs Trading Commerce.

2
3 And of course, you know, with all these updates, we'll continue to
4 share new information with the Council and with respect to this
5 Flyingfish-Dolphinfish Working Group meeting in particular in
6 advance of the meeting, we'll definitely be looking to the Council
7 to provide your input in coordination with our regional colleagues
8 and look forward to continued collaboration.

9
10 Okay, next slide.

11
12 This is the end of the presentation, so I just want to express my
13 sincere gratitude for your interest, your collaboration and all
14 your engagement. And happy to take any questions if there's time.

15 16 **Questions/Comments**

17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Laura. Thank you for the great job. Your
19 office is doing with those working group that is basically
20 connecting the knowledge and the management throughout the
21 Caribbean. It's open for question. Miguel.

22
23 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Not a question, but for the meeting of the
24 Flyingfish-Dolphin Wahoo Working Group once we set the date, we
25 are going to collaborate. We are going to receive money from NOAA
26 Fisheries. Those monies were allocated from other activities that
27 we had. So, we already set aside some time and money to discuss it
28 with the coordination committee and Laura is part of the committee.

29
30 In the case of National Fishery Service, local waters, Southeast
31 Region and María López is our contact. So, we will inform you in
32 due time about this development with the Dolphinfish Wahoo. The
33 importance of this meeting is that yesterday and today we are going
34 to be discussing the dolphinfish again and etcetera. One of the
35 key management measures is establishing of the size limit, so the
36 Council will participate, and Dr. Merten also, at the meeting in
37 June of 2024. So, hopefully by that time the Council will know
38 what is it that you would like to do and how we are going to be
39 progressing with the management of the dolphinfish and the wahoo
40 so we can present at that meeting at least an idea of where we are
41 going with this. The only thing that we can do is lead by example.
42 We cannot go tell other countries "This is a great idea" if we
43 think that it's not in our area.

44
45 So, thank you Laura, for the presentation. It was very
46 comprehensive and I'm looking forward to keep working with you. I
47 probably will see you in September, isn't it. September the 6th?
48 Maybe it'll be virtual. Did you mention the place?

1 **LAURA CIMO:** No, thank you. Oh, sorry Mr. Chair. Is it acceptable
2 to respond?

3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Go ahead.

5
6 **LAURA CIMO:** Oh, thank you. No, thank you very much, both Marcos
7 and Miguel. Yes, so the meeting that will take place in September,
8 will take place in Jamaica. We have not heard if it's going to be
9 a hybrid meeting. We hope that it will be to allow more
10 participation, but unfortunately, that decision hasn't yet been
11 made. So certainly, I'd be happy to share any further updates that
12 we receive.

13
14 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Thank you.

15
16 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. No, I don't see any further question. We
17 keep in touch. Thank you very much.

18
19 Next presentation now is Sarah.

20
21 **Review Draft Amendment 3 to the St. Croix and St. Thomas/St.**
22 **John Fishery Management Plans to Develop Management Measures for**
23 **Dolphin and Wahoo- Cont.**
24

25 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay, so this is Sarah. Where we left off
26 yesterday was, we had made it all the way through size limits and
27 we did recreational bag limits for dolphin, but we need to look at
28 recreational bag limits for wahoo. So, here's the slide that has
29 the three alternatives for Action 2(b), which is Saint Croix, and
30 Action 4(b), which is Saint Thomas. So, Alternative 1 is no bag
31 limit. Alternative 2 would establish a bag limit of four wahoo per
32 person per day, or 20 wahoo per vessel, per day, whichever is less.
33 And that would be compatible with the new U.S.V.I. regulations
34 whenever they're implemented. And then Alternative 3 is a kind of
35 a placeholder right now but it could be a more conservative bag
36 limit compared to Alternative 2 if the Council likes. And the
37 example that is put in there, the two wahoo per person per day or
38 six wahoo per vessel per day was proposed by the Saint Thomas/
39 Saint John DAP at their meeting this past March. And then again,
40 the rationale that's there for right now is to protect against
41 overfishing the resource by this sector. So that's where we left
42 off.

43
44 There is-- the next slide if you would please --kind of talks about
45 the pros and cons of each of the alternatives. So not establishing
46 the bag limit would still leave it to unlimited harvest by the
47 sector, which could potentially deplete the local resource. The
48 two alternatives, the action alternatives, the four and 20 or two

1 and six if you so choose, would allow for greater biological
2 benefits than the no bag limit, because they would leave more wahoo
3 for future catch, which in turn could provide for economic benefits
4 through a healthier fishery. But alternatives two and three could
5 have short term negative effects if recreational fishers typically
6 catch more than those numbers. For instance, if they're used to
7 catching 15 wahoo per person per day. And then you have to think
8 about compounded, we did add the size limit yesterday, so how might
9 that affect fishers?

10
11 So, it could increase discards, alternatives two and three, because
12 if they're catching small fish and they have to throw them back
13 now or if they were going to do that anyway because for whatever
14 reason, this isn't the fish I want, and they throw it back. So
15 that could increase discards or discard mortality, again, if the
16 fish swallowed the hook hole.

17
18 Alternative 2, as I mentioned, would be compatible with the new
19 regulations. Alternative 1, would not be compatible at all and
20 could create enforcement issues. And then depending on what was
21 selected for Alternative 3, if it's a more conservative bag limit
22 in federal waters, there would still be some conflicts there, but
23 it would be less because they would be they wouldn't be allowed to
24 catch as many as they would in state waters. So, it would still be
25 kind of difficult for enforcement, but maybe not as difficult as
26 number one. And then lastly the two action alternatives would
27 require rulemaking to implement these bag limits and then education
28 and outreach for the new regulations.

29
30 So that's kind of the pros and cons to think about. And if you
31 want to go back to the previous slide now it's ready for any kind
32 of discussion or motions.

33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** It open for discussion and motions. Julian?

35
36 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Yeah. Julian Magras, for the record. This is the
37 same problem that I had with the dolphin yesterday, and it was
38 clearly said by Sarah just now. We have increased the size limit
39 of these two stocks, and here it is now, we are looking to set a
40 compatible regulation along with the territorial waters. The
41 recreational license has not been implemented in the territorial
42 waters. It's been approved, it's not saying that it can go back
43 and be amended to drop these numbers. We have increased the size
44 limit, so these guys who will be allowed to catch up to 20 wahoo
45 per day per vessel with a bigger size fish will definitely overrun
46 the existing commercial ACL because there is no recreational ACL.
47 And I know I have an FAC member in here, Daryl Bryan, he is here,
48 and he has a lot of concern with this. He had a lot of concerns

1 with the dolphin yesterday also. I think it needs to be brought
2 back to the Board Fishery Advisory Committees in territorial and
3 a request to the commissioner to revisit the bag limits for these
4 two species. Because here it is, we are trying to protect, but
5 then on the other hand, we are blowing the stock out of proportion
6 and it's a big issue. Mr. Ricardo said it yesterday, if we have
7 bigger fish, guess what? Your numbers are going to be higher.

8
9 So, I am asking and requesting that something be done to address
10 this issue before we move forward with adapting compatible
11 regulations. Thank you.

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Sennai.

14
15 **SENNAI HABTES:** Morning. Sennai Habtes, for the record. I just
16 want to clarify a couple of things and maybe we can have NOAA weigh
17 in on this as well. First, Sarah and María, maybe you can explain,
18 are there any current recreational data used in compiling
19 information towards ACLs used by SERO for managing any of the
20 stocks within the U.S. Caribbean?

21
22 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** The answer to that is no.

23
24 **SENNAI HABTES:** Okay. Thank you for that clarification. So, in
25 reference to the first point Mr. Magras was making, there would be
26 no use of any recreational information coming in towards
27 considerations for ACLs, which are currently only managing the
28 commercial stocks within the territories of the U.S. Caribbean
29 because we use data from the CCRs. We do have an indication where
30 we are moving in the U.S. Virgin Islands to using hook and line
31 fisheries, which may cause an increase in landings for some of the
32 pelagic fisheries. At that indication, that is information that
33 can be used to change the way measures are taken for current
34 fisheries and how we consider the management of those current
35 fisheries, but we need to indicate that data to use for that.

36
37 Second, although there is not an actual recreational fishing
38 license that is being enforced, those rules and regulations are in
39 place. My concern in that not having any of these regulations in
40 place could lead to no sort of management actions towards these
41 stocks, which is part of the reason for putting those in.

42
43 The last thing I think I would also like to clarify is it is not
44 simply within the U.S. Virgin Islands for that bag limit of 20 per
45 vessel, it would be 20 per vessel if they have at least four or
46 five persons on that boat. If there's a single person on that boat,
47 the limit for the wahoo would be a bag limit per person bag limit.
48 So, I just wanted to make sure that those things were clarified

1 before we move forward with any discussions for this particular
2 measure. Thank you.

3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian.

5
6 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** So, I'm going to go right back to Sarah and to
7 María and to the higher ups. So, correct me if I'm wrong, I know
8 because we don't have a recreational quota or a recreational that's
9 being reported, once this license is implemented, it's going to
10 take at least three years minimum to collect data on the
11 recreational side. So, as far as I understand the process for the
12 years I've been involved, because we don't have an ACL for the
13 recreational, the commercial ACL would reflect both sectors once
14 it's being reported, because they don't have a number.

15
16 So, say for instance, next year, the recreational guys report 5,000
17 pounds of wahoo, 10,000 pounds of dolphin, that's going to go
18 towards the commercial landings that's already in place. That ACL
19 that's been set already because an ACL has not been set for the
20 recreational fishery as yet. So, I want some clarification on that
21 because I'm listening to what Sennai is saying, and I totally
22 disagree because we have an opportunity for compatible regulations
23 right now with a lower number.

24
25 These guys are considered recreational. They don't need 20 fish.
26 The commercial guys need 20 fish. So, this is the problem. Why,
27 why do you need 20 fish to feed a family? The charter boats that
28 are going out, they already been paid for the day. We don't get
29 paid until we catch a fish and get back to the market and sell it.
30 So, if you want to go there and catch fish for consumption for
31 your family, you don't need 20 fish. What you need is maybe two
32 fish. So, I don't understand what we are trying to protect, but I
33 think we're going the wrong way. Thank you.

34
35 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, I'm going to try to answer all of that and
36 hopefully it will make it clear.

37
38 The commercial landings are reported through your catch forms.
39 When the U.S.V.I. gets the recreational landings system up and
40 running that, I'm assuming, will be a separate system. So, you
41 will have a bucket of data of commercial landings and then a bucket
42 of data for recreational. Anything that the recreational guy's
43 report will not go against the commercial ACL they are separate.

44
45 What we would want to do is, given enough time of having
46 recreational landings, is to establish recreational ACL. So, they
47 would have their own separate ACL, which would likely be a lot
48 higher than the commercial ACL. So, anything that the recreational

1 fishers report would go, would count against theirs, it wouldn't
2 go against the commercial.

3
4 In the meantime, since we don't have that, the recreational guys,
5 they can report, but it's just basically it goes nowhere. It
6 doesn't go towards commercial landings or commercial ACLs.
7 However, if the commercial landings exceed the commercial ACL,
8 remember the AM, the accountability measure, is different for
9 pelagics, we would take a look and the Council and NMFS would
10 decide if any action was needed. If they decided that a closure
11 type action was needed, then the closure would apply to everybody.
12 So that's where they're kind of tied together in absence of
13 recreational. But whatever they land doesn't count against you and
14 your ACL as a commercial fisherman, but you as a commercial
15 fisherman, if you take too much, it could impact the recreational
16 guys. So that's how that they're kind of connected. Does that
17 answer your questions?

18
19 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Well, it clarifies it a lot more, but then I go
20 back to the Council, and I say, our ultimate goal is to protect
21 the resources for the future generation, future use for everyone.
22 So, if we are protected by increasing a size limit of these
23 species, we should decrease the bag limit because it's not the
24 same. Before you had a bag limit with a smaller fish, and you were
25 able to catch this quantity of fish. So, I would like
26 clarification. We need to do better than how we are doing this.

27
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. I want to bring the discussion to hear from
29 the Council members. Andy.

30
31 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. Thanks, Marcos. So, I guess a couple of
32 things, right? So, bag limit often is interpreted as everyone's
33 going to go out and catch that bag limit, right? It is an
34 opportunity to go out and catch up to that bag limit or up to that
35 vessel limit. The data in all areas of the country show that
36 commonly we don't catch the full bag limit, but it's the potential
37 to obviously catch that bag limit. Here, my understanding is
38 U.S.V.I. has not even implemented this bag and vessel limit that
39 it's still pending, so we don't have restrictions right now in
40 terms of limiting harvest. So, anything we do would be to the
41 betterment of conservation, assuming people are exceeding this bag
42 and vessel limit.

43
44 What I'd like to recommend, because I generally kind of agree with
45 some of Ricardo's comments yesterday about dolphin and some of the
46 concerns that Julian is expressing, is that I think we do need a
47 new alternative here, Alternative 3, and would recommend a two
48 fish bag limit with a 10 fish vessel limit. So, it's half of

1 essentially the proposed Alternative 2. Doesn't mean we have to
2 select it as preferred, but I think it gives us a range of options
3 for consideration. And then based on that, if we're ready to select
4 or preferred, we could certainly discuss that today. But there's
5 always the option amendment to change that if we wanted to change
6 our position before final action.

7
8 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. I want to bring to the table something
9 along the same lines that Andy is bringing. Based on my experience,
10 fishing for wahoo, and not my experience fishing, but my experience
11 on the dock, to see 20 wahoos on one boat, that's not common. I
12 personally never saw that except on the situation, rarely, where
13 they find a log floating to catching small wahoos that we already
14 address with the minimum size, right? But for the wahoos that you
15 fish on the drop off, which is the valuable fishery for the
16 Caribbean, the reality is that we are not going to have those 20
17 fish bag limits happening very often. I never caught more than
18 probably eight wahoos in a full day fishing for bigger wahoos
19 myself. Maybe I'm a bad fisherman, but I also didn't see that on
20 other boats very, very common. I'd like to hear from Nelson.

21
22 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nelson, for the record.
23 Marcos, contrary to what you said, in the West coast of Puerto
24 Rico, in the season, I see almost every day.

25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** 20?

27
28 **NELSON CRESPO:** 20 or more per vessel.

29
30 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** En La Parguera también.

31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** How big?

33
34 **NELSON CRESPO:** Huge ones. 20 pounder, 30 pounder, 50 pounders.

35
36 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for the clarification. Probably it's
37 because I don't know how to fish for wahoo. Anybody from the
38 Council that wants to speak.

39
40 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes. James Kreglo. Good morning. Saint Thomas.
41 I'd just like to say it. I agree with everything that Julian's
42 been saying about--

43
44 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Can you closer to the mic?

45
46 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Oh, I'm sorry. I agree with what Julian Magras
47 has been saying about the catch limits for the wahoo. Again, to me
48 recreational fishing or sportsmen that should take a few fish home

1 to eat, but not catch a multitude of fish to do whatever else
2 they're going to do with. So, I agree with what Julian's saying.
3 That's it for right now. Thank you.

4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Kreglo. Nicole?

6
7 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yeah, just a point of clarification is then
8 what this discussion is about, is it a preference for Alternative
9 3. Just making a point of clarification.

10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** We are discussing the whole range of options and
12 general aspects of it. We are not referring to a specific
13 alternative at this point.

14
15 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Okay. I guess I haven't heard. So, the range of
16 options are not establishing any limit, establishing a limit of
17 four per person, which is compatible with the territorial
18 regulations or establishing a more conservative bag limit. And
19 what I'm understanding is that Alternative 3 is what the preference
20 of the folks that are having a discussion are leaning towards. I
21 just wanted to make sure that I understood that.

22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** This is my understanding too. Andy?

24
25 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, and I'll look to maybe Miguel, as well
26 as the Council, if you want, I can make a motion to add a new
27 Alternative 3 with that lower bag and vessel and if that's
28 appropriate or we can just give staff direction, whatever's your
29 preference. Would rather have a formal motion?

30
31 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** We should have a motion.

32
33 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Okay. So, I'll make a motion.

34
35 All right, so my motion will be *to include in Action 2(b) and*
36 *Action 4(b), a new alternative, two wahoo per person per day bag*
37 *limit, and 10 wahoo per vessel per day. Whichever is less.*

38
39 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** You need a second?

40
41 **MARCOS HANKE:** Is there any second?

42
43 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** I'll second that.

44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Open for discussion. On the table,
46 anybody would like to discuss? We have it on the chat. Go ahead,
47 Cristina.

1 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Ricardo Lugo. Can we consider pounds
2 limits instead of number of fish?
3
4 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No.
5
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for the question. But that's not a-
7
8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** That is not viable way to operate for
9 enforcement. So, the answer is no.
10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** The answer is no. There is a rationale for that.
12 Andy.
13
14 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, and just to add to the rationale, this
15 doesn't have to be selected or preferred, but gives us another
16 alternative to consider. I think there's been some good comments
17 about the fact that we've raised or were proposing to raise the
18 size limit substantially. And just to be conservative with regard
19 to a fishery that we don't necessarily know a lot about and we
20 don't have recreational landing statistics at this point, it seems
21 a viable alternative.
22
23 The other thing, I think, to note here that's really important
24 with wahoo is, it's a fast-growing fish and can be obviously caught
25 in large quantities, so a lower bag limit obviously would be
26 conservative in terms of conservation value.
27
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Any further discussion? Hearing none, I think
29 we are ready to vote. Vanessa. Actually, Vanessa, you have a
30 comment before, right?
31
32 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez, for
33 the record. The comment practically was to agree with the motion,
34 so I'm ready to vote. Go ahead, Vanessa.
35
36 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.
37
38 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.
39
40 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.
41
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.
43
44 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.
45
46 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.
47
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. *All in favor. The motion carries.*

1
2 Sarah, is there anything pending?

3
4 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes. So, there's one last management measure.

5
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** One second.

7
8 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Julian Magras, for the
9 record. I have a question now. I know we already passed the motion
10 yesterday for the dolphin. Is there any way that we can revisit
11 that motion to make it look like this showing the conservative
12 efforts. Andy can make a motion similar to this, adding an extra
13 alternative if that can be revisited. I know we have done it in
14 the past, so I'm throwing that out there for the dolphin. Because
15 I have the same issue with the dolphin from yesterday and Ricardo
16 and everybody else had issues with that. Thank you.

17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Miguel.

19
20 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** I mean, we need to allow Sarah to finish and
21 then when we finish, we can revisit that part and the Council can
22 decide whether to consider it or not. And the way that they do it
23 is not to substitute the motion yesterday, but the same that we
24 have done here to add another alternative and I guess that's what
25 Julian is proposing.

26
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Andy.

28
29 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. I guess before we move on, so given the
30 potential that we're adding dolphin for Puerto Rico to this
31 amendment, we likely won't be able to bring this back for final
32 action in August. Is that correct? So, we would have another
33 opportunity to review the alternatives and wouldn't necessarily
34 have to select a preferred for this at this meeting. But if we
35 want to select a preferred, we could go ahead and do so. I did not
36 recommend a preferred, I just recommended a new alternative.

37
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** I agree with you and actually I want to highlight,
39 I just commented to Carlos Farchette on the side that the
40 discussion and the numbers that we established for the mahi was
41 established based on the mahi fishery and the biology and the
42 dynamic, which is totally different than wahoo for many reasons
43 that we already discussed. But we are going to have opportunity to
44 reevaluate and to press pass through the process. If the process
45 guides us with the rationale to change, we do so. But let's leave
46 it the way it is and see how it goes. Sara.

47
48 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay, Marcos, for the record, let me clarify

1 that. Remember that yesterday we were talking about when you have
2 a size limit, the bag limit for recreational and bag limit for
3 commercial. One is with the harvest, the other one is with the
4 biology. Here, at this time, we're talking about the harvest of
5 the darn animal. So, once you finish with the wahoo, then you can
6 say, "well, for the dolphin you can do it." What Andy is proposing
7 is to wait until the August meeting where you have all the
8 documentation for the dolphin and the wahoo, so you can make a
9 better decision. Because we need to allow the staff to process
10 what we decided yesterday so they can put together the
11 documentation. There's a lot of work between here and August that
12 they have to put together these two ladies here.

13
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for rephrasing exactly what I said and
15 being more clear on the record. Sarah, keep going.

16
17 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay. So, the last management measure that we
18 haven't discussed is commercial trip limits for dolphin and for
19 wahoo in both islands, so those will be the next few slides. As
20 it's structured right now since the IPT wanted to know, well,
21 what's the reason for establishing a commercial trip limit? Are
22 you worried about exceeding the ACL? or are you trying to create
23 a longer fishing season? Which I mentioned yesterday, we don't
24 really have a fishing season because they're able to fish year-
25 round. And then, we just established these ACLs and looking at
26 landings for the past few years of dolphin or wahoo and comparing
27 them to the ACLs they're not near the ACLs, so there's no danger
28 at this time of exceeding them. So again, the IPT wanted to know
29 what's the reason. So, we're bringing that to the Council today.
30 And is there a need for commercial ACLs? We heard at both the Saint
31 Thomas/Saint John and the Saint Croix DAPs that neither DAP would
32 recommend a commercial ACL. So, now it's back to the Council to
33 discuss and determine if they want one and that's why the rationale
34 there is in red, and it says it's needed. And that's also why there
35 aren't trip limits proposed under alternatives two or three, it
36 says limit to be determined. So that's where we are right now.

37
38 Uh, will you just go to the next slide, please?

39
40 We did try to put together a comparison of the alternatives even
41 though there weren't numbers attached to them just for Council
42 consideration. So, Alternative 1 would not establish a commercial
43 trip limit. So, landings would continue to be monitored to the
44 commercial ACL and an accountability measure for pelagic stocks
45 that are already in place if landings exceeded the ACT. Um, but we
46 do have a commercial ACL and ACT for the pelagic stocks.

47
48 So, if you decided to establish commercial trip limit Alternatives

1 2 and 3 could reduce the risk of that ACL and ACT being exceeded
2 and prevent overfishing in the future. But as I mentioned, current
3 landings of both dolphin and wahoo, in both islands, are not in
4 danger of exceeding those catch limits. Alternatives 2 and 3 could
5 have negative socioeconomic effects if commercial fishers needed
6 to change how they fished. For instance, if they had to reduce the
7 amount that they could catch per trip or if they had to likewise
8 fish more days, or if they're not able to meet their market demand
9 because now there's a daily trip limit. So, those would be the
10 negative impacts to the fishers.

11
12 Also, alternatives two and three could increase discards and
13 discard mortality if they were forced to throw fish back during a
14 trip. And Alternatives 2 and 3 would require rulemaking to
15 implement limits and likely also require additional outreach and
16 education.

17
18 So those are kind of the pros and cons of the commercial trip
19 limits for your consideration. And now it's ready for discussion
20 and/or motions.

21
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** Discussion and motions. Vanessa.

23
24 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez, for the
25 record. I think that for now for commercial trips, it's not
26 necessary to take any. Not only because we already know as
27 commercial that we have our same limits because of the weather,
28 because we don't catch what we can sell. So, the market also limits
29 us. So, for now I will choose for Alternative 1. Does someone else
30 want to motion or I can present the motion.

31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Let's keep on the discussion to hear what everybody
33 has to say. Andy and Carlos.

34
35 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, so I think Sarah outlined obviously some
36 good rationale as to why we would not consider a commercial trip
37 limit. I've thought a lot about this just from a fairness and
38 equity standpoint because we are talking about recreational limits
39 but not commercial limits. And what Sarah talked about obviously
40 is important in that the catch limits aren't being exceeded right
41 now. There's really no reason to further constrain commercial
42 harvest, but we should obviously continue to monitor commercial
43 harvest. In the event that we need to constrain harvest, we could
44 go back and reconsider trip limits.

45
46 On the recreational side, the difference is that we're not actively
47 monitoring their landings and catch. And so, we want to set some
48 management measures, at least to be conservative with regard to

1 the resource and helping to obviously constrain some of the harvest
2 by setting those limits. So, I think it's reasonable, obviously at
3 this point not to consider a commercial trip limit. And if we
4 choose the no action alternative, I recommend we just move it to
5 consider by rejected and eliminate it from the amendment entirely.

6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just a segue like this, I don't need to speak up
8 again. I agree with what you just say, Andy, and with what Vanessa
9 said. Carlos.

10
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Well, Andy clarified what I was thinking because
12 I mean, if we are around a table, if we're so concerned about
13 protecting the resource from the recreational guys, you know, why
14 not protect the resource for the commercial guys also and have a
15 bag limit? But Andy kind of clarifies something, so I'll stand
16 down on that one.

17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Anybody who would like to present the
19 motion?

20
21 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez, for the
22 record. I present the *motion for Action 1(c) and Action 3(c),*
23 *Alternative 1*. To select Alternative 1 would not establish a
24 commercial trip limit for dolphin in federal waters, or dolphin
25 caught could be kept.

26
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second?

28
29 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Seconded by Kreglo. Any further discussion? Andy?

32
33 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, so what I would recommend instead, unless
34 you want this to still be considered in the amendment for August,
35 we could eliminate it from the amendment and just move it to the
36 consider but rejected section. So essentially, we discussed it, we
37 reviewed it, but it's no longer on the table for consideration.
38 And that way it avoids staff having to analyze it and prepare any
39 additional information for the amendment. So, if you're amenable
40 to that, I would just change the motion to move-- Would it be move
41 Actions 1(c) and 3(c) to the considered but rejected section?

42
43 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Just to clarify, would you do it for wahoo as
44 well? So, you would be moving all of the (c)s 1 through 4(c) to
45 considered but rejected.

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** In terms of the rationale, because we are discussing
48 one, I would say is that the same rationale does applies for what

1 you are just mentioning. I think that's a correct move to do. I
2 would like to hear from the rest of the Council if we want to
3 follow the same path for wahoo and for dolphin. The suggestion
4 that Andy just mentioned, that's the question that I'm making. Are
5 we going to reject or use the language that Andy proposed for both
6 of them, Vanessa?

7
8 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes, I agree with that.

9
10 **MARCOS HANKE:** I'm not seeing any hands or anybody in opposition.
11 Andy can help with the language for the motion? And the then I
12 will check for acceptance from the motion makers.

13
14 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes. So, if I'm understanding Sarah correctly,
15 it would be *to move Actions 1(c), 2(c), 3(c), and 4(c)*, correct?
16 And that would include trip limit for both wahoo and dolphin. That
17 would be *eliminated from the amendment and moved to considered but*
18 *rejected.* So, Vanessa and J.J., are you good with that change?

19
20 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes, I agree with that change in the motion.

21
22 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** I also agree with change.

23
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Now we are ready to vote.

25
26 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.

27
28 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.

29
30 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.

31
32 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

33
34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

35
36 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.

37
38 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** *It's unanimous. Motion carries.* Thank you all.
41 Sarah, anything else?

42
43 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, that speeds us through to just my last
44 slide, which was just next steps, just to give you an idea of what
45 to expect with this. So, you did at this meeting refined the
46 management measures. You provided rationale, thank you. You did
47 select preferred alternatives, so we will take all of this back
48 and update the amendment. We will add in Puerto Rico, dolphin and

1 wahoo alternatives and bring that back. We probably will not
2 prepare the codified text, I'll get with the policy, the
3 regulations writers and see if that's something that we need to
4 wait for, but we'll bring back this draft amendment. It won't be
5 the final amendment anymore. We'll bring back the draft amendment
6 for review at the August meeting, which will have analysis of the
7 preferred alternatives selected for the U.S.V.I. FMPs, the two
8 species. And then, we will include alternatives for you to consider
9 for Puerto Rico, for dolphin and wahoo. So, we'll strike those
10 last few, but I just wanted to give you an update of what to expect
11 with this amendment. And with that, I'll take any questions.

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Sarah. I have somebody on the chat.

14
15 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** You have a raised hand from Katherine
16 Zamboni.

17
18 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Kate Zamboni, NOAA's
19 Officer of General Counsel. Just to make the record clear, I don't
20 know if there was a motion yet to add Puerto Rico Alternatives, or
21 Actions for Alternative for Puerto Rico and whether that motion
22 would reflect the same alternatives that have been identified for
23 Saint Croix and Saint Thomas and Saint John. I thought we had
24 decided anything related to Puerto Rico would be considered after
25 we got through all the actions that Sarah had to present.

26
27 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, Kate, I would ask you, is a motion needed?
28 We originally had in the draft amendment that we brought in
29 December, we had actions and alternatives in that document for
30 Puerto Rico and we split them out fall into December meeting. So,
31 we had previously drafted them. Do we need a motion to put them
32 back in? We weren't expecting that the Council would pick preferred
33 for Puerto Rico today, at this meeting. We would bring that back
34 in August and they would do it then. But do we need a motion to
35 put those two species back in this amendment for Puerto Rico?

36
37 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Mr. Chair, if I may again. Again, Kate
38 Zamboni here. I would recommend doing that just to be clear because
39 the prior version had those other species included and so just to
40 give staff that clear direction of what the next draft will look
41 like, I think a motion would be preferred.

42
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Thank you. Sarah, can you please suggest the
44 language for the motion to put on the screen and just for sake of
45 time and to see if any Council member can accept and propose the
46 motion?

47
48 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, *the Council moves to add actions to the*

1 *amendment for size limits and recreational bag limits for dolphin*
2 *and wahoo in Puerto Rico.* period. And if you wouldn't mind, add,
3 "to Amendment 3." It's number three.
4

5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Kate, does this motion have the language needed?
6

7 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Yes. You could clarify it by just inserting
8 the name of the two species of fish. The Council moves to add
9 actions to amendment three for size limits and recreational bag
10 limits for dolphin-- oh, you have dolphin and wahoo, sorry. It's,
11 good. Thanks.
12

13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Vanessa.
14

15 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** *So moved.*
16

17 **MARCOS HANKE:** She presented a motion we can discuss.
18

19 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** I'll second.
20

21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy, second.
22

23 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** So, for clarification, we would also want to
24 make sure it includes vessel limits. And then can we talk just
25 briefly about what the range of alternatives would be so that we
26 understand and make sure we have the right range of alternatives
27 to bring back to the Council?
28

29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.
30

31 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, for size limits, we would include the same
32 two options for dolphin and wahoo, which were based on the 50% of
33 the females being spawned or ready and a hundred percent. So those
34 would be those same size limits of 20 and 24. And then the same
35 for wahoo, the 50% and a 100%, which are 30, 32 and 40. So those
36 would be the size limit, rate alternatives for the Puerto Rico.
37

38 The recreational bag limits would likely be similar to what we had
39 in the December document, which Alternative 1 would be no bag
40 limits; Alternative 2 would match what Puerto Rico has in their
41 regulations, which as we discussed yesterday, was 10 per person
42 per day, 30 per vessel, per day. And then, Alternative 3 would
43 likely be a more conservative bag limit. I believe what we had in
44 the December document, which was recommended by the Puerto Rico,
45 DAP at one of their previous meetings was five dolphin per person
46 per day, 15 per vessel per day. I don't believe at that time the
47 DAP recommended a bag limit for wahoo. Puerto Rico does have a bag
48 limit for wahoo, but it's combined with mackerel, so that was the

1 five species of wahoo, or the two mackerels and I think the, not
2 two exceed, I can't remember the vessel limit. So, this Council
3 could provide input if they wanted to change that five and 15 more
4 conservative bag limit for dolphin. And they could also recommend
5 an individual bag limit for wahoo that's more conservative than
6 what the Puerto Rico regulations are.

7
8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Not to change, but to add another alternative
9 that is more conservative similar to what we did before?

10
11 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** You can either direct us to include what we had
12 before, which is going to match Puerto Rico and then be more
13 conservative based on recommendations from the DAP or you could
14 direct staff to, for instance, to have the compatible alternative
15 and then the Council could provide your own more conservative bag
16 limit. It doesn't have to be what we had in the December document.

17
18 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. Because also, I was thinking, that perhaps
19 for the next meeting the document can have all those alternative
20 included. The other thing is that yesterday when we were around
21 reviewing the literature for the wahoo and the others seen this
22 discrepancy in terms of the 50% maturity for females and the 100%,
23 40 inches and they have difference, but I believe that you took
24 note of that. So, the documents that Sarah is going to present at
25 the next meeting, we will have all that incorporated, the biology
26 that supports the difference size limit. Somebody asked me also
27 "what size limit are you talking about? do they mean fork length,
28 total length and standard length?" And I guess most of the species
29 we're talking about is fork lengths because of the shape of the--
30 so I clarified that to them that and every time that we discuss in
31 these pelagics, these two species, we're talking about fork
32 lengths.

33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. And thank you very much, Miguel. And just in
35 my opinion, we have to have an alternative that reflect the
36 possibility of compatible regulations to be explored and discuss.
37 I think we are ready to vote.

38
39 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.

40
41 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.

42
43 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yes.

44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

1 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.
2
3 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yes.
4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** *All in favor. Motion carries.* Andy?
6
7 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. And one more thing. Cause we really want
8 to, obviously, be able to bring back as complete of a draft as
9 possible for the August meeting. It was mentioned earlier about
10 the U.S.V.I. and dolphin bag and vessel limits. So, if I'm not
11 mistaken, we have the compatible regulations option. And then for
12 Saint Thomas/Saint John, we also have an alternative that would be
13 five dolphin and 30 per vessel. But now would be the time if we
14 wanted to consider any sort of additional alternatives like we
15 discussed in wahoo, if you wanted that brought back to the Council
16 in August. So, we could make a motion now if the Council desires
17 to change the bag and vessel limit for dolphin or recommend a
18 change of the bag and vessel limit for dolphin.
19
20 **MARCOS HANKE:** For Puerto Rico?
21
22 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** This is for Saint Croix and possibly Saint
23 Thomas/Saint John, if you want more of a range of alternatives.
24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** I will defer to the people from Saint Thomas/Saint
26 John, do you have an input on that? and Saint Croix?
27
28 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** For Saint Croix, no.
29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Which area again?
31
32 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. So maybe really quick, can we bring up
33 the presentation, slide seven, I believe it is.
34
35 So, if you see in the first section, Action 1, we right now have
36 a no action alternative and a second alternative that has 10
37 dolphin per person, 32 per vessel. We don't have a third
38 alternative for that section. And then you go down to Action 3,
39 and we have the same alternatives in Action 1, but then also a
40 five dolphin, 30 per vessel. So, if you would like further
41 alternatives considered, looking for guidance and a motion at this
42 point so that staff would have direction to bring back to August
43 meeting.
44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian, you? anybody else from the table? Carlos?
46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Well, I don't need another option here because
48 I think that dolphin is a fish that, I mean, it grows like

1 [inaudible]. I mean, it's totally different to the wahoo. So, I'm
2 good with the 10 and 32, which is compatible to the state waters.

3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Anybody else? Gerson.

5
6 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There was a long
7 discussion, as I said yesterday on this, on the DAP meeting. And
8 these are the numbers that the members, all the members in that
9 DAP meeting decided that was feasible for us in the Virgin Islands
10 and the island of Saint Croix.

11
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just to clarify, you're looking for a third
13 alternative that we don't have?

14
15 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** No, what I'm trying to do is, given the
16 comments made today, right, if there's an alternative that you
17 want to add, let's go ahead and make that recommendation today.
18 Otherwise, it won't be in the amendment in August, right. And so,
19 what I'm hearing, at least from the few people that have commented
20 on this, is there's not a need to add alternatives, so we would go
21 with what's on the board here in the amendment and not make any
22 changes.

23
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Exactly. This is what I'm hearing from the group
25 two.

26
27 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah.

28
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Unless anything else? I don't see any hands up,
30 which means that we stay with what we have. Sarah, are we done?
31 Right?

32
33 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes, unless the Council had any recommendations
34 for those Puerto Rico bag limits, the more conservative numbers,
35 if you wanted to give us a range to consider for the draft
36 amendment, that would be the only thing pending.

37
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** The only thing that I commented before is to have
39 an alternative that looks for the compatible regulation, to have
40 that.

41
42 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** We would include that one. Did you want to
43 direct us to have a third alternative that would be more
44 conservative than the one that would be compatible with DNER and
45 then recommend bag limit numbers that we consider. For instance,
46 a two and a 10 or a two and a six or a five. Like if you don't,
47 then the IPT will develop that and bring those back.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** I prefer that you guys do it based on the biology
2 and all the discussion that you have to put the alternatives and
3 then we discuss and decide once it's presented. Cause I don't think
4 the group is in position now to explore that.

5
6 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos, but again, the biology is for the size
7 limit. The bag is with other considerations. So what Sarah is
8 asking, is for some guidance as to how low they can go rather than
9 waiting until August. So, they can have a range of what they're
10 going to write.

11
12 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I would also like to put in, if it would be
13 possible, could we give a similar presentation to the Puerto Rico
14 DAP that we gave to the U.S.V.I. DAPs to discuss these management
15 measures and get their input.

16
17 **MARCOS HANKE:** I think that is totally appropriate. In terms of
18 the timing of the next meetings, maybe a special virtual meeting
19 to address exactly that, if you guys needed, an in coordination
20 with Miguel.

21
22 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, well it is a little bit more than that. I
23 talked to Nelson, and we are going to have a virtual meeting for
24 all the three DAPs, but this will be a in person meeting. It will
25 be a hybrid meeting because there's a lot of things that we did
26 with Saint Thomas/ Saint John and Saint Croix that Puerto Rico
27 didn't have a chance to do it. So probably, I'll talk to you later
28 and Nelson and see which will be the best time for having that in
29 person hybrid meeting, similar to what we have in San Juan.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. I think we covered the inputs that you're
32 going to need to make a good document. Thank you, Sarah.

33
34 Now we are ready for the next presentation, which I believe is
35 Kate Zamboni. CFMC Best Practices.

36 37 **CFMC Best Practices Discussion**

38
39 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The next item on the
40 agenda is the Counsel's Best Practices Discussion. There is no
41 presentation but the working draft that is in the briefing book
42 and available on the Council's website was presented to the Council
43 at its December 2022 meeting. And this is the same draft the
44 Council received in December. I'll just take a few minutes to
45 summarize what this document would do if adopted by the Council.

46
47 It would recommend certain best practices that members of the
48 Council's SSC could follow to avoid actual and the appearance of

1 conflicts of interest. These would just be best practices, which
2 is to say these are not hard and fast rules. I don't want to create
3 an impression that a failure to adhere to these best practices
4 would automatically mean that somebody had a conflict of interest,
5 or it violated some rule.

6
7 The best practices are organized around three functions served by
8 the SSC, which are conducting peer reviews, making preliminary
9 determinations or recommendations as to whether information
10 available for management represents best scientific information
11 available, referred to as BSIA in the document, and making other
12 recommendations to the Council, such as research priorities. And
13 the real meat of it starts on page seven, where the document
14 describes how SSC members can ensure to avoid again, either an
15 actual or the appearance of a conflict of interest when the SSC is
16 serving one of those three functions. Most of the rest of the
17 document serves as background regarding the role of the SSC and
18 National Standard Guidelines that apply to conflicts of interest
19 in a peer review context.

20
21 If the Council were to choose to adopt this document today, you
22 can make changes to it now before it is finalized and even after
23 it's adopted, the Council could undertake revisions at any point
24 in the future. And I'm happy to answer any questions anyone may
25 have about it. Thank you.

26 27 **Questions/Comments** 28

29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Kate. Thank you for the great job and
30 all the assistance when you were elaborating this document and the
31 conversation with the Council members for our awareness of the
32 important issues about it. Carlos has a motion to present and he's
33 just writing it in a paper to present on the screen. I'll ask for
34 a few minutes until we can present on the screen and present the
35 motion formally. It's open for discussion and question with Kate.
36 In the meantime, Carlos is doing that.

37
38 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos, to kill time. The Wesley Merten comments
39 are in the briefing book, the letter for everybody. He might ask
40 for a chance this afternoon when we get into the five minutes, but
41 from correspondence with him, he believes that the document is
42 enough. But he might be available for this afternoon.

43
44 **MARCOS HANKE:** I think it'll be very good if he's available. I
45 read the letter and I invite all the Council members and the DAPs
46 to read the letter that was sent by Wes Merten, which is a
47 collaborator of this Council addressing wahoo and pelagics. Thank
48 you, Wes, for sending the letter.

1
2 Let's, put five minutes of break until the motion is on the screen.
3 We'll be back in five minutes. Gerson's birthday was celebrated
4 yesterday. He brought some cake. Everybody is welcome to eat the
5 cake, please.

6
7 (Whereupon a brief recess was taken.)
8

9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for the patience. We have a little delay,
10 and we are ready to restart. Liajay or Cristina, can you put the
11 motion. Please take your seats, the motion will be on the screen
12 soon. Please read it for the record, Carlos.

13
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, the *motion is to adopt the draft document*
15 *on the SSCs best practices and procedures regarding conflicts of*
16 *interest on peer review of scientific information and best*
17 *scientific information available.*

18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any second?

20
21 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Second.

22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any further discussion?

24
25 We are very aware that we discuss and talked about this many, many
26 times over, and we read this document. Do you want to say
27 something, Carlos?

28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, I would like, maybe, to have Ms. Zamboni
30 input on the motion if she thinks it's good or needs anything else?

31
32 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Mr. Chair, if I may. The motion is fine. I
33 might just recommend saying, "*adopt the draft document as final.*"
34 You know, just to indicate that I will, if this motion is approved,
35 I will remove the water mark that says draft and the top of the
36 document where it says working draft.

37
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** They are making the change now. One second.

39
40 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Hi, Kate, this is Liajay, to be clear, you
41 want me to delete, draft and replace with working draft or final?

42
43 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Well, you could say-- the way it's worded
44 is fine --"Adopt the draft document" and then insert "as final" and
45 delete "on".

46
47 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Thank you.
48

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. That's the language, Carlos?

3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So yeah, I accept those corrections.

5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Any second?

7 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Second.

9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any further discussion? All in favor, say aye.

11 **GROUP:** Aye.

13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Motion carries. Thank you. *No opposition, no
14 abstentions. All in favor. Motion carries.*

16 Next presentation is the Southeast Fishery Science Center Updates.
17 Kevin McCarthy.

18
19 **SEFSC Caribbean Data Review for Stock Assessment**

21 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thank you. This is Kevin. So as that's opening
22 up, I just want to point out that all the good work that you're
23 going to see here is the responsibility of people other than me.
24 So, Stephanie and Refik and Adyan, who are all in the Caribbean
25 branch with me and Kim Johnson, who is in the Fishery Statistics
26 division, but also with the Southeast Center, but she happens to
27 be located in Galveston, Texas. So, they did a lot of great work
28 that you're about to see. And so, all of the good stuff is theirs
29 and any errors or omissions are mine.

31 So next slide please.

33 So, what we're going to talk about is data and data availability,
34 and data availability for stock assessment. And you saw this slide
35 yesterday, but I just want to reiterate that there are several
36 data, several kinds of data that need to go into a stock
37 assessment. So, we talked about abundance and the biological data
38 and the catch data, so I won't belabor the point since we talked
39 about it yesterday. But all of these are important inputs to the
40 stock assessment. So, I don't know if they can see the slides or
41 not, but I guess they'll comment if they're continuing to have
42 problems.

44 Okay. Well, I'll just carry on and hopefully folks are going to be
45 able to see things. We can go to the next slide.

47 This is an overview of the process that the review of the data
48 went through. And I'll get into each one of these phases a little

1 more as we work through the slides. But ultimately the idea was
2 let's get to a list of species that we think have sufficient data
3 to at least attempt a stock assessment. Sometimes in the past we've
4 begun on a species, and it turns out we didn't have life history
5 information, for example. So, it wasn't going to work right from
6 the start. So, we wanted to get ahead of that and not spend time
7 and resources on something that wasn't going to be successful from
8 the get-go.

9
10 So, next slide please.

11
12 So, this was our process. I'm going to break this down and go
13 through it step by step, but again, we went through this four-step
14 process. There are a couple of other steps that are still ongoing,
15 but we got to a point where we can say, "okay, we've got a list of
16 species that at least have, on first examination, enough data to
17 recommend that species be something we put forward to SEDAR as a
18 species we want to try to get an assessment on." I'll break this
19 down step by step.

20
21 Next slide, please.

22
23 So, this first step was we've got different categories of species
24 as we're managing them in each of the species' groups. So, in some
25 groups we have an indicator species, so that's what we're calling
26 Group A. So, we've got two examples of Group A, the Saint Croix
27 Grouper Unit Three, which is coney and graysby. Coney is the
28 indicator, and those indicators were selected by the SSC, if I'm
29 remembering the process correctly, because in this case, coney had
30 more information and graysby had less information. Primarily that
31 decision was driven by the number of landings, those were the data
32 that the SSC were considering at the time. Then we've got some
33 other instances where there are two indicators in the group. So,
34 Saint Croix Snapper Unit One is an example of that. Black,
35 blackfin, silk and vermilion snappers are in the group, but
36 blackfin and silk are the indicators.

37
38 We've got this other kind of group, we're calling Group B, which
39 there's only a single species in the unit. So, for Snapper Unit
40 Two in Saint Thomas/Saint John, queen snapper is the sole species
41 in that unit. So, we want to look at those. And then, we've got
42 another group where we have multiple species in the unit, but there
43 is no indicator. And so, in Grouper Unit Four in Puerto Rico,
44 black, red, tiger, yellowfin and yellowmouth groupers are all in
45 that unit, but there is no indicator.

46
47 So, what we wanted to do was identify those species that are in
48 either group A, B, or C, because there are also instances like

1 those group A's where we've got graysby, for example, in Grouper
2 Unit Three for Saint Croix, it's not an indicator, so we didn't
3 move forward with looking at data for graysby. We wanted to focus
4 on the indicators. That's the sort of the point I'm trying to make
5 here. We focused on the indicators, we focused on the single
6 species units, and we then also included that Group C, where there
7 was no indicator, but we have to account for all the species in
8 the group.

9
10 So next slide.

11
12 So that was our first step. Was it an indicator species? Was it a
13 single species unit? or was it a multiple species unit that had no
14 indicator? We kept all those species. That was our first cut at
15 identifying species for possible assessment.

16
17 Next slide.

18
19 And so, what we ended up with here is in Puerto Rico we started
20 off with 65 species, but when you eliminate those that aren't a
21 group A, a group B, or a group C, we're down to 53.

22
23 Next slide.

24
25 Well, I should point out if you could go back for just one second.
26 Sorry about that. Yeah, up to that one. Perfect. Yep. Down one on
27 the other direction back to the initial list of species, wherever
28 that is. A couple more. Another one and one more. That's the one.
29 Thank you.

30
31 So, all of that, just to tell you that sea cucumber, sea urchin
32 and corals are also managed, but we didn't include them in this
33 analysis. We're not going to do a stock assessment on any of those
34 anytime soon.

35
36 Uh, next slide.

37
38 So, in Saint Thomas and Saint John, we started with 49 species by
39 cutting out those that weren't indicators or single species or
40 multiple species without an indicator. We ended up with 29 out of
41 49.

42
43 Next slide.

44
45 In Saint Croix we went from 45 to 33. And those are just species
46 that we're not focusing on because they don't meet that first
47 criteria. It's not as though we won't, one day in the distant
48 future, do a stock assessment on them. But we're really focused on

1 these three groups.
2
3 Next slide.
4
5 So that was step one. Step two, we're now starting to look at the
6 data. So, are there size composition data available? If yes, the
7 species moves on to the next step. If no, it's not really yet ready
8 in terms of data for a stock assessment.
9
10 So next slide.
11
12 So, what we're looking at is sample size and the distribution of
13 that sample size over time. You know, we want to have samples
14 throughout the time series that we've got data for and how many
15 years is that? Do we have the most recent years of data? Are we
16 missing any years? It's especially problematic if we're missing
17 data in the most recent years. And we're looking at, do we have
18 those data by gear and have the patterns of gear usage changed
19 over time? This gets into selectivity. So, when you're looking at
20 size composition, you have to know what kinds of gears are being
21 fished because different gears may catch the fish at different
22 sizes and so you've got to understand the gear selectivity so that
23 you understand the patterns of sizes that you're seeing in your
24 samples.
25
26 Next slide.
27
28 So, this is an example of one that has a good amount of data. You
29 can see we're talking about almost 63,000 lobster that have been
30 measured over time and you've got a little bit of a dip in the
31 sample size in '20 and '21, that's probably a covid effect. But
32 before that, we had, you know, thousands of animals that were being
33 measured every year and that goes back to 1980. There were a couple
34 years where there were fewer, and the gears have changed a little
35 bit in terms of the proportions of animals being measured from the
36 different gears. Diving has become much more important, and the
37 pots and traps has a relatively smaller proportion but still steady
38 numbers of animals being measured by those different gears over
39 time. And when we completed this investigation, remember we had 51
40 species that passed step one in Puerto Rico, we're now down to 14.
41 14, have sufficient size compositions. We went from 29 to 12 in
42 Saint Thomas and in Saint Croix went from 33 to four.
43
44 So next slide.
45
46 So, here's an example of when we've got problems with the size
47 composition data. Those last several years that are in that box
48 there on the right side of the graph. There are just not very many

1 samples there. You know, overall, there are almost 34,000 samples,
2 and this is about 34 years. So had we had a thousand measured Blue
3 Tang every year, we'd have been in great shape. But what we have
4 is a big cluster of the measurements happening in the first half
5 of the time series and the second half of the time series. It gets
6 really sparse and almost non-existent beginning in about 2011. And
7 you can see it jumps, from the scale on the bottom it jumps from
8 2011 to 2016. So, for several years we didn't have any measured
9 Blue Tang.

10
11 Next slide.

12
13 So, we could then go on to step three and looked at landings
14 because we certainly need to have a time series of landings.

15
16 Next slide.

17
18 And we looked at a lot of the same things as we did with the size
19 composition data. You know, what are the distribution of landings
20 over time? Were the species always on the form or were they write-
21 ins? We've talked about that in discussions yesterday. How many
22 years was the length of the data set? Do we have data from the
23 most recent years? Are we missing years? We just don't have any
24 landings for some of the time series. And we need landings by gear
25 because that also ties back to the size composition data. So, we
26 need some very specific things. And you can see changes,
27 especially, in some of the islands where the new fishers come in,
28 they may be more likely to be divers than they are to be trapped
29 fishers, for example, in some of the islands.

30
31 Next slide.

32
33 So, when we look at that, this is an example, this is Lane Snapper.
34 This is an example of a great time series. We've got landings from
35 a number of different gears, but they've been pretty steady, and
36 we don't have a bunch of holes in the time series. And it turns
37 out when you have good size composition data, you generally have
38 good landings data. They sort of go hand in hand. As a species
39 that's landed frequently is more likely to be sampled by the port
40 sampler to get the size composition data. So, in Puerto Rico, after
41 that second step, we were down to 14 species. Two dropped out
42 because of insufficient landings time series. Saint Thomas/Saint
43 John we went from 12 to 11. In Saint Croix, we stayed at four.

44
45 Next slide.

46
47 So, this is an example of a bad time series of landings data. And
48 I can't show it to you because the data are confidential, it's so

1 sparse. So, we had some of those and we drop those from further
2 consideration in this analysis.

3
4 Next slide.

5
6 So, step four, is there life history information available? We've
7 got to have that. If we don't have life history information, we
8 can't really do much in a stock assessment.

9
10 Next slide.

11
12 So, we spent a lot of time, well, we, the folks who were really
13 doing the work, spent a lot of time reviewing a really nice review
14 paper by Molly Stevens and colleagues. This came out in 2019.
15 They're also looking at more recent data, but this was an excellent
16 review. And the other nice thing that was done in this paper was
17 to rank the completeness of the life history data. So, we got a
18 score of zero to three, you could see in this little table here.
19 And what we went with was, I believe if it had a score of two or
20 higher, we considered that adequate. And we went, in this case
21 then, from 12 species to eight species in Puerto Rico, 11 to eight
22 in Saint Thomas/Saint John, and from four down to three in Saint
23 Croix.

24
25 Next slide.

26
27 So, here's what we've come up with. So, this is in Puerto Rico.
28 These are the species, the ones that are highlighted in yellow
29 have either had a stock assessment or scheduled for a stock
30 assessment. So, SEDAR 57, the 57 update, and SEDAR 91-- which is
31 shocking to me since I think my first SEDAR was SEDAR 4, so I've
32 been doing this a long time --that's spiny lobster. We are
33 currently working on SEDAR 80. It's been completed in Puerto Rico.
34 That's Queen Triggerfish, but it is still ongoing for the Virgin
35 Islands. SEDAR 84, which is coming up later this summer we'll start
36 some of the data prep. That's, that's yellowtail in Puerto Rico.
37 And then, hogfish has been recommended for the 2025, yet to be
38 numbered, SEDAR. But there are several others here mutton lane,
39 red hind and dolphin that so far look adequate to try a stock
40 assessment on. So, we've got several more we can do in the future.

41
42 Next slide.

43
44 In Saint Thomas, same thing. The yellow either have had a stock
45 assessment or in the midst of a stock assessment or scheduled for
46 a future stock assessment. I have red hind up at the top there.
47 This is something we need to discuss. Right now, we don't have,
48 for the Virgin Islands, a species that has been recommended to

1 SEDAR for a stock assessment in 2025, but we want to talk about
2 what that will be. So, red hind is a possibility. We've also got
3 data sufficient for redbtail, stoplight, blackfin and doctorfish.

4
5 Next slide.

6
7 In Saint Croix we were down to three species. All of them either
8 have had a stock assessment or in the middle of a stock assessment.
9 Queen Triggerfish or stoplight parrotfish are up for an assessment
10 in 84. We still need a candidate for 2025 and we'll talk about
11 that.

12
13 Next slide.

14
15 So, these are species that we're still examining. What we need to
16 do, in this case-- let me go down to my notes because there was
17 something terribly insightful, I was going to say about this. So,
18 if we explore some alternate modeling approaches, if we are
19 creative in our approaches and do some exploratory work, we might
20 be able to include these in a stock assessment. I think the major
21 issue that we have with these species is the size composition data.
22 And if that is in fact true, we might be able to do something in
23 a modeling framework. But if we do, it'll be really critical that
24 we have an index of abundance.

25
26 Next slide.

27
28 Same is true in Saint Thomas/Saint John. We've got four other
29 species that maybe we can do something with, but in the meantime,
30 we're doing some additional data exploration.

31
32 Next slide.

33
34 The same is true in Saint Croix. Here I've highlighted red hind as
35 a possible candidate for 2025 stock assessment. But there are a
36 number, you could see-- 2, 4, 6, 8, --9 species it looks like,
37 that maybe we can, with some additional data exploration and some
38 thought into how we could model the data that we do have, we might
39 be able to do something with those, but that examination is
40 ongoing.

41
42 Next slide.

43
44 So that was our process. And down here in the lower left in red,
45 these are steps that we're still working on. So, we know that we've
46 got issues with recreational landings. The issue being we don't
47 really have them. We don't have them in the Virgin Islands, and we
48 no longer have them in Puerto Rico after MREP stopped sampling

1 back in 2017. 2017 is in a complete year, for sampling. Then we've
2 got indices of abundance, step six and step seven. One, the FD
3 meaning fishery dependent. So, this would be an index that we
4 generate with data from the fishers, either the logbooks or some
5 additional work that we could do and getting reports directly from
6 fishers. We've talked about that a little bit, and we're going to
7 continue those conversations. And the fishery independent data, we
8 do have one longer term data set. This is what I sometimes refer
9 to as the RVC data, the reef visual census data. So, these are the
10 divers. That is a good data set for some of the finfish, not for
11 lobsters, not for conch but for some of the finfish, not all of
12 them, but a number of them. So, we're continuing to examine those
13 data for the most, likely species that, that survey can inform an
14 index. So that's our process and that gets us down to those lists
15 of recommended species.

16
17 Um, next slide.

18
19 Okay. So, the other thing that this does is it points out the
20 things we need to do, right? So, we've got some species that we
21 think we can try an attempt an assessment on. We've got some
22 confidence there that we've at least got data to give it a try.
23 But we've also got those lower tiers of species that kind of fell
24 out along the way. And so, they're missing pieces of data and
25 that's where we can focus future work. You know, so we can focus
26 on getting more length samples, for example. That was a problem
27 for a lot of those sort of second tier species where we're doing
28 some additional work and need to be fairly creative in how we might
29 model those. But that's one area that we can really, I think,
30 increase the number of species that have adequate data for
31 assessment if we get some more length samples.

32
33 Life history was also a problem. We've lost a few species along
34 the way because we didn't have adequate life history. Those are
35 studies that are not long-term. Length samples, landings, indices
36 of abundance those all are time series of data that require years
37 and years of data. Life history studies are shorter term studies.
38 So that's a really productive area of research that you can do on
39 research grants. You don't need programmatic funding, although
40 it's nice to have. We're still looking at the abundance indices
41 and where we have adequate data for those.

42
43 And we're working with both DNER and DFW on beginning recreational
44 landings data collection programs on all of the islands. And we
45 continue to develop new commercial landing estimation surveys,
46 again, on all of the islands. In particular in the Virgin Islands,
47 we're working in partnership with the DFW staff.

1 Next slide.

2
3 So, the Council needs to provide SEDAR with a recommendation for
4 2025. We've already got-- in Puerto Rico, you all have already
5 recommended Hogfish. In the Virgin Islands, I'm going to suggest
6 red hind. It's an indicator species in both Saint Thomas/Saint
7 John, and in Saint Croix. In Saint Croix we've got low numbers for
8 size composition samples, so that'll present some modeling
9 challenges. So, an index of abundance will be critical input for
10 that model, but I think we can try it. And in Saint Thomas and
11 Saint John a much more numerous size composition data, and I think
12 that it was in that highest tier. So, recommended for stock
13 assessment.

14
15 So, red hind would be my recommendation. Let's keep in mind that
16 currently we have capacity for only two species for any given
17 SEDAR. So, the same species on two islands and a second species on
18 a third. It would be even better if we did a single species and
19 the same one on all islands, but my branch has only two assessment
20 biologists. And, in fact, we only have one right now but I'm in
21 the process of hiring. So, anybody who has some stock assessment
22 background, you're welcome to apply. So, I'm going to pause it
23 here and take questions and we can talk about this 2025
24 recommendation question.

25 26 **Questions/ Comments**

27
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Your questions. Vanessa?

29
30 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you. Vanessa Ramírez, for the record. I
31 was just thinking about the hogfish in Puerto Rico. We know that
32 it is highly commercial and on demand for the restaurants here and
33 especially from the west coast. In that case, when you're thinking
34 about taking this SEDAR, how could we collaborate for the
35 information and to be active with the commercial fishermen and
36 supply those samples for you?

37
38 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** So, there are lots of ways for folks to be
39 involved. One of the biggest ways will be to select fishers who
40 fish for hogfish to be involved in the process right from the
41 start. And this will be in 2025, so we don't have to have any
42 nominations yet. But SEDAR will ask for participants, and we want
43 to make sure that we identify those fishers and get them involved
44 in the process.

45
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Kevin. I think I can see on your
47 presentation that we are lining up the previous presentation and
48 this one, the inclusion of the industry where I'm going to make a

1 question and an example where we can improve on the analysis,
2 maybe. There is a slide that you presented with the black grouper
3 as a priority to explore, because we need information about this.
4 As an industry member, we don't catch a lot of black groupers. I
5 know about the ecological importance of the high predators but
6 based on my experience, to get a life history locally of all the
7 juveniles and all the data needed for that, I see very, very
8 difficult in a mid-short and midterm. You know, I hope that this
9 kind of analysis, because I would hate to put effort into that
10 needing more information on very important commercial fishes
11 versus this example that I'm giving to you.

12
13 Addressing the question of Vanessa, I keep seeing this question
14 coming over and over and over. What about a little bit of
15 coordination and leadership? Because on the life history, we want
16 the very little and the very big ones, and creating a protocol
17 guided by the Center saying, "Vanessa, as soon as you get a huge
18 hogfish, which is this measurement, you're going to preserve it
19 this way and I'm going to have my contact and my personnel go there
20 and pick it up" And starting to make sure that, not just Vanessa
21 but any fishermen can support the difficult parts, which is the
22 larger ones and the little ones, right. Things like that, I think,
23 in coordination with the industry, we can do a much better job. I
24 would like to hear your comments about it, and I have something
25 else to say.

26
27 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** I agree with you completely. That's great way for
28 fishers to be involved in solving some of these data scarcity
29 issues and informing, especially life history. But it does require
30 coordination because samples are perishable depending upon what
31 we're sampling. We could train people-- I don't know how to do it,
32 but others do --in taking the otoliths, for example, and that is
33 not perishable. But if we're doing any sort of reproductive studies
34 or something like that, the samples have to be preserved in a
35 certain way and so there's supplies that are involved, so it would
36 take some coordination, but I think it's doable.

37
38 I think it was on a slide yesterday. I went through a lot of stuff
39 pretty fast yesterday, but we have proposals in for three different
40 life history studies and we'll absolutely want fisher
41 participation in those. So, if they're funded, we'll certainly be
42 looking for cooperative research partners from the community. So,
43 I think that all of those things are possible to better fill out.
44 As you say, it's the small ones and the big ones that we have
45 trouble getting, right, because the ones in the middle sizes are
46 what everybody's catching. So those are easy to get. So, you're
47 right.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** I just think that the technical coordination with
2 the industry goes a long way. There are leaders that can be trained
3 and things that can be done. I know in fact-- I don't want to get
4 to the weeds and the details that we can do better --including
5 once, there was a study being made that those scientists that were
6 doing X study of life history or whatever, had on their grant
7 something allocated to money, resource and materials to train and
8 start collecting other things that were going to advance finding
9 the guidance that you just gave us on the presentation.

10
11 I don't know. I think we can do a better coordination. It is not
12 a better job because the information is there. We have expertise,
13 but we need to coordinate better in a proactive way, more than a
14 presentation, to turn into action. This is what I have been
15 desperate for, for years, right? And we are getting there. We are
16 seeing the engagement, but we just need everybody to step up to
17 the plate. I have Nelson, Julian and the chat.

18
19 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Kevin, I think that Marcos
20 and I are talking a lot about this. We think that pilot training
21 and data collection to create a long-term index of abundant for
22 lobster is necessary. Everything has to be coordinated and
23 supported by the Science Center. Scientific fleet formed by a
24 voluntary trap lobster fisher, and maybe you can consider including
25 the divers, that could be excellent for providing special
26 information to create the index abundance. We can consider number
27 of trips, pounds of lobster, number of top haulers, soaking time,
28 number of lobsters, anything that you consider is pertinent, but
29 it'll have to be coordinated by you.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Nelson. I have Julian.

32
33 **NELSON CRESPO:** One second.

34
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. I'm sorry, Nelson.

36
37 **NELSON CRESPO:** I'm going to bring this issue to the DAP meeting,
38 which I hope you can make it, for discussion and exploring
39 alternatives.

40
41 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Yeah, like we discussed yesterday, we'll figure
42 out a way to get to the meeting and have that discussion. And we'll
43 bring along with me either Adyan or Stephanie so that we don't
44 have any sort of language-- we don't need to make it more
45 complicated by-- I want everybody to feel comfortable in the
46 conversation. So, Stephanie and Adyan will fill that role very,
47 very well.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for the usual disposition of being there
2 for the fishermen and to keep creating those channels. Julian.

3
4 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras, for the record. Excellent
5 presentation, Kevin. Once again, we are headed in the right
6 direction. Like, the off the record conversation we had several
7 times, filling in the gaps before we actually go into our stock
8 assessment is the key. Because we're going to save thousands and
9 thousands of dollars. Let's spend that money up front and get
10 what's needed for the assessments and we are ready and willing to
11 do whatever it takes to help. You know, I've sat on three or four
12 different SEDAR assessment processes, all the way back to 2004 was
13 my first one, and the most recent one was the Queen Triggerfish.
14 We are still not finished with that in some areas. I saw one of
15 the issues there was, we didn't have any juvenile fish, because
16 the fishers only bring in the ones that can be sold. So, what I
17 did over the last couple months, well few months, is I've been
18 collecting some small little juvenile queen triggers that managed
19 to stay compressed in my traps. Those we normally release right
20 away and I brought them in so when Virginia comes back in June to
21 do the sampling for the yellowtail snappers, the life history
22 assessments on those yellowtails, I'm going to give-- I have a
23 whole big bag full of them and I'm going to give her that so it
24 can be plugged in to that assessment, so we can see that link that
25 was missing.

26
27 So, this is where the Fishermen Association and the fishers of the
28 Saint Thomas/Saint John District are ready to work, once the method
29 has been created and how we move forward, we're ready to work in
30 getting this information together. Okay, this is what is needed.
31 Because at the end of the day, you guys will be able to do your
32 job and the fishers would also feel comfortable with the outcome
33 of not using models from other areas because we didn't have
34 sufficient data here in the Caribbean. So, I think we're headed in
35 the right direction, so thank you.

36
37 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Yeah, that's great. I mean, very much what Marcos
38 was just saying, when the fishers know what to be looking for,
39 they're able to make those collections if they know how to maintain
40 the samples. Yeah, it's a great collaboration and you and you guys
41 are out there all the time. You're seeing this stuff all the time.

42
43 **MARCOS HANKE:** Anybody else? Andy?

44
45 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, thanks, Kevin, for the presentation.
46 Great synthesis of how you've kind of walked through to evaluate
47 how to conduct stock assessments. I had a similar comment to kind
48 of what Marcos mentioned earlier, which is, you know, a species

1 like black grouper could show up on the list but maybe isn't really
2 suitable for conducting a stock assessment because it's not of
3 economic importance or there's maybe limited data and information.
4 So, I guess my comment is, I don't necessarily have any
5 recommendations for 2025 other than I think another component of
6 this should be looking at kind of the cultural and economic value
7 of the fishery and how we use that to help prioritize stock
8 assessments and evaluation of the species.

10 Then my question for you is, doing the triage really is
11 enlightening in terms of the gaps that need to be filled. So
12 historically, if we haven't collected the data in a manner to
13 conduct a stock assessment it's like we're starting at day one and
14 then collecting data to go forward. So, at what point do you feel
15 like we would have sufficient information if we were able to
16 accomplish the objectives of data collection to meet the stock
17 assessment needs to actually perform a future stock assessment?
18 Assuming we start that today, is it a 10-year timeframe? Is it a
19 five-year timeframe? Is there a way of being able to make progress
20 toward adding species to this list over time if we're able to
21 collect the data?

23 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Yeah, I think it depends upon the data that's
24 lacking. You know, so if we had, for example-- a lot of this is
25 size composition data or lack of it, right? Is where we run into
26 problems. So, if we had a couple years from now of good size comp
27 data and we also had it from 10 years ago or 15 years ago, now
28 we've at least got a couple of data points. And there's some things
29 we can do to be in the modeling that, you know, we can sort of
30 work around that to a certain extent if we've got some other
31 information, like an index of abundance. An index is usually going
32 to be, you know, you're going to want five years of that because
33 you just need to have a time series. Anything much less than five
34 years is really not enough to track those trends.

36 So, I think it also depends here on what we're lacking. If we can
37 fill in the size comp data pretty well even if we've got a gap of
38 some years, if we've got the most recent years in adequate
39 sampling, that makes a big difference. So, I think there's some
40 things we can do in the next five years that really turn a lot of
41 this around. During those five years, we can also be addressing
42 the life history gaps for some of these species too because those
43 are shorter term studies. You don't need 10 years of life history
44 data to inform a stock assessment like you would need, say, five
45 years of an index.

47 So, I think there's a lot of things we can do in a relatively short
48 period of time. And hopefully when the boss was here yesterday,

1 she was suitably impressed with what we're trying to do that she'll
2 look out for us in the money realm. We'll see how that goes.

3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. And in terms of the triage mentioned by Andy,
5 I know by fact that the amount of fish landed is one of the main
6 ones, but I really didn't see the part where, how many gears
7 interact or catch that fish in, not just sectors but gears. Is
8 there anything on the triage that considers that? Because basically
9 what we are talking about is the potential exposition of that fish
10 to be caught into the future or being caught now. Is there anything
11 that we are doing to address that?

12
13 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** So, all of the data that we reviewed, the landings
14 and the size composition data, all of that we look at it gear
15 specific. So those graphs-- we could go up to one of them --you'll
16 see that it's by gear within those histograms.

17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Short question. If there are more gears that catch
19 the fish that would put the ranking higher, or no?

20
21 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** No. No, we just need to track it by gear because
22 the size composition may differ among gears.

23
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** No, I get it. I was just talking about the priority
25 and the triage.

26
27 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** No, this is in no way-- this is entirely data
28 driven. So, we've made no ranking due to some other criteria. All
29 of them are the same in the sense that there was adequate data or
30 they're missing a key piece, or they really don't have any data at
31 all. Those are sort of the tiers that we developed. But, within
32 those, it's entirely the purview of the Council to decide, "Okay.
33 We think this one needs a stock assessment more urgently than some
34 other one." So that would be up to you all. We could weigh in on
35 that if you asked us to, but it's really up to you all.

36
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Anybody else? Or we keep going with your
38 presentation?

39
40 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** I'd like to see, if we can, if the Council agrees
41 with red hind for 2025 for SEDAR in the Virgin Islands. So, we've
42 got Hogfish in Puerto Rico, but we need a species for the Virgin
43 Islands, and we can really only go with one.

44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. I remember. I'm going to defer to the people
46 from U.S.V.I. to know how important red hind are on that fishery.
47 I think it's a very important species and there are other
48 discussions about timing on the reproduction and other things

1 related to the red hind. I think this stock assessment will be
2 important, but I would like to hear from people from U.S.V.I.
3 Carlos?

4
5 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I'm good with the red hind.

6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nicole?

8
9 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yeah. I think this is an appropriate species.
10 It spans both districts. Both island-based fisheries management
11 plans will benefit, and our data will increase. So, we support
12 this.

13
14 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian?

15
16 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Yeah, I think the red hind should be that
17 assessment for 2025. We have tons and tons of information on red
18 hind, both from the CCR and also from all the studies that the
19 University of the Virgin Islands and other people have studied
20 these closed areas and everything. So, I think it's a great
21 opportunity for us to do a stock assessment on a red hind.

22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Gerson?

24
25 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** I also agree with the red hind for the
26 assessment.

27
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. What else, Kevin, do you need to know
29 from us?

30
31 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** If everyone's happy, if the Council's happy with
32 red hind, you just need to tell the steering committee and I'll
33 tell Julie Neer, I think she's on the call, so we can move forward
34 with red hind and hogfish in 2025.

35
36 **MARCOS HANKE:** Please, just to take note Liajay about that. The
37 record is clear that the red hind is the one. Thank you.

38
39 **Southeast Fishery Science Center Acknowledgements**

40
41 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thank you, thank you all. I've got some more
42 slides and then I know John wanted a couple of minutes, so I'll
43 try and get through these fairly quickly.

44
45 Next slide.

46
47 So, I just wanted to acknowledge that this was not the first sort
48 of data review in the SEDAR process. I think it's SEDAR 4 and all

1 the way up to 46, had some pretty extensive data reviews. There
2 was a special workshop, a SEDAR special topics workshop, back in,
3 I want to say 2009 or so, that looked at Caribbean data. So, in
4 our review, we very heavily looked at the work that had come before
5 us. There had been a fishery independent survey workshop that was
6 conducted at the Science Center in Miami a number of years ago.
7 Skyler Sagarese, who many of you know, did an awful lot of work on
8 species prioritization, not just here in the Caribbean, but also
9 in the Southeast, Gulf and South Atlantic. And Adyan Rios began
10 this most recent data review and then sort of pass it over to
11 Stephanie, Refik and Kim. So, I just want to acknowledge all those
12 efforts in the past.

13
14 Next slide. Oh, we lost—

15
16 **ZOOM SERVICE:** Recording in progress.

17
18 **Southeast Fishery Science Center Quick Update**

19
20 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Okay. Looks like we're back in business. Next
21 slide.

22
23 So, this is really just a prompt for me to give you a quick update
24 on SEDAR 80. So, as you'll recall, SEDAR 80 is Queen Triggerfish
25 for all the islands. It was completed and accepted by the SSC for
26 Puerto Rico. We're still working on the U.S. Virgin Islands. You
27 may, I think most all of you know by now that Nancy Cummings
28 retired at the end of last year. So, she was our lead assessment
29 biologist on that on that project, so Adyan Rios has taken over.
30 So, we've taken a little bit of time to get reorganized and moved
31 forward. Also working with Adyan is Kyle Shertzer. He's one of the
32 assessment biologists that normally works in the South Atlantic.
33 He's based in Beauford, North Carolina, but he is an outstanding
34 assessment biologist. So, he's going to be a real boost to this
35 assessment and also, SEDAR 84. He's going to be participating in
36 that. I think we've had Kyle for over a year, I mean, assisting
37 with those two assessments. So that's exciting news.

38
39 Following the presentations to the SSC at the end of November last
40 year, there were some additional guidance for how the SSC would
41 like to see SEDAR 80 move forward. So, those are going to be
42 reviewed at the upcoming SSC meeting in a few weeks. That's a joint
43 meeting with the with the TAP, the EBFM TAP. So, I'm looking
44 forward to that presentation from Adyan and Kyle at the SSC.

45
46 Next slide. Is that the last one you have?

47
48 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** That's it. That was the last slide.

1
2 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Oh, well I've got more, so I'll just tell you
3 about it. So, SEDAR 84-- there's nothing to show. I'm just going
4 to talk.

5
6 SEDAR 84 which is Yellowtail Snapper in Saint Thomas/Saint John
7 and Puerto Rico, and stoplight parrotfish in Saint Croix, we are
8 really looking for participants in that. I know we've talked about
9 that a little bit, so I know that the SEDAR coordinator would like
10 to have a finalized list, if she hasn't received it already, from
11 the Council, of folks that you would nominate to participate. So
12 those would be you know, folks from the SSC, which I think we've
13 already got some of them and if not, they certainly need to take
14 up this conversation at their meeting in a couple of weeks. It is
15 also not uncommon to have Council members participate in the
16 process. So, if there's a Council member who is interested it'd be
17 helpful, and we'd certainly welcome their participation. Fishers,
18 of course we need participation, but also from the Virgin Islands
19 Division of Fish and Wildlife participants, as well as Puerto Rico,
20 DNER.

21
22 So many of you may have already put your names out there. I'm not
23 chastising anyone. I'm encouraging people to participate because
24 it's vital to the process.

25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** Question. When's the date of SEDAR 84 for
27 yellowtail?

28
29 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** We started in the summer with a data scoping call.
30 I think that's in July. So that's just an online thing. A virtual
31 meeting. I think there's an in-person workshop, I believe it's
32 scheduled for October, late October. And it will be down here
33 somewhere. It's up to SEDAR to decide if it's in the Virgin Islands
34 or if it's in Puerto Rico. That's something that they'll be working
35 on.

36
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay, Carlos.

38
39 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, yeah, I mentioned this to Kevin yesterday
40 and to Graciela a few weeks ago, but I want to put it on the record
41 that for the Saint Croix district, for the workshop, for the
42 stoplight parrotfish, I'm recommending Gerson Martínez and Marsha
43 Taylor to be on that workshop as local fishers and they're also
44 members of our Saint Croix FAC and they're also members of the
45 Saint Croix DAP.

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Kevin.
48

1 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thanks. So, are these people you're drafting, do
2 they know that they're being drafted?

3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** No, yeah, I spoke to them at our December,
5 January FAC and again, I mentioned it at the April FAC.

6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. And because I'm not going to be—

8
9 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sorry. I'm sorry. And they both agreed.

10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Because I'm not going to be on the next August
12 meeting and as a member of the industry, I just want to say, to be
13 on the record, that I am available for yellowtail representing
14 recreational and other expertise on lane snapper and yellowtail
15 snapper in the future SEDAR process. I'll be available. I'll be
16 glad to collaborate on that. Julian?

17
18 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Yes, Julian Magras, for the record. Also back in
19 December, I submitted the names recommendation for the fishers for
20 the yellowtail Fisher fishing industry in Saint Thomas/Saint John
21 District. I submitted them to Graciela already. Thank you.

22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Julian.

24
25 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** So, I've got one more thing, very brief and then
26 I'll turn it over to John. So, all we need for this to move forward
27 is to make sure that whatever the list of nominees is from the
28 Council that goes to Graciela and onto SEDAR. And we need it pretty
29 soon. So, whatever that list is, if we can just ensure it moves on
30 to SEDAR, so that would include also the local science partners in
31 DNER and DFW as well as any nominees from the Council.

32
33 And then the last update I want to give is on the electronic
34 logbook data availability issue. So, this is the ShellCatch data.
35 So, this is an ongoing process right now. The data are housed in
36 a cloud storage the ShellCatch has. So, in order for us to use it
37 in an assessment, we've got to have more accessibility than that.
38 A good portion of the commercial landings are now being reported
39 by these electronic logbooks. And I know it that the Virgin Islands
40 is also interested in moving forward with this but there are some
41 database issues that we're trying to solve. It's something that I
42 would not have realized that is as complicated as it is, had I not
43 worked for the Fishery Statistics Division for years. It's just
44 not something you think about until you live in that world. Anyway,
45 there's a group from DNER ShellCatch, ACCSP, which is the Atlantic
46 Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. They're going to warehouse
47 the data that we then have access to, and this is the sort of thing
48 they do. And the Science Center, primarily Kim Johnson and Yanet

1 Jiménez, are working to get those data migrated over to ACCSP.
2 There's a lot of stuff that goes on in the background that requires
3 a lot of work. And it's a slow process because they'll fix one
4 thing, and two other things will break. So, it's a trial and trial
5 and trial and trial some more around the error's kind of process.
6 But I think they're a little bit stalled but hopefully we can get,
7 get them moving again.

8
9 So that is my update. Thanks for your attention and your decision
10 making. I'm going to turn it over to John.

11
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** One quick thing from Carlos.

13
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Oh yeah. I forgot to mention, when it comes to
15 the stoplight parrotfish assessment, Gerson will be representing
16 the commercial sector and Marshall will be representing the
17 recreational sector. So, you'll have two different opinions.

18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Carlos. John?

20
21 **Marine Spatial Planning for Aquaculture and Offshore wind**

22
23 **JOHN WALTER, III:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Kevin, for
24 presenting on behalf of the Center. I just wanted to follow up on
25 two things that our topics that Janet brought up and one other
26 topic. The one topic is on offshore wind and also on aquaculture.
27 I think those are two things that we have, as an agency, worked on
28 pretty extensively in the Gulf of Mexico and other areas to develop
29 what we call Marine Spatial Planning for those kind of activities
30 in the offshore environment. It's probably a beneficial thing for
31 this Council to consider as well, that that planning informs where
32 you might put offshore aquaculture and also the planning for where
33 offshore wind might go, to try to deconflict for other ocean uses.
34 I think it's that upfront early planning for those activities that
35 is really critical to being able to find the right space in the
36 ocean for all the activities, including our fisheries.

37
38 And so, what I want this Council to be aware of is a number of
39 things, and I'll send these links to Council staff. One, the
40 aquaculture opportunity area Atlas for the Gulf of Mexico, which
41 was a NOAA product. NOAA administers aquaculture in the offshore
42 waters. That is something that we'd like to begin the planning
43 process for in the Caribbean. Something similar to what was done
44 in the Gulf of Mexico and in California to identify good areas for
45 aquaculture. We're going to work with our partners at NCCOS to
46 begin that process.

47
48 There's also likely to be a strong stakeholder component of those

1 because we're going to need the information on what the other
2 activities that are in that environment. Right now, we don't have
3 a major initiative for it yet. It's just getting started. But I
4 think that's something that it would be good, if there is support
5 from the Council for that, to say, "Yes, indeed, we want to see
6 that happen."

7
8 Number two is offshore wind. We think that the planning should be
9 done for both at the same time because there is likely to be
10 synergies in economies of scale that could be gained. Also, if
11 you're going to compile all of the spatial data layers, you might
12 as well do it all at once. And so, we're also going to be doing
13 that planning for offshore wind in the Caribbean, in territories
14 and the Commonwealth. We think that it may be possible to do that
15 for other areas as well. Depending on the scope and nature of what
16 we can do, that's going to involve pulling together all the data
17 sets for where fishing occurs, where coral reefs are, where our
18 trust resources occur. So, for instance, marine mammals, sea
19 turtles, if we've got the data, we're going to put that into a
20 spatial modeling process.

21
22 And then the next step is that, at least in the way that it happened
23 in the Gulf of Mexico, is the state leadership requested a task
24 force be stood up by BOEM. Then after they get a request from that
25 BOEM then stands up a task force which assembles all of the
26 stakeholders who would be involved in that and then that task force
27 then has a series of meetings that will outline the process and
28 the plan going forward. And so that worked out fairly well in the
29 Gulf. The Gulf started with 30 million acres of wind to be
30 considered in the initial planning process. Now they're offering
31 300,000 acres of wind for a lease sale. I think the message is
32 start big to be able to end big and be able to deconflict for other
33 ocean uses. And so, the gulf process was able to find good areas
34 in the Gulf that avoided many of the major fisheries and avoided
35 many of the major protected species.

36
37 And I think following that process of informed planning is where
38 we would like to promote and also partner, I think, if the Council
39 is indeed interested in that. Those are my two points there. I
40 have something to follow up afterwards, but I'd like to hear some
41 comments on that.

42 43 **Questions/Comments**

44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, I'm ready to make some comments, but I want to
46 hear from the Council members if you have any. Go ahead, Miguel.

47
48 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** We did that before, Marine Spatial Planning, for

1 other purposes, and we put together, we the Puerto Rico and U.S.
2 Virgin Island government. So how do you envision this task force?
3 who should trigger the development and the assemblage of the task
4 force? And certainly we, in the past, we stated for the record
5 that we are interested in participating in anything that is related
6 to spatial planning. Especially now with the offshore wind and the
7 Aquaculture facilities that we're discussing. So, in your mind,
8 what would be the next step for the Council to work on this spatial
9 planning?

10
11 **JOHN WALTER, III:** Okay, so the task force specifically is
12 administered by BOEM, and that's a request from Commonwealth or
13 territorial leadership to BOEM to stand up a task force that would
14 begin that process for offshore wind. The Marine Spatial Planning
15 can happen independent of the task force because that is compiling
16 the data sets and building the models to inform where we might
17 want to do things to then advise BOEM. BOEM used that information
18 in the Gulf to then determine where they were going to eventually
19 offer for leasing. NOAA uses that information to identify the areas
20 that it would promote or recommend for aquaculture.

21
22 In terms of how the Council can get involved in the Marine Spatial
23 Planning, I think one, seeing what information has already been
24 done is the first step, so that we aren't recreating work that's
25 already done. And then two, I think in terms of being able to help
26 compile data sets, both the socioeconomic aspects of it, which are
27 often a little more challenging to get, as well as any of the
28 natural resources data sets that can be compiled would be highly
29 valuable. And in particular, we need to know where fishermen are
30 fishing and what activities might be either precluded by
31 aquaculture or offshore wind or promoted by it, because it has
32 both benefits and opportunities. Thank you.

33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** I have Carlos.

35
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah. John, can you tell me, I keep hearing
37 BOEM, can you tell me what that is?

38
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just explain a little bit of what that is.

40
41 **JOHN WALTER, III:** BOEM is the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.
42 And so, BOEM is the agency who does the lease sales for offshore
43 oil and gas.

44
45 And so, something that worked well in the Gulf of Mexico was that
46 BOEM engaged very strongly and repeatedly with the Gulf Council.
47 In the last Gulf Council meetings, BOEM would have staff explain
48 the offshore wind process to the Council and then present on the

1 status of how wind is proceeding. We found that to be quite
2 effective in being able to raise awareness of what was going on.
3 And I think a request also to BOEM of could you please advise us
4 of where BOEM's intents are for the Caribbean could be a useful
5 request to BOEM from this Council. Thank you.

6
7 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos?

8
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos.

10
11 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** The orientation that I received from BOEM people,
12 because they also work with Atlantic and the Council, is that the
13 two local government, maybe they already did it, but the two local
14 government has to send a request for inclusion. That has to come
15 from the governor of Puerto Rico and the governor of the Virgin
16 Islands. Of course, it has to be supported by the locals, but I
17 don't know the status of what they are doing.

18
19 They asked me if I had any document related to that because they
20 also wanted the Council to provide the information and that's why
21 I asked John. For example, we asked geographical information as to
22 where the fishers are, where the marine resources are that we use
23 for fishery, the possibility of aquaculture areas, and is the map
24 that Graciela is working with Martha Prada, if that's something
25 that we can provide.

26
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Carlos.

28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah. So, I know that the U.S.V.I., the
30 government, has appointed their Aquaculture Commission members,
31 and I think that this would be a good place for them to start
32 discussions on spatial planning and I'll mention that.

33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nicole or Ricardo, do you want to mention something?

35
36 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Sure. We're very interested in helping support
37 marine spatial planning. We already have multiple initiatives
38 underway. The Council already has initiatives underway, and we
39 would like to support that in a cohesive manner. Our Office of
40 Energy is in conversations with BOEM, so I think that that might
41 be a good integration for us that we could talk about at some
42 point. Um, I wasn't aware the Council had been asked as well, but
43 we have been asked in alternative ways, territorially.

44
45 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Thank you for the opportunity. Ricardo López
46 for the record. In DNR, we have an office of permits and most
47 recently we have been gathering more applications to work with
48 aquaculture. So, I think this comes in a good moment. Thanks a

1 lot.

2
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy?

4
5 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, a couple of comments. So certainly, I
6 think one recommendation would be if the, you know, knowing that
7 there's potential for development of wind energy in the Caribbean,
8 having the Council reach out to the territorial governments and
9 express, kind of, interest in participating and engaging as this
10 process develops would be really important.

11
12 The process in the Gulf kind of emerged from the state of Louisiana
13 requesting this task force be developed, right? And so, they kind
14 of led the charge with the task force, then expanded into a large
15 group of people from both federal and state governments as well as
16 Congress and many other participants and we've now had, I think,
17 four inter-agency renewable energy meetings. But it's been a very
18 productive, open dialogue, transparent process and as John
19 mentioned, informed by marine spatial planning. And we've really
20 been pushing, obviously, for the marine spatial planning to move
21 forward in other areas.

22
23 For the Caribbean, it would be, I think, more challenging just
24 because of the data and information you have, right? And so, I
25 think the process will have to develop based on the data
26 limitations and how we get informed, obviously, from fishermen and
27 others. But I did want to comment on the aquaculture opportunity
28 areas.

29
30 So that's a process that's run by NOAA, National Marine Fisheries
31 Service. We have been selecting a couple areas every few years in
32 order to develop around the country. And so, that process is
33 informed by marine spatial planning, but we gauge interest, we
34 gauge availability of infrastructure and then, based on that, we
35 dedicate time, resources, effort to prioritize various regions in
36 the country to develop aquaculture opportunity areas. And so, the
37 first two that were out of the gate were the Gulf of Mexico and
38 the Pacific Southwest California but there's other areas,
39 obviously, that we've been looking into and expanding. And so
40 certainly, we can do that for Puerto Rico and the U.S.V.I., but
41 it's kind of a stage process that we're developing over time based
42 on resources and staffing in terms of what we can support based on
43 other areas that we're working on right now.

44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. I want to share with the Council because
46 as Chairman and part of the Council I have been in many meetings
47 that address what is going on around the nation in terms of
48 aquaculture, spatial aquaculture. I saw the value of aquaculture

1 activities and that it has flexibility to it, to adapt to the
2 Caribbean needs.

3
4 I made a presentation representing you guys at the Recreational
5 Summit about the added value if you design correctly the
6 aquaculture activity, not just the poundage of fish that is
7 produced, but the divers that can visit the site, if the structure
8 helps in recruitment of other species that get into the fishery
9 and so on. I don't want to go over that in detail, but I really
10 think that the Council expressed on the past and should promote
11 the aquaculture with Caribbean considerations by design since the
12 beginning not to lose opportunities of making it work. And that
13 addresses which species we are going to use, the genetics that are
14 going to be in there, the design of the cages and all the technical
15 details.

16
17 One other thing that we can take advantage. There is expertise
18 locally that are working already with multi traffic production and
19 also exploring infrastructure to be able to grow smaller fish to
20 get into the cages and food for that. There are a few projects
21 that already share with John in an informal conversation and all
22 of those elements are there. We just need to help and guide and
23 help line them up to do our version, a Caribbean version, to this
24 approach of the aquaculture.

25
26 And one last point is that I believe that the wind farms are the
27 windmills on the ocean and depend on the design we do. Considering
28 the need of clean energy in the Caribbean is probably something
29 that we should explore and get more educated and see where it goes
30 but for sure an opportunity that the Council should be involved
31 since the beginning, have an input and consider. Miguel.

32
33 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** In concrete, actually, we are in line for the
34 aquaculture opportunity areas. I talked to the, I was interviewed
35 by the NOAA guy who's working on this, one of them, and he told me
36 that they have the Gulf, they have all the areas, and in due time
37 they-- because they already came here, and they are going to
38 consider us in due time but at this moment, they don't have plans
39 to immediately come here because of what has been said. But Dr.
40 Strelcheck said they have a priority lease, and they have
41 personnel, etcetera.

42
43 Regarding the offshore winds. The only thing that we can do, at
44 this time, is that the two local government representatives can
45 inform back to the Council at the August meeting the status of any
46 interaction that the local government has with BOEM.

47
48 And remember, this is outside natural resources. It goes to energy

1 and other offices in the Puerto Rico and the Virgin Island
2 government. So, if Dr. Angeli and Dr. López can bring some light
3 into the status of those activities, that will lead to a connection
4 between Puerto Rico and the offshore windmill with the BOEM people.
5 It will be nice if you can do it. You can also tell us, "Sorry we
6 couldn't find anything." But at least we are on the right track
7 because unless we have a connection with two local government, the
8 Council cannot get involved directly.

9
10 **MARCOS HANKE:** I think, Miguel, that that's a great idea and
11 request to them. But we can go a step forward. You and I sit down
12 and make a letter requesting the information that is probably ne
13 needed. Anyway, do you guys want to express anything, Ricardo and-
14 -

15
16 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** It's just a question. I don't see the email
17 of John Walter in the list that I received. So, if that email can
18 be provided, I would appreciate that.

19
20 **JOHN WALTER, III:** I could certainly provide my email. I am
21 drafting an email with a number of the key links to documents that
22 I alluded to, and I'll send it to Council staff and so that could
23 be submitted so that-- it'll outline the BOEM process, the task
24 force process, marine spatial planning and aquaculture. And so, I
25 think that will help people to kind of get an idea. It's a lot of
26 material, but as I've learned about offshore wind, when it comes
27 to your region, it comes quickly, and you'll want to get up to
28 speed quickly. Thanks.

29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Do you need anything else from the
31 Council at this point, John?

32
33 **JOHN WALTER, III:** I do not think so. I think there was the broad
34 support for proceeding with this and so I think that's what we
35 wanted to get. I do have one more thing to follow up on.

36
37 Okay. And I just wanted to say that on behalf of the Science
38 Center, Marcos, we really respect your leadership and that you've
39 literally built a bridge between Miami and the Council and allowed
40 us to walk across it. And that has opened the door for us to be
41 able to provide much more science support, and I think to be much
42 more engaged with people. And I think it's a testament to your
43 leadership and your ability to build the bridges and to be
44 welcoming to us and to all of our staff. And so, we greatly
45 appreciate that.

46
47 Don't be a stranger, which we know you won't be. And so, we look
48 forward to you being involved in SEDARs in the DAP and to being a

1 voice and continuing to help build the bridges that are going to
2 improve the sustainability in this region. So, thank you, Marcos.

3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. And for sure it'll be on a different
5 position, right? But it is time for to renew, to engage more
6 people, but I will be available to support anybody. Everybody has
7 my telephone number, my emails, and we keep moving forward for the
8 best interest of the fishery and the fishermen of Puerto Rico.
9 Thank you, John. Next presentation.

10
11 We had a longer break before so we're going to skip the break. We
12 have a presentation of Equity by, Andy? John.

13
14 **NOAA Fisheries' Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Strategy,**
15 **Regional Implementation Process, and Schedule**
16

17 **JOHN WALTER, III:** Okay, thank you. Got the presentation lined up.
18 So, Andy and Clay and I, have the pleasure of being able to go to
19 all the Council meetings in this region, the Southeast. So, our
20 staff asked us to give this presentation and I think I just really
21 want to acknowledge Heather Blough and Brent Stoffle for a lot of
22 their work in advancing the EEJ strategy and serving on the
23 national EEJ strategy team. And on behalf of them, they actually
24 asked us, Andy and Clay, to give this presentation because it
25 sends, I think, an appropriate message and they felt that hearing
26 it from the leadership was really exceedingly valuable. And so,
27 they asked Andy and Clay and now me to give this presentation,
28 which I have the honor to do.

29
30 One thing before I start. I noted that at the beginning of this
31 meeting there was a request of who needs interpretation services
32 and that we actually have simultaneous interpretation of this
33 meeting. I think one of the things that is part of the EEJ strategy
34 is that we meet people where they are. And that equity means that
35 everyone has an equal opportunity to make their case before
36 decision makers. That means they have the opportunity to make their
37 case in the language and manner they feel that they can most
38 appropriately make it to a decision-making body like this Council.
39 And I think sending the message that you are willing and able to
40 hear them in whatever language they choose to talk in, is a good
41 message. And I think for someone like me, who is who Spanish is
42 not very good, I would like to hear from people if they choose to
43 speak in Spanish, I can understand them quite well because I've
44 got this. And I think having that in your hand, having it on your
45 head says, I'm willing and able to hear you how you want to
46 communicate with me.

47
48 I know the power of this, because at ICCAT, where I was the Western

1 Bluefin Tuna Chair for a number of years, we usually have
2 simultaneous interpretation. Particularly, at the decision-making
3 meetings where your words matter, and your words are intended to
4 make a case before decision makers. That's where having that is
5 exceedingly valuable. I think we're going to hear public comment
6 today, in the afternoon, and I think that public comment should be
7 available and however people choose to comment it, we can have it
8 interpreted in real time.

9
10 I've had numerous arguments with my colleagues as well as friends
11 across the table and across interpretation where I've spoken in
12 English and they have spoken in French or Spanish, one of the three
13 languages that are official languages of ICCAT. And I've found
14 that having that ability to make your case in the language that
15 you are most comfortable means that you are making your best
16 argument. I think that's essential to equity and to achieving
17 equitable outcomes in bodies like this. So, I'd say next time these
18 come out, raise your hand, unless if you are not that comfortable
19 in working in other languages, say "Yes, talk to me how you want
20 to."

21
22 With that, if we could go to the next slide. So, to meet people
23 where they are, evidently, they are not able to see the
24 presentation right now on the webinar. Can you check to make sure
25 that we're presenting, they're saying that they're seeing actions
26 and alternatives, but not the presentation. Okay. Apologies then.

27
28 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** On that point, John. That's important, that's
29 why we have the Zoom, and we have the translation in zoom. During
30 the pandemic, we learned a lot. There was a lot of people that
31 couldn't make it to meetings physically, but there are a lot of
32 fishers who connected with us. They looked at the agenda and when
33 they had the time, they connect to the agenda.

34
35 Not only that, but they also asked for document translations and
36 things. So, I believe that those two points that you're making are
37 really important.

38
39 **JOHN WALTER, III:** Thank you. Okay. So, the objectives of the NOAA
40 EEJ strategy are equity in research and monitoring; incorporation
41 of EEJ into policy and plans; inclusive governance; equitable
42 distribution of the benefits; equitable outreach and engagement;
43 and an empowering environment. It's a broad expansive strategy,
44 but I think the goals are something that resonate with many of us,
45 and it's something that our administration is very much in favor
46 of and supporting us in actually implementing the strategy.

47
48 Next slide.

1
2 So, there was initial poll of people about the EEJ strategy, and
3 it was initially sent out for public comment. Here's the regional
4 distribution of who responded in terms of individuals and
5 organizations by region.

6
7 You can see that there are many respondents from the Pacific Island
8 region. A high number of respondents nationally and fewer from the
9 southeast region. I don't think that necessarily speaks to the
10 importance of it. This is just the regional representation of who
11 responded.

12
13 Next slide.

14
15 And so, in terms of public feedback, do stakeholders support the
16 strategy? And in large part, the answer was yes. There was a number
17 of implied yeses, and yet there were some nos. And I think perhaps
18 there's a number of reasons why people might not support the
19 strategy. I think the strategy and I'll say that the idea of EEJ
20 in implementation is going to have some difficult conversations
21 that need to be had. And I think that some of the lack of support
22 may be due to people being concerned about the difficulty of those
23 conversations. And when we talk about allocation of scarce
24 resources, which is what fisheries management is about, there are
25 going to be difficult conversations. The key to those difficult
26 conversations achieving equitable outcomes is to have those
27 conversations out in the open, to have all stakeholders there and
28 have them be able to make their case equitably. And I think then
29 those difficult decisions are going to come before a Council
30 process where the Council ultimately makes those societal
31 decisions.

32
33 In terms of the other lack of support, I think perhaps we also
34 need to continue to make the case for the value of EEJ. One way I
35 like to think about this is that we often think that "well, it's
36 the right thing to do" and in fact it probably is the right thing
37 to do but I think beyond that, it is not just the right thing to
38 do, but it creates a stronger nation. Similar to how last night we
39 were able to have a wonderful dinner from the Fisherman's
40 Association of La Guancha, and we had many different recipes. I
41 think in terms of thinking about this as a recipe, that the sum is
42 much greater than its individual parts and that's how a great
43 recipe comes together. I think that's how a great nation comes
44 together, that it is greater than the sum of its parts, which is
45 how we build resiliency in terms of having diverse participation,
46 how we overcome a lot of the obstacles that we're going to face
47 and how we're stronger with that equitable participation. So, I
48 think the case may still need to be made in some areas.

1
2 Next slide.

3
4 So, some of the public feedback and the key messages. One, to align
5 NMFS work with local needs; to engage with more diverse groups; to
6 support the autonomy of territorial and tribal governments; to
7 collect demographic data; to measure success by feedback from the
8 communities. And there were concerns with things such as catch
9 shares, aquaculture and protected species, all of which have
10 implications about allocation of scarce resources such as catch
11 shares, who and what implements aquaculture, and then who and what
12 are affected by protected species. And so, some of the
13 implementation recommendations were to communicate early and often
14 with stakeholders, work with the Council and other agencies, and
15 then support capacity for EEJ work.

16
17 Next slide.

18
19 So, from our Southeast stakeholders of which the Caribbean is one
20 of them, we got specific feedback that the Council supported and
21 ranged from enthusiastic to measured. I think the measured response
22 is because of some of the difficult questions that may arise from
23 this. One, that we need more data, more data and more data to
24 inform any of the decision making. And that we need boots on the
25 ground and that is meeting people where they are at, going to the
26 docks, meeting people in their communities, which in fact our
27 implementation strategy, I'll go into that, we are actually
28 planning those. And then work with and financially support the
29 Council states and other liaisons who are already well positioned
30 to advance outreach and engagement activities. This is essentially
31 to work with our partners who already do this.

32
33 Then improve accessibility to programs like the Fisheries Finance
34 Program and other federal funds. I think the national seafood
35 strategy is maybe one other area to explore. Then support and
36 expand training programs like MREP that has been highly successful
37 in this region, the Gulf Commercial Fisheries program. And then
38 what we saw is the Young Fisherman's program in Vieques, which I
39 think is really an opportunity there to engage with people early
40 on in their fishing careers. Then ensure equitable Council
41 representation, ensuring underserved populations and fishing
42 sectors are at the table. And I think of all the Councils, this
43 Council might do a very good job at that.

44
45 And then obviously, the "Show me the money!" is something that is
46 sort of the lower hanging fruit, yes, it's easy to ask for money,
47 it's much harder to get it under situations where funding is
48 scarce.

1
2 Next slide.

3
4 So, in terms of NOAA Fishery's EEJ strategy, one of the things is
5 that it's going to be a framework to incorporate EEJ in all of our
6 activities. This is something that we as an agency are trying to
7 look at our activities through that lens of EEJ. Are all of the
8 activities that we do meeting our goals?

9
10 And it requires a step down from the implementation plans to the
11 regional level. So, from the national to the regional to the local.
12 And ideally seeking to remove the barriers to EEJ. What are the
13 barriers? Why are we not achieving our objectives? And what are
14 things that could be done to remove them?

15
16 Next slide.

17
18 So, this is the timeline for this process. We're right now in the
19 spring 2023 where we're soliciting public feedback, presenting
20 these to the Councils. And then, we're going to start the process
21 for our focus groups that are going to start fairly soon. Those
22 focus groups are going to occur throughout the spring and summer,
23 which are going to provide us the information for developing the
24 regional implementation strategies.

25
26 Next slide.

27
28 And so, the focus groups, and these are going to be a one of a
29 suite of ethnographic methods used to consult and collect data
30 from local stakeholders. It's going to bring together a small group
31 of people selected based on predefined experience or knowledge to
32 answer questions in a moderated setting designed to shed light on
33 a topic of interest, in this case, EEJ.

34
35 Each will include up to 15 stakeholders from underserved
36 communities that are impacted by our work to help us understand
37 how to advance our six national strategies, our national
38 objectives.

39
40 Next slide.

41
42 The plan for the Caribbean focus groups is in mid-May to go to the
43 U.S.V.I., both Saint Croix and Saint Thomas and Saint John. And
44 then, Puerto Rico, in June, in four locations throughout the
45 island.

46
47 Next slide.

1 The national strategy and regional implementation. In terms of the
2 national strategy rollout, one of the keys is to roll that out in
3 multiple languages. We got that translated into a number of
4 different languages to make that available to many of our fishing
5 communities. The Council presentations, of which this one is the
6 April Caribbean Council. It will also go out to the South Atlantic.
7 And then, the regional implementation strategy, which focuses
8 initially on the 21 focus group meetings. The Caribbean, the Gulf,
9 south Atlantic, and South Florida. Then we'll bring that to the
10 Council Coordination committee, and then we'll work with our other
11 internal and external partners.

12
13 Next slide.

14
15 So, a number of the basic needs to accomplish this strategy, staff
16 training, staff time and training. That's in terms of allowing our
17 staff the time to understand what they need to do. Work with our
18 community liaisons, collect the demographic data, analyze that
19 data and report out to it. Collaboration with partners and other
20 agencies and language translation and interpretation services.

21
22 Next slide.

23
24 And so, some specific Southeast strategies. One, research and
25 monitoring, which is using our social science research methods to
26 collect the demographic data, incorporating indigenous traditional
27 and local ecological knowledge and the data and information
28 supporting our work.

29
30 And when I talked about climate resilience, this local ecological
31 knowledge may in fact provide some of the keys to climate
32 resilience. Because many of the communities that we have endured
33 and survived through multiple different environmental changes. So,
34 they know what has happened in the past and they've weathered those
35 storms. How did they do that? And that's the local ecological
36 knowledge that may provide the key to our resilience for an
37 uncertain future.

38
39 Then policy and plans, ensuring that our management decisions are
40 incorporating EEJ principles; evaluating what that fairness and
41 equity issues are taken into account in catch share programs as
42 well as in disaster response protocols.

43
44 Inclusive governance, and in this case hiring multilingual staff
45 in things such as permitting so people can get permits in the
46 languages that they can operate in. Obviously simultaneous
47 interpretation, which in we have here at this Council. It's
48 something that might be considered in the other Councils we're not

1 sure, it's really resources dependent whether we can provide that.
2 But I think as Miguel said, now that we are often in a hybrid
3 environment, it actually is increasing our ability to have more
4 participation because zoom can allow for that simultaneous
5 interpretation and for people to attend even if they can't
6 physically be there.

7
8 Then, the benefits, I think, improve accessibility of regional
9 grants processes. One of the key things there is representation on
10 the AFAC committee, of which our Chair is now the AFAC
11 representative for the Southeast. And so, I think that's a key
12 ability for the Saltonstall-Kennedy Grants process to include
13 considerations that would be of benefit to the Caribbean.

14
15 Then communication and outreach. In terms of translating, ensuring
16 that our outreach and our messaging is in ways that people can
17 understand. And then creating an empowering environment and
18 trusting the personnel needs. Biologists for the Caribbean and
19 anthropologist for all regions. Organizing regional workshops and
20 federal partners to share information and lessons learned from the
21 focus groups. And then support for things such as scholarships,
22 internships, and training opportunities for local residents. And
23 I think those are all things that we can embark upon.

24
25 Next slide.

26
27 So, we're seeking your input here, in particular, your thoughts on
28 the tentative dates and locations for the Caribbean focus groups.

29
30 I'll note that some of these dates are not exact, and they are
31 largely the locations we think are going to be the right locations,
32 we may need to change the dates around depending on the actual
33 practical arrangements. And then, do you have suggestions for
34 engaging partners and communities and developing Southeast
35 specific implementation strategies? Are there communities we are
36 missing that we need to be talking to and include? And then how
37 can you inform the work we're going to be doing with the focus
38 groups and how we can best collaborate in developing this regional
39 plan?

40
41 So next slide.

42
43 I believe that is it. Thank you, I very much appreciate being able
44 to present this on the behalf of our EEJ working group and on
45 behalf of SERO and the Center.

46
47 **Questions/Comments**
48

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, John. We have Andy and Alida.

2
3 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, so John and I have been tag teaming this
4 presentation with the Councils, but we felt it was really important
5 that leadership give this presentation. This is not just an
6 initiative that's being implemented just because it's an
7 administrative priority, it's important to us as leaders within
8 NOAA Fisheries to move this forward. We've talked about it, and I
9 think John did an excellent job. This is something we want to be
10 part of our culture within NOAA Fisheries, working with all of our
11 constituents. And to give an example of that, I was really struck
12 last night. What a wonderful occasion we had last night with the
13 fisherman and how gracious people were inviting us to participate
14 in that event. But several people mentioned to me, the fishermen
15 were surprised that me or others from the continental United States
16 were going to come and show up to that meeting. That really struck
17 me as something that is a barrier, as something a perception in
18 terms of me as a leader for NOAA Fisheries representing the United
19 States and the territories in terms of fisheries management and
20 the importance of how we work with one another on the fisheries
21 issues and policies and decisions.

22
23 And so, something like that is just one example of many in terms
24 of opportunities that we can make in terms of working with
25 industry, collaborating with industry, communicate with industry,
26 and trying to break down those barriers as we move forward. So,
27 we're very passionate about this. We're really excited to be moving
28 forward with this and really want your feedback and information
29 and look forward to also sharing the outcomes of these focus groups
30 with you because that's going to really help inform our regional
31 implementation strategy going forward. So, thank you.

32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Andy. You just described the reason I
34 expressed myself earlier that we are in much better position since
35 I saw the evolution on the Council on many things and EEJ is one
36 of them and thanks to leadership like yours and your staff. Alida.

37
38 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Yes. In my next presentation of the
39 Outreach and Education Advisory Panel, I will make all the comments
40 for the EEJ because we do have here a working group that has been
41 meeting with Heather and Cristina is part of that group, Janet is
42 part of that group, Wilson and myself. And then, in the last
43 outreach and education meeting, we presented mostly the same thing
44 that you have, especially, what is the strategy? And then we made
45 recommendations that made changes because before you had only two
46 focus groups in Puerto Rico and Puerto Rico needs more than that
47 because it's very different in terms of sociology, in terms of
48 economy, from the East to the West, from the South to the North.

1 So, I see that that recommendation was accepted.
2
3 The other thing is that at the beginning we had only one management
4 plan for all the islands in the area and there where
5 recommendations for having one for each island that were mostly
6 based on that environmental, justice and equity. Why? Because all
7 our islands are different in terms of history, in terms of
8 sociology, in terms of economics. It took a long time to get that.
9
10 So, when I give my presentation, I'll give the details that we
11 have.
12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Alida. Nelson.
14
15 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sweet, I like this. And I
16 think this initiative should be presented to all DAPs so the
17 members can start learning about this and help spread their voice.
18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Nelson. And addressing the questions
20 that you left on the previous slide. Is it possible to put the
21 slide where you lay out the pueblos where you are going to meet in
22 Puerto Rico? Go backwards in the—
23
24 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Hey, Marcos, let me say something about that.
25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** Mm-hmm.
27
28 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** The lady who was putting together all this, she
29 consulted with Diana and myself. We were the one who told them
30 about these places. She said, "this is the first time, but it's
31 not the last time." So, as we progress, because they have a fixed
32 budget for this, we were able to secure four to cover the cost of
33 Puerto Rico because they're different, they will continue to work
34 and see if we can expand maybe some other time.
35
36 But the message is that if-- this is by invitation by the way, but
37 if you are interested, we need to spread the word. If you are
38 interested, we encourage you to participate, because there are a
39 lot of things and-- EEJ didn't start last year. It started in the
40 eighties and have a long history about it. So, I encourage you to
41 participate. The Council will be involved as much as possible. I
42 believe that this is a step in the right direction.
43
44 The other thing that we need to do at this meeting is to identify
45 the needs of the communities. So, all the members of the DAPs, all
46 the people, Alida, and people around the table here, can provide
47 that information. Once they collect that information, you have
48 seen the presentation by Andy and John, they will gather all this

1 information, come back and say, "These are the priorities, the way
2 to go, and these are the gaps."

3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah, I have just a comment and something that we
5 need to be careful by us inviting people to go. We need to find a
6 way to make sure that we don't exclude people that should give us
7 feedback on EEJ, other communities and so on. My suggestion is
8 that we have Wilson, we have Helena and people that are on the
9 ground nowadays with different communities that can suggest many
10 names, and we can make a list of invitations that is based on the
11 capacity that Miguel just described. But I just inviting and asking
12 Miguel how we can address to make sure that we are not excluding
13 a community or something that have special needs or a special way
14 of doing things on this process.

15
16 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** But that's the point. This is the first time on
17 the last one. This is limited by the budget, limited by the places
18 that they're going to meet because they have to secure a place,
19 they have to pay for it, etcetera, etcetera. So, once we have that
20 and they already had that information, they are going to invite
21 the key people that will provide that information.

22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. Alida.

24
25 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Actually, we have that information already
26 and we sent it to the group. And it is that the group is not more
27 than 15, 20 in each group, in each focus group. That the stipends
28 will be covered by the large EEJ and that the meeting should be in
29 a place that is not something like this. That it should be made in
30 the community, in the fishing villages so that we can get all the
31 information easier.

32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** (Mr. Hanke's comment is inaudible on the recording.)

34
35 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** So, I think Alida covered it. I was going to
36 ask Heather Blough to comment just in terms of how the working
37 groups are being assembled, but I think the point of emphasis,
38 which was Miguel's point, it's not going to involve everyone. We
39 can't involve everyone. It's not going to be just an open process,
40 right? But it's also just a starting point. And we want to have
41 this very kind of facilitated conversations, meeting people in the
42 community to gather information to inform our EEJ strategy. But
43 from that, it'll expand out because we're going to work on a
44 broader implementation plan. And the work is certainly just
45 beginning at this stage.

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah. I just want to make sure, to be on record,
48 that we consider everything, and that we have a group of variety

1 of people helping to form those groups. And everything on my mind
2 is important to be very clear, for people to know where we are
3 going, that we want really to want to be inclusive. It's not an
4 artifact that is of exclusion, it is the reverse of that. We want
5 to include everything.

6
7 That's all for the presentation? Yes? Thank you very much.
8

9 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. And one other thing just to reemphasize,
10 this is a team effort and so a lot of people to thank. I'll probably
11 miss some people, but Janet, Alida, Cristina have all been critical
12 to this. Graciela as well. And the Outreach AP. So, thank you very
13 much for all of the work you've done to this point and your
14 continued help with this.
15

16 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. We going to go for the next presentation.
17 That presentation will be after lunch, which 12:18.
18

19 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** I'm hungry.
20

21 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** There's a presentation by Nelson Ehrhardt and
22 it's important that we keep the time of 1:30 because it will be
23 virtual.
24

25 **MARCOS HANKE:** We'll be back here at 1:20, back to the room. 1:30?
26 No, we cannot. No, 1:20 because we need time to set up to be ready
27 for the presentation. Okay?
28

29 (Whereupon the meeting recessed for lunch on April 19, 2023.)
30

31 - - -
32

33 APRIL 19, 2023
34

35 WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION
36 - - -
37

38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Please take your seats.
39

40 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Yes, I am ready.
41

42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿Nelson, nos oyes? Can you hear us?
43

44 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Yes. Good afternoon.
45

46 **MARCOS HANKE:** Good afternoon, Nelson. We are ready to restart the
47 meeting this afternoon. Thank you for being available. You have a
48 presentation. Right now, 1:28. Your presentation can start now. We

1 are seeing on the screen your presentation, just instruct the staff
2 if you want to pass the slides or they will pass for you.

3
4 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Yes, please. You can pass the slide.

5
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Go ahead.

7
8 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Okay. Are we ready then?

9
10 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, we are.

11
12 **Application of CFMC Queen Conch Training Modules in a European**
13 **Union/FAO Funded Pilot Program**

14
15 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Okay. Well, thank you very much for the
16 invitation. The Caribbean Fishery Management Council has been
17 fundamental in most of the works that we are doing regarding
18 methodologies on how to estimate the catch quotas, and how to
19 assign exploitation rates, etcetera throughout the region.

20
21 In the last working group of the queen conch a couple of years
22 ago, it was suggested that some training was necessary to improve
23 the statistical validity of the landings queen conch landings in
24 the region. The reason for that is that there is a very uncertain
25 way on how those catch statistics are collected or even reported
26 and therefore, we wrote a short, let us say, proposal to develop
27 a pilot program that the FAO could find the sources of funding and
28 then the European Union accepted this proposal and is the reason
29 why we are here today with the implementation of this project in
30 Jamaica. So, the first slide, please.

31
32 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Nelson. Good afternoon. We are having a
33 delay with the internet here, so I'm going to put down your
34 presentation for a moment and use the pdf version instead to see
35 if it works faster.

36
37 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Okay, that's fine.

38
39 In the meantime, I can continue discussing the origin of this
40 project in Jamaica. As I said, this was sponsored by the European
41 Union. The European Union accepted the proposal submitted by the
42 FAO and the FAO then contracted GCFI. And then GCFI is the
43 institution that is responsible for the implementation of this
44 proposal.

45
46 The proposal was submitted in 2021. The European Union approved
47 this proposal in June of 2022. The GCFI then hired two consultants,
48 me and Alex Tewfik. This was in July of 2022. The proposal then,

1 the activities, the field activities, were assigned to Jamaica,
2 and we started implementing the project back in September of 2022.
3 This pilot program is supposed to be completed by 2023.

4
5 Next.

6
7 The objectives, and here we need to be very specific. This pilot
8 project is a feasibility study. It is a very small-scale, short-
9 term feasibility, and the hope is that the National Fisher
10 Authority in Jamaica can gain experience on how to improve queen
11 conch fishery landings. And this is without replacing the existing
12 statistical system that they have.

13
14 At present, the queen conch statistical system for the industrial
15 fishery is pretty elaborated, and there is a lack of fish and
16 effort statistics that needs to be implemented. However, the main
17 problem is with seasonal fisheries. These fisheries, the artisanal
18 fisheries, are very significant throughout the country. Probably
19 not in volume, but in terms of the local economics and the social
20 impact. So, the problem here then as an objective is to enhance
21 the technical and strategic capacities of the Jamaican queen conch
22 Fishery Management authorities regarding statistically valid catch
23 and effort data. And then to generate a formal understanding on
24 how to incorporate key queen conch population dynamic
25 characteristics in the statistical systems.

26
27 The reason for this second objective is the fact that in many
28 countries in the region, there are very many units of stock of
29 conch and all of them are being exploited at the same time. The
30 catch statistics are then pulled together, and it's not possible
31 to perform any reasonable stock assessment when you are pulling
32 from different units of stock that have different responses to the
33 exploitation that they're being subjected to.

34
35 Next.

36
37 The basic idea then was to use the CFMC training modules that we
38 developed through the pandemic in 2019, 2020 and 2021. The basic
39 computational level, that is to mean the application of the
40 statistical system to unit of stock is the computational level 1.
41 There is a computational level 2 that is related to the estimation
42 of conversion factors. And then, the computational level 3, which
43 is the estimation of dirty meat and live weight.

44
45 The live weight is required by the FAO of all the queen conch
46 landed in the country. And therefore, you can see there that the
47 arrows are indicating which of these computational levels are using
48 the training modules that we developed for the Caribbean Fishery

1 Management Council a few years ago. And this has been an extremely
2 important documentation to support all the training.

3
4 Next.

5
6 Here we have very briefly, what are these modules? First of all,
7 there is a final report on the consultancy that was supported by
8 the Council. This was done in 2019 where we reviewed the data being
9 utilized by the different countries in the region regarding these
10 conversion factors. We performed some advanced statistical
11 analysis for comparisons on the morphometrics of the conchs in the
12 different regions. And how these, the percentage clean meat
13 categories coincide or differ among countries.

14
15 So, there is an opportunity to decide if there are regions where
16 conversion factors are common, as well as those regions where the
17 conversion factors for the same nomination of percentage clean
18 meat do not or are not compatible. And this is very important
19 because the FAO, for example, in the report of queen conch landings
20 by the different countries where do not specify anything from the
21 percentage clean meat or even the conversion factors, then the FAO
22 is using an average of conversion factors, which is very
23 misleading. It is biased and it doesn't contribute to the correct
24 expression of the total output from the conch stocks in the region.

25
26 This particular work, in the meeting we had last week here in Miami
27 of the Statistical and Scientific Technical Committee, of the
28 working group, the FAO agreed to publish this product and Miguel
29 has been trying to move forward with the publication of this work,
30 the 2019 report on the conversion factors. And finally, the FAO
31 has agreed to pay for it. So that is a very significant
32 contribution indeed, that we will have at least a common frame to
33 think in terms on how to estimate these conversion factors using
34 some statistical procedures such as regression analysis rather
35 than recollecting data.

36
37 We need to remember that these conversion factors, they have been
38 in the making since 2014, just about. It's a very long time for a
39 very short task. And we discussed this last week once again, and
40 we all agree that the content in this report is very fundamental.
41 So, the FAO decided to publish it.

42
43 Then we have three modules. Module one, two, and three. Module one
44 is comprehensive training on landings and fishing effort
45 estimation, which is the one that we are using as support, as
46 technical support in Jamaica. And this offer is very extensive
47 review of all the statistical sampling designs that could be or
48 may be applicable to landing and fishing effort estimation in

1 artisanal and commercial fisheries with adaptation, obviously,
2 with examples to the queen conch fisheries. This module has been
3 written in Spanish and there is a presentation, a PowerPoint, with
4 some 65 slides that are in English.

5
6 Then module two is a module on training in population density
7 estimation, basically by diving, direct estimation. It's a very
8 thorough analysis, especially on how to estimate area swept. A
9 mayor significant error has been introduced historically in those
10 estimates because we are not accounting correctly or very precisely
11 on what is an area swept by a diver when searching for conch. And
12 obviously there is a very lengthy discussion nowadays regarding
13 what is the meaning of a density estimate for conch and we could
14 discuss that briefly at the very end.

15
16 And fourthly, is the module three. This is a training module on
17 assessment methods on an annual catch quota estimation. It is a
18 major piece of work where we have reviewed and assessed all the
19 methodologies that have been implemented in the region to estimate
20 the annual quotas for conch. There is a very sad conclusion here,
21 and I have to say, "sad conclusion" in the sense that some models
22 that have been applied to the queen conch, all the assumptions are
23 not validated with the existing data and that is a very terrific
24 problem. We are discussing those issues and in this particular
25 module, we are offering some opportunities to improve
26 methodologies that could work with queen conch and their very
27 unique population dynamics.

28
29 The issue here is the minimum density whereby recruitment can be
30 sustained on the long range. And unfortunately, that situation
31 [inaudible] the application of most of the fish type of stock
32 assessment models that we use in our fisheries. And the situation
33 then being queen conch, such an important fishery in the region
34 that obviously the U.S. is one of the main importers the effort
35 here and the support from the Caribbean Fishery Management Council
36 have been truly fundamental.

37
38 Next

39
40 In addition to the training and the modules, we're using two fairly
41 new publications. One, in 2021 by Stoner and Appeldoorn based
42 basically on the reproductive biology of the conch. We need to
43 think in terms of what is happening with the reproductive dynamics
44 of the species. If we want to understand the type of information
45 that is needed to obviously develop the different quotas, as well
46 as the issue with the unit of stock and populations, a recent paper
47 by Vaz et al. provides the basic understanding of that. We are
48 using those two fundamental papers in the definition of the unit

1 of stock.

2
3 Next.

4
5 Here is very briefly the way that we have implemented the project
6 in Jamaica, the pilot program. In September of 22nd we carried out
7 a general training to facilitate a self-assessment of the
8 statistical system in Jamaica. For this, we use the whole extent
9 of module one of the training modules. And it is generic in the
10 sense that it can be applied extensively to any type of conch
11 fisheries in any of the countries, from commercial to artisanal,
12 etcetera.

13
14 In October to January of 2023, we developed a self-assessment in
15 the country, and we evaluated what is, what the National Fisher
16 Authority has as a statistical division and the programs they have
17 to collect all the data. But more importantly, we were able to
18 define a production chain. The production chain, as we will see in
19 the few next slides, shows that the points where you are supposed
20 to go, and when to collect, and how to collect the data we need to
21 have for unbiased, let us say, landings and fishing effort.

22
23 During February and March, we developed specific training modules
24 as we made discoveries in terms of the production chain. There was
25 a need to accommodate what was in the module one, training module
26 one, to the very specific cases of Jamaica. And today, what is
27 ongoing and starting next week, in fact, the field work is being
28 implemented. There are 14 people associated in the field. Four
29 areas have been selected and we have separated, clearly, those
30 artisanal fishers operating in Pedro Bank from those that are
31 operating on the island shelf. And obviously the industrial
32 fisheries are a totally different system that we are analyzing and
33 also collecting data from those.

34
35 During April to June, we expect to carry out all the reviews,
36 analysis, and all the exercises, and we hope to have a final report
37 by the end of July of 2023.

38
39 Next.

40
41 So here very briefly again. A statistical system that is
42 statistically efficient must have three fundamental frames, let us
43 say. The first is a unit of stock. Secondly is related to fishing
44 power. There is so many different fishing powers characterizations
45 in the fisheries that we need to be careful. What do we mean by
46 catch per unit of effort coming from those different levels of
47 fishing power from industrial to artisanal? And within artisanal,
48 there are very many different categories. And then by product type,

1 that is to mean fundamentally differences in the percentage clean
2 meat categories from each of the above.

3
4 We hope that through a census/frame survey approach as adopted by
5 the pilot may produce landing statistics that will have some known
6 level of accuracy and especially on precision. That is to mean we
7 hope to have an estimate of the variances for those cases in
8 artisanal fisheries, where landings are estimated as opposed to
9 the case of the industrial fisheries where the landings are all
10 accounted for as a census.

11
12 Next.

13
14 So once again, our production chains were very critical. It allows,
15 first of all, the mapping of the product pathways. And this is
16 very important because it allow us then to clearly identify
17 opportunities to collect data and not going at random to about 200
18 different landing places, but going exactly to points that are
19 very hot spots for the issue of artisanal conch fisheries. And
20 then illustrate ways on how to intercept con queen conch products
21 as well as allocate proper conversion factors to the different
22 areas.

23
24 Next.

25
26 This is the production chain that we developed from the self-
27 assessment in the existing statistical system in the country. The
28 inshore or island shelf grounds, let us say, as opposed to the
29 offshore banks, where only industrial boats are located. The
30 artisanal boats are very significant in numbers. However, some of
31 them are operating in the offshore banks and they are transferring
32 the landings, or their catch to either transfer boats or to
33 industrial boats. This perhaps is the most complex fishing activity
34 that marks any standard procedure on how to estimate fishing effort
35 and the total catch is obviously obtained from the industrial
36 fleets. But however, the fishing effort that is coming from
37 artisanal boats into industrial boats that are carrying their catch
38 to shore is one of the big problems that we are trying to resolve.

39
40 There are also transfer vessels of the artisanal boat catch into
41 the industrial sites, and the sampling will be realized in those
42 areas. As well as the artisanal sites where sampling will also be
43 realized. And then, there are different ways of obtaining retail
44 processing and the processing plant where all the sampling for the
45 industrial fisheries are carried out.

46
47 Next.

1 The artisanal fisheries, very briefly again, consist of a frame
2 survey and a fishery census. The fishery census then are simply
3 used for an expansion of the catch and the catch per trip that is
4 obtained from the frame survey. The frame survey consists of some
5 30 questions to artisanal fishers arriving in the four localities
6 that we have selected as key and with similarities to many other
7 localities such that the estimates of catch and catch per unit of
8 effort can be expanded to all the country.

9
10 In the fishery census, here we had an initial problem. The last
11 census was carried out very early in the two thousand, and the
12 situation obviously has changed. So, in the first survey that we
13 are carrying out next week, we are carrying out the standard
14 questionings that are related to the actual landings. But also, we
15 have questions regarding the census. What is the knowledge of the
16 fishers regarding the fleets that are operating in their areas?
17 how often they fish? etcetera, etcetera. Which are questions more
18 related to census rather than the survey. However, these questions
19 related to censuses are going to be integrated to the existing
20 data on census such that we have an update version of the national
21 census on queen conch fisheries.

22
23 And then the industrial fisheries, as I mentioned, is being based
24 on fishery census of all the landings being recorded at the
25 processing plant. And this is done through landing receipts by
26 fishing trips. However, what you have at the bottom of the page
27 there, numeral two and three, this is something new although the
28 vessel monitoring system is not legally in place in Jamaica, it
29 exists in the sense that all the industrial vessels are carrying
30 this. And we have been in touch with a few of the industrial
31 vessels and we have all agreed that we will have access to this
32 VMS data, which is data that will be associated to each of the
33 fishing trips for which capital logbooks will be made available.
34 That is numeral three. So, we can compile then, the spatial
35 temporal distribution of the industrial vessel being sampled over
36 Pedro Bank and what is the outcome of the fishing in the different
37 spots where you detect these spots from the VMS? The captains are
38 keeping a logbook of all the conch that is coming aboard because
39 it's been used to pay both the artisanal fishers that are releasing
40 their catch to the industrial vessels, or the dinghies that are
41 belonging to the vessels and that they go out fishing in several
42 spots that are detected in the VMS system.

43
44 We hope to then reconstruct, doing some archeology here, on the
45 fishing that is happening in Petro Bank in each of these fishing
46 trips. We have selected four vessels out of nine or 10 vessels
47 that are operating in the region. We think this is a number that
48 is sufficiently large as to express commonality of what is going

1 on in terms of catching conch in the offshore banks.

2
3 Next.

4
5 Basically, this is the let us say the production that is expected
6 from the logbooks. We will sample the product transfer from vessels
7 as well as in the industrial sites. And obviously the total catch
8 of every landing will be obtained from the processing plants.

9
10 Next.

11
12 So, in summary, the statistical systems for landings and fish
13 effort in the industrial fisheries will be, first of all, landings
14 received from the processing plants, and then the captain logbooks.
15 And the fishing effort is going to be through the VMS review. And
16 the day's fishing is obviously going to come from the VMs.

17
18 Unfortunately, some of these commercial vessels are not reporting
19 their trips and there is nothing official in terms of their
20 activities. So, the actual days fishing will come from the VMS
21 estimation. And the total fishing effort from the industrial fleet
22 will come from the total landings of these vessels divided by the
23 catch per unit of effort that we hope to analyze and standardize
24 from the VMS data and the logbooks of the captains.

25
26 Next.

27
28 The results emerging from the pilot project will allow two things.
29 The first, is to expand the statistical system tested in the pilot
30 project to the queen conch fishery at the national level in
31 Jamaica. That is to mean, move away from the four locations for
32 artisanal fisheries to all the main locations where conch is
33 historically been landed. And secondly, to adopt a similar approach
34 to improve queen conch landings and fishing effort in other
35 countries in the region.

36
37 We hope, and we had agreed with the National Fisher Authority of
38 Jamaica for them to train in other countries in the region. So,
39 whatever they are learning out of this pilot program, hopefully,
40 it will be transmitted having a multiplication factor here. We
41 will be conducting these works and we hope then that with the help
42 of those that learnt the procedures as samplers and as leaders
43 will help then expand the knowledge and the experiences obtained
44 in Jamaica to the rest of the countries.

45
46 Next.

47
48 As I said last week, we had a meeting here in Miami of the SSTAG.

1 The first two most important priorities that were defined by the
2 group of experts was, first of all, one on the queen conch non-
3 detrimental findings as a guidance. And module training three was
4 requested to be adopted and followed on all the decisions regarding
5 non-detrimental findings. And the reason is very simple. In module
6 three, you will find all the characteristics biologically and
7 oceanographically that affect the productivity of the conch and
8 that then that defined the needs to collect information, to assess
9 the stocks and obtain the proper data, etcetera, etcetera.

10
11 The request came from the CITES. The CITES were present in the
12 meeting last week and they found that these modules, developed by
13 the Caribbean Fishery Management Council, are paramount to the
14 effort of the CITES at controlling international catch quotas. As
15 you know the CITES is controlling the export of conch, however,
16 the quotas are being generated by the CITES Scientific authorities
17 in the countries. The Animals Committee do not have anything to
18 say in terms of the quality of the assessments of the methodologies
19 being used. Given the discoveries in the assessment that we find
20 in module three, the CITES has decided that they have to get more
21 involved in this and in fact, there is going to be an Animals
22 committee meeting next June. Martha, who is the person linking all
23 our efforts with the Council will be attending or was invited to
24 attend, and the SSTAG decided to nominate Martha as our
25 representative in this meeting in the Animals Committee in Geneva
26 next June.

27
28 This, indeed, is a very major step. For those of us that have been
29 participating in this Scientific and Statistical Committee for the
30 working group on conch it has been pretty frustrating that years,
31 after years, after years of work and providing insights on how
32 countries should do something about better statistics and more
33 control on the fishery mortality of conch, finally, we see that we
34 are being heard by CITES and by the FAO that they have to pay more
35 attention on how to control these international catch quotas.

36
37 Equally important is the priority two, which has to do with the
38 results of the European Union funded pilot project in the region,
39 in Jamaica, that will need to get funding from the CITES, hoping
40 to expand these activities then to the entire region.

41
42 So that is all what I have to say today. And again, thank you so
43 very much for inviting me. I think very many important aspects of
44 the conch issues in the region are being tackled now from a very
45 different point, strongly I will say from a scientific and
46 statistical standpoint.

Questions/Comments

MARCOS HANKE: Thank you for the presentation. I'm going to open the floor for questions.

I don't have questions at this time. I just want to make a comment that this is a very timely effort and great job as presented, especially on the scenario that the conch is being evaluated for ESA. I think it's a very important job. Thank you very much for your job. Miguel, want to say something? Thank you.

Next presentation. Oh, I'm sorry. There are some hands up. Sennai, please.

SENNAI HABTES: Yeah. Miguel, I was just wondering if there's any possibility of getting the training modules that he's developed to be shared through the CFMC's website, or at least to individual stakeholders that are interested in developing similar statistical methods in an analysis within the U.S. Caribbean?

MIGUEL A. ROLÓN: Yes, there are two things to that. This document is not ours, it's WECAFs. We pay for it, but I can get authorization from WECAFs Secretariat and then we can distribute it. Because they will be translated into-- they already have a version in English and Spanish, and they will do the translation into French and certainly, I will work with Dr. Nelson Ehrhardt and make sure that anybody who wants it, we can send it. But I will put them on the webpage as long as I have the authorization. Cristina will load it up there.

Let me say also that we had the privilege of having Dr. Nelson Ehrhardt. I met Dr. Ehrhardt a long time ago. He used to work with the FAO and many other institutions, and he was the first one who put together the dataset for, especially Honduras, Nicaragua and those countries. And he was able to figure out the capacity of those areas to produce the queen conch. So, the other thing that he mentioned is the conversion factor.

As you all know, the scientists know, that when you have apple and oranges, it's very difficult to compare them. But also, if you have different methodologies to compare them to, you have problems. So, what Dr. Nelson Ehrhardt and other have done, and they are contained in these three models, is the conversion factor, the elusive conversion factor. For example, some countries, a clean conch is just one without the shell. In others, without the shell, without the visceral and without the skin. So, all that plays into the stock assessment that you have to do for each one of the areas to do the queen conch.

1
2 The other thing is that the queen conch is of importance for the
3 international community, especially for CITES. The convention for
4 international trade of endangered and threatened species is the
5 only animal within that group that have been assessed twice, and
6 they hate that. And they're talking about assessing it the third
7 time.

8
9 We have Dr. Martha Prada, as mentioned by Dr. Nelson Ehrhardt.
10 She's well versed about queen conch and she's the one that will be
11 representing us at the Animal committee, but she's also the liaison
12 of the CFMC with the efforts of the WECAFC. And she had been
13 instrumental in putting all this together.

14
15 It's frustrating because the first time we put together a map, an
16 FMP and everything about the queen conch was about 30 years ago.
17 We thought that all the countries were going to adopt that. Well,
18 nope, they didn't. The reason for that is that in some countries,
19 queen conch is a priority while in other is not. In Central America
20 the monies are really in the Pacific, not in the Atlantic. So, we
21 understand that. But the other issue is that WECAFC is a voluntary
22 organization, so nobody's forced to do anything but in the case of
23 CRFM, the Caribbean Fishery Mechanism, the countries that are part
24 of it, they do commit. So, they have meetings of the scientists,
25 they also have meetings of the decision makers, and they move
26 forward with the queen conch. In the case of the U.S. Caribbean--
27 and by the way, we were in tune all around the Caribbean. We have
28 the same season except for Puerto Rico, that without thinking too
29 much, they changed it for one month. I paid a thousand dollars for
30 a survey when the survey came, already they changed it. So, this
31 doesn't help.

32
33 I congratulate Dr. Ehrhardt for the excellent work that he has
34 done. He also has been a professor of applied statistics to
35 fisheries for many years. And Mr. Chairman, I think that the reason
36 why we brought this to your attention is because you see CFMC NOAA
37 Fisheries contributing, but I would like to import that into the
38 U.S. Caribbean. As I Sennai says, you know, whatever we can use we
39 will be moving forward. The next step will be for the publishing of
40 the document, and also, we are going to have a pile of projects
41 similar to what you have in Jamaica now with other countries. Thank
42 you, Mr. Chairman.

43
44 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. Anybody else? No. Go ahead,
45 Vance.

46
47 **VANCE VICENTE:** I think that this information is very relevant,
48 particularly since there is a proposed rule to list the queen conch

1 under the Endangered Species Act as threatened. In order for that
2 to follow, this kind of information needs to be updated as soon as
3 possible before NMFS can come to a final rule. Okay. That's it.

4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for the observation. Anybody else? Hearing
6 none, I think we are ready to move to the next presentation. Again,
7 to reiterate our gratitude to Nelson Ehrhardt for his
8 professionalism and a great comprehensive presentation. Thank you
9 again.

10
11 **NELSON EHRHARDT:** Thank you very much.

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Next presentation is the Outreach and Education
14 Report by Alida Ortiz.

15 16 Outreach and Education Report

17
18 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Good afternoon. I'll try to be as quick
19 and easy as possible so that we can cover all the rest of the
20 materials that we have in the meeting.

21
22 Next, please.

23
24 This one, you have seen it before, but we have said that every
25 time we will put this as our first slide. This is because we are
26 following exactly the five-year strategic plan communication
27 objectives that the Caribbean Council has.

28
29 So, the basic concept of Ecosystem-Based Management, the Island-
30 Based Fishery Management Plan from Puerto Rico, Saint Thomas/Saint
31 John and Saint Croix; the sustainable fish and seafood consumption
32 and the marine protected areas in Puerto Rico, Saint Thomas and
33 Saint John and Saint Croix. Those the wider areas that we are
34 constantly covering in every activity or in every project that we
35 have in outreach and education.

36
37 Next.

38
39 So, for right now, the outreach and education products that we
40 have, we have been intensely working with the fact sheet for the
41 island based. This is the one that we did for the entire issue of
42 the island based. And it takes care of Puerto Rico, Saint
43 Thomas/Saint John, and Saint Croix, all of them. What is the island
44 based? It has a QR code that you can, you know, take the QR code
45 and download the document.

46
47 Next.

1 But then we are working with the specific fact sheet for each one
2 of the islands. And in those, we're using space for the
3 information, chapter one and chapter five of the management plan
4 that correspond to the island.

5
6 These management plans are very extensive documents, some of them
7 with 500 pages, something like that. But if you go to chapter two
8 and chapter five, then you have like a summary of everything that
9 is discussed. We're still working with the Saint Thomas/Saint John
10 and with the Puerto Rico. We are having a little bit of difficulty
11 getting the person that designs the fact sheets, so as soon as we
12 get rid of that, we will have all the fact sheets for the public.

13
14 Next.

15
16 We have had meetings and much of the information that we had in
17 this meeting with the DAPs was preferred Saint Thomas/Saint John.
18 Then we did Saint Croix and then we did Puerto Rico. They mentioned
19 this today when they spoke about the equity and environmental
20 justice. They have the information that we gathered from the DAPs.
21 This something that has been discussed today by many other people.
22 They gave us the objective to ask for recommendations and content
23 of Fisher Managed Plan fact sheets and other products for each
24 island.

25
26 The DAP, taking into account their own situation, the biology of
27 the area, the sociology of the fishing communities, they made the
28 specific recommendations. The first one that we had from the Saint
29 Thomas/Saint John was that we had to produce some sort of book or
30 a catalog or a big document, a complete document, that had all the
31 species mentioned or treated in each one of the management plans.
32 In those cases, we have some species that are the same for Puerto
33 Rico and the same for Saint Thomas. Then, we will have an
34 illustration of the species, the basic biology, like the color,
35 maturity, size, life cycle, this type of thing. And then, we will
36 have the common names. The common names like for Puerto Rico, is
37 something very difficult because we have three or four common names
38 for the same species one from Rincón, the other one is from
39 Naguabo, the other one is from Cataño. But we have to have all
40 those common names.

41
42 Then we also have to have people from each one of the islands. So,
43 that recommendation in the DAP, in the working group in Saint
44 Thomas, Ruth Gomez is going to be our collaborator with that. She
45 will make sure that all the names that they use will be there. And
46 then we have from Saint Croix-- In Saint Thomas, we also have-- no
47 Ruth Gomez only. In Saint Croix we have Carlos Farchette, who's
48 going to be the collaborator for doing the same thing, and make

1 sure that we have the correct common names and the correct
2 description of how it's managed in the area. In Puerto Rico, we
3 have Nelson Crespo. The idea is that as soon as we get out of here
4 today, so as soon as next week we will have to make an arrangement
5 so that at least we can meet virtually, and I can send you the
6 names of the species that are included in all the FMPs. At some
7 time, we saw that it was going to be one book for each one of the
8 islands, but then the idea finally got to only one book.

9
10 Then, with the information, this species Puerto Rico, Saint Croix.
11 This species, Puerto Rico, North Coast, and some other place. So
12 that information will be in a catalog or in a book following the
13 FAO model of the catalog. We will have that, I hope, that before
14 the end of this year, this should be ready.

15
16 Then the DAP Puerto Rico reviewed the species common names and
17 checked them for different regions of the island. Also, the DAP
18 Puerto Rico requested that the Council makes a press release when
19 the spiny lobster closed seasons commence, because there was a big
20 mess in Puerto Rico when that happened, because it was it was
21 prohibited in the federal area in the EEZ but not at that time in
22 the regional, in the territorial waters. So, the information in
23 the newspapers was just a mess. The fishers and the fisheries, the
24 restaurants had a big problem because they were requesting lobster
25 and they said, "you know, you cannot fish it." But it is not fished
26 in the federal areas, in the local areas it could be. So, that
27 thing has to be made clear to the public that is the one that is
28 involved in this.

29
30 Next one.

31
32 We were also asked to produce a fact sheet on Bajo de Sico and the
33 fishery management regulations in that area, because there's also
34 confusion between what can be fished in that area and what cannot
35 be fished regarding the rest of the areas that are managed by,
36 sometimes, DNR and the local government. Also, a request that was
37 presented at the workshop in Puerto Rico with the DAP, is that
38 there's a necessity, there's a need to offer a workshop on fishery
39 management regulation for new DAP members. This is not just, you
40 know, this time for everyone but it should be something very
41 similar to the PEPCO that Wilson offers in Puerto Rico and then
42 for the new DAP members. Every time there is a DAP member, they
43 should have information of what they are talking about and what
44 are the responsibilities as DAP members.

45
46 Next.

47
48 With the equity and environmental justice strategy that we

1 discussed this morning, we have been working with a formal working
2 group. Heather is the person that keeps us in contact. We usually
3 meet sometimes like twice a week for one hour and discuss all the
4 things that can be done here. This is something that you saw before
5 that was presented by, I don't remember the name, but the person
6 that presented the equity and environmental justice.

7
8 Next one.

9
10 This is the same thing. Noticed that in the focus groups that we
11 have there the Caribbean had four, the Gulf seven. It was before
12 the presentation that we have today.

13
14 Give me the next one.

15
16 The focus group were local people from the area, fishers in
17 different levels and different species of fishing. This will be
18 conducted in each one of the islands.

19
20 Notice that for Puerto Rico, they only had in June in San Juan and
21 Cabo Rojo. So, give me the other one.

22
23 The discussion with the Outreach and Education Advisory Panel was
24 very intense. They said that Puerto Rico should have more than two
25 focus group, at least four, to cover the East, the West, the South,
26 and the North. This because of the differences in socioeconomic
27 environment in the North, West, South and all of the Puerto Rico
28 archipelago. When we say East many, many times, we forget that
29 Vieques and Culebra exist, and they are fishing areas and they
30 have a lot of fishers. So, we presented that to the group of the
31 EEJ, and today I know that it was accepted.

32
33 The presentations in Puerto Rico must be in Spanish or with a
34 translation from English. If they don't have a person that can
35 speak the Spanish language, then we should have translation. And
36 that's something that, okay, it will take a little bit more money
37 because the translation services are not too cheap. But then I
38 know probably that they'll deal with the Council and get the fact
39 that we will have Spanish as a language for our focus groups.

40
41 Next.

42
43 The other projects that we have, we are still working on some of
44 the illustrated booklets. This one, the one that we are working
45 right now, is climate change and U.S. Caribbean Fisheries. What we
46 did with the material for this climate change illustrated booklet
47 was, we consulted with the fishers and asked what are the topics
48 in terms of climate change that you think are more important for

1 the fisheries? So, we have topics like water temperature, sea
2 level, acidification, changes in the life cycles probably, or in
3 terms of areas of different species.

4
5 So those are the material, those are the content that we took from
6 different references and from all the projects that have been done.
7 I think that by the next meeting we will have that climate change
8 booklet finalized. Then the other thing is that we are still
9 working, obviously, with the big fact sheets for each one of the
10 FMPs. Because now that we can have better information and we have
11 people in each one of the islands that will review that, that will
12 give me more information, then we will have that, I hope, also for
13 the next meeting.

14
15 The integration of concepts on marine fisheries in the U.S.
16 Caribbean to the regular education curriculum. Notice that I am
17 not saying fishers, you know, preparing fishers. That's something
18 wonderful that the person from Vieques is doing. But the fact that
19 our environment in these islands, the most important one is the
20 marine environment, and we have very little of that content across
21 the curriculum.

22
23 We have been working, collaborating, with one of the Montessori
24 schools in Parguera where the general focus of the curriculum,
25 that doesn't mean that they are going to change the courses or the
26 standards that the Department of Education has, but the marine
27 knowledge about the ecosystem, about the people who live or who
28 have their way of life from the marine environment is part of the
29 curriculum. Not only in marine sciences, not only in in general
30 science, but it also has to be in history, in literature, in art,
31 absolutely every part of the learning space. So that one, we are
32 working very slowly so that we can put something that could be
33 used all around the island because we have many, many of these
34 Montessori schools in the coast and none of them have any
35 information on the marine environment.

36
37 Next one.

38
39 The products for the '23-'24. We have strong support for MREP. We
40 meet, I believe, like twice a month to review the content, to
41 review what the people in the fisheries need for that. So, we have
42 to support MREP for all the information and all the work that they
43 do for us. And the Pepco workshops.

44
45 Something that has been mentioned before, something similar to
46 PEPCO in the U.S.V.I. Because I go to the PEPCO workshop that
47 Wilson conducts in Puerto Rico and I have quite a bit of time to
48 talk about the Council, about what we are doing in the Council,

1 especially what it has to do with ecosystem-based management, which
2 is the important part at least for us.

3
4 Also, we have been asking the Council to request, from the people
5 who do research, who do some kind of activity, that they can take
6 pictures to send good definition pictures for the Council so that
7 we can make a big catalog and have all the information so that we
8 don't have to go take pictures all the time.

9
10 Please, next.

11
12 For 2024, this is the fact sheets that we are working on, the
13 essential topics that I told before on the FMPs. They have been
14 asking more information in fact sheets, in something that they can
15 have, that fishers can have in their stores or in the landing sites
16 as a nice fact sheet or stickers. Those stickers with only the
17 information of the lifecycle for nassau grouper, mutton snapper
18 and queen conch. There are large posters of those, but in the
19 stores, probably, they don't have the place for the posters. But,
20 Vanessa, at one moment, ask that from the poster of the queen
21 conch, we take out the ones that differentiate the different
22 species of queen conch and we made a sticker of that and that's
23 been used in many places.

24
25 The content of fishery ecosystem plan. We have to understand,
26 people have to understand the conceptual model, the Endangered
27 Species Act and Clean Water Act, because that's what the basis of
28 that fishery ecosystem plan. I think that we could do a lot with
29 giving information to elementary school children. If initiate the
30 identification of those species, we will have not just probably
31 more fishers or more people dedicated to fishing, but also a more
32 educated community at all levels. They don't have to go and get a
33 marine biology diploma. So, I will work with the design and present
34 it to the Council for their approval.

35
36 And then, the integration of concepts on marine fisheries in the
37 U.S. Caribbean to the regular education curriculum. Every time I'm
38 asked for one of my science teachers that I worked with a long
39 time ago, "Alida, can you come and give us a lecture? Can you give
40 us some activity?" What I do is that I take the book that we made
41 two, three years ago on the marine fisheries ecosystem and with
42 that I make the class activity. Then they see that it is not
43 science, that I have a lot there that is economics, that I have a
44 lot there that is sociology. So, we can do that, and we don't have
45 to interrupt the curriculum. We enrich the curriculum with the
46 marine education materials.

47
48 Next.

1
2 The 2024 calendar that we are already working on. Getting the
3 information is going to be dedicated to the Island-Based Fishery
4 Management Plan. So, we have four months dedicated to Puerto Rico,
5 four months dedicated to Saint Thomas/Saint John and four months
6 for Saint Croix. This has to be not just for review, it has to be
7 published; it has to be produced totally by September. So, we are
8 getting the information now.

9
10 I think, and when I heard today the presentation on stock
11 assessments that that is one of the issues that we have to get
12 more information to the public, with vocabulary that you use in
13 the legal document, but what does it mean to the fishers? And we
14 have some booklets from a long, long time ago on a stock
15 assessment, but we have to renew that because now the way they do
16 the stock assessment is very different. And then something that
17 the community can understand this management terminology, optimum
18 yield, allowable catch, limit, acceptable biological catch, and
19 others that most of the time we put the abbreviations and then we
20 put what it means, but we don't explain what it is. So, we need to
21 have, I don't know, some sort of dictionary or a terms material
22 that can make those terms clear to the public.

23
24 Next.

25
26 That's my presentation for today. Questions, comments,
27 recommendations.

28 29 Questions/Comments

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Alida. I'm going to open the floor for
32 questions. Vanessa.

33
34 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you. Vanessa Ramírez, for the record.
35 Alida, as always, thank you for all your work and your staff. This
36 year you have been very helpful, especially for our community of
37 commercial fishermen and of course all this that you present to be
38 developed. It's very important material, especially for the
39 community and the coastal communities around Puerto Rico. So, I
40 hope that this could be finished soon and starts spreading out on
41 the island. Thanks.

42
43 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Great.

44
45 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yeah, Alida, thank you for that information.
46 When do you think that some of the materials for the Island-Based
47 FMP will be available for distribution to the public?
48

1 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** What? I didn't--
2
3 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** The materials for the Island-Based FMPs?
4
5 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** They should be available for the public,
6 not later than September. And also, today I got some of the things
7 that they are having, they could be amendments, but we are going
8 to leave that out. But there are things that, even though the
9 document was published in October, there are things that have to
10 be clarified a little bit. But before September, I hope that by
11 the end of May, I can send you what I have already for the three
12 fact sheets, the big ones.
13
14 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you, Alida. Just let us know if you
15 need any help with revision of the documents or any suggestions.
16 Okay?
17
18 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Yes, I will. I will get in touch. And also,
19 to me, it's very important that book or that catalog that the DAPs
20 requested, because that's going to be the book for the rest of the
21 life that you will have there.
22
23 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos?
24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.
26
27 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Alida and I have been talking to prioritize these
28 things. So, the fact sheet for depicting chapter five and other
29 parts of the Island-Based FMPs is number one. And number two will
30 be the Fishes of the U.S. Caribbean as suggested by the Saint
31 Thomas/Saint John DAP and adopted by the other two. So those are
32 the two priorities that we have.
33
34 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Yes.
35
36 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** And of course, the third one is the calendar. We
37 don't want to have the same experience of this year that by the
38 time we finished the year was over, almost. So those three,
39 ¿verdad, Alida?
40
41 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Yeah. And at I feel very confident that I
42 will have direct contact with Ruth, that I will have direct contact
43 with Nelson and with Carlos. So, before I give even anything to
44 you to review, they have reviewed it already.
45
46 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. The other thing about this catalog is that
47 we are not reinventing the wheel. All the information is already
48 there in different booklets. What Alida will do is to compile them

1 and then add an outline, which is the key to the document is the
2 outline. The biology of the animal and the place of the fish or
3 invertebrate in the fishery.

4
5 In addition, once we have that document, it will be distributed to
6 the DAPs so they can take a look at it. And to the Regional Office
7 and make sure that we have the information as correct as possible.
8 If we do that by the summer, probably the book will become out
9 before the end of the year.

10
11 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Yeah, I'm sure I will though.

12
13 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** And the other thing is the EEJ stuff. The book
14 will be in Spanish and English.

15
16 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Yes.

17
18 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** It takes a little bit more because it takes about
19 two paragraphs to say the same thing that you say in English when
20 you say it in Spanish. I'm serious. [laughter]

21
22 So Alida took note of all that and she has a lot of experience
23 doing both. So, I'm sure that by this year we will have that
24 document out. It's important to get the momentum when you spend
25 the time of busy fishers in a room and they come with suggestion
26 like that, and then you end doing something in three years from
27 now, we're not going to do that.

28
29 So, Alida is committed to get the book out. The fact sheets are
30 number one, and the Almanac. And then we are going to review our
31 webpage. Cristina and I will work on that to make it more relevant.
32 The stuff that we produce, for example, the recipe book we are
33 going to have it popup, so you don't have to chase it all around
34 the webpage to find it. And already Dr. Wanda Pantojas, one of the
35 chefs yesterday evening, she did that and she received a lot of
36 people interested in the book.

37
38 So, thank you for all your effort, Alida. We'll continue the work.

39
40 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** I enjoy it.

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Thank you, Miguel. Any other questions? Andy.

43
44 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** So, thank you Alida for the presentation.
45 Impressive list of priorities and work that you're doing and
46 recommendations. A couple of comments. So, with the Marine Resource
47 Education program, which you mentioned, I think that's a huge
48 opportunity to continue to build upon, to be able to discuss the

1 science and management. And although we don't run a lot of
2 stakeholders through that process on an annual basis, it seems to
3 be a very effective process and so we certainly want to build upon
4 that. My question to you is, I was struck by a couple of instances
5 where you referred to booklets or fish pictures or, you know,
6 physical materials. And so, I know many, not all of us have a cell
7 phone, right. I rely on, for example, Fish Rules App anytime I go
8 fishing and I just brought it up while we were in the room, and it
9 gives pictures and information about the species and the
10 regulations. And so, I think from an electronic media standpoint
11 to the extent that fishers have a phone or could use this, it's a
12 real opportunity as well for outreach and education. You just need
13 to make sure someone is paying attention and updating it. So, I'm
14 curious from your perspective about materials that are developed
15 both electronically as well as physical paper products.

16
17 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** We already are part of the Fish Rules and Cristina
18 will be working to update the Fish Rules. We believe this is a
19 very good tool. In addition, all the things that we produce on
20 paper will be available on a digitized format on our webpage and
21 social network. Cristina is in charge of the social network that
22 we have. We produce a lot of material that has been very
23 successful. When she puts it on Facebook it attracts a lot of
24 public. Not only that, but the fishers, they have their own pages,
25 so they copy/paste the information and send it out. So that's an
26 excellent point. And we want to make sure-- the other thing is, it
27 looks innocent, but Alida presented the QR because that makes the
28 document a live document. Because sometimes we spend a couple of
29 thousand dollars producing a brochure and then we change the law
30 within the lifespan of that brochure, and it's obsolete. So, with
31 the QR, we said, you know, for an update of this regulation, go to
32 the QR and then it will take the person to the place where he or
33 she will get the right information on time.

34
35 The QR feature also was recommended and supported by enforcement,
36 National Marine Fishery Service at the meeting that we held in
37 Saint Thomas. So, we want to update that. I believe that's an
38 excellent point. I have it also in my cell phone and it's working.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy, I need to make a comment about the Fish Rule.
41 The work that Cristina is going to do is very important because
42 there is information that is general information for regions that
43 have similar species, and I'm going to address one. There are some
44 of them that are considered ciguatera on the literature and they
45 expressed that. That can change the whole effort and put the
46 information there that is very conflicted because, many reasons,
47 right? And we need, most likely, Cristina, will need support from
48 people to revise that into the future, maybe from your office too,

1 to make sure that this kind of conflictive information or
2 information that we want to ask Fish Rule not to include for the
3 Caribbean once you access, are not there.

4
5 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. And the other point that I really
6 appreciated was fish are known by different names, right? And so,
7 someone could go in and look at an electronic application and
8 they'll be looking for it under one name and not be able to find
9 it, right? And so being able to provide all those names or based
10 on where your location of fishing is, be able to search for it
11 based on the more common name is really important as well.

12
13 So yeah, I mean the tools are as good as we can make them in terms
14 of the outreach and education, but we need to tailor them,
15 obviously, to meet the needs of the fishermen.

16
17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just to inform the Council. I'm aware that a
19 professor from UPR from Ponce, Miguel Del Pozo and some students,
20 they are already going to around the island working with the common
21 names. Right. As soon as they have the product, final product,
22 I'll make sure that it gets to your hand because it's going to be
23 an updated list of names and it's amazing how much things are there
24 that we don't even imagine. Things that we don't know, right?
25 Actually, on the last DAP we have a name that Carlos Velázquez
26 brought to the table that is meaningful for his community, how
27 they call the graysby, I don't dare to say on the mic. But all of
28 that most likely is going to be documented on this work that those
29 students are going to do. Anyway, that's the only comment I have.

30
31 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Michelle Schärer. Fish Rules only has
32 recreational regulations at this time for the U.S. Caribbean.

33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** Noted.

35
36 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** We know. That's exactly what we're doing.
37 Cristina will be working with the contractor to pick up and update
38 the fish rules.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Thank you for highlighting. Michelle Schärer
41 is probably one of the persons that we should include in this
42 revision in some level because you have extensive knowledge about
43 many aspects that are going to be included in the Fish Rule.
44 Nicole.

45
46 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Yeah, I just had a point of clarification for
47 Fish Rule. Are only the federal rules and regulations included in
48 fish rules currently? I know that we haven't paid or processed

1 that as a territory but had been exploring it. And so, are the
2 territorial rules and regulations also in Fish Rules as part of
3 the initiative by the Council or not?

4
5 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** We're supposed to be comprehensive when we
6 started with Fish Rules. We had some issues before and that's
7 what Cristina's doing. She's making the right connections and
8 everything. But ideally, we should have, for every fish a picture
9 and you have a GPS. If I'm in the middle at sea, near Saint Croix,
10 I should be able to identify the fishes in Fish Rules. Not only
11 that, identify the rules that apply to that fish.

12
13 So, in essence what Cristina is working with the people-- actually,
14 we probably need to allocate some funding for them because Fish
15 Rule is an expensive baby and the idea will be to have the fish,
16 the regulation in English and Spanish for Puerto Rico, for the
17 U.S. Virgin Islands, and for the federal government. That's the
18 whole idea that we have for that. So yeah, we will probably be
19 able to inform about an update at the August meeting, what we're
20 doing with Fisher Rule.

21
22 And now that we are talking, I was conferring with Nicole Angeli
23 because they're also interested in adopting one of the strategies,
24 the PEPCO program and we are going to help the Division to work on
25 that one. The MREP is going to Saint Croix and she's in the loop.
26 So, hopefully this year we'll have MREP in Saint Croix and we can
27 initiate the PEPCO program. The PEPCO program needs a champion. We
28 need a person dedicated to that program at least half time. So,
29 thank you, Mr. Chairman.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. Any further questions? Hearing
32 none, I think we are ready to pass to the next presentation, which
33 is social media by Cristina Olán.

34 35 **Social Media Report** 36

37 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Good afternoon. My name is Cristina Olán,
38 for the record. I manage the social media of the Caribbean Fishery
39 Management Council, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and
40 ISSUU. I'm not going to make details on numbers, but if you want
41 statistics on the social media, please let me know and I will
42 provide them.

43
44 As usual, we are providing content on educational materials,
45 seasonal closures, the NOAA Fisheries bulletin, celebrations like
46 the Fishers Day and Women's Month, for example, meetings, the CFMC
47 Bulletin, English and Spanish, all the content and content from
48 other agencies and organizations related to fishing.

1
2 We receive a lot of inbox and direct messages, mostly related to
3 fish ID, documents, regulations, workshops, fishing license, were
4 to buy fish among other topics.
5

6 This is an example of what we did for the World Fisher's Day. It
7 was in a collaboration with Sea Grant of Puerto Rico, and we took
8 a selection of fishers from the U.S.V.I. and Puerto Rico. We also,
9 provided our followers, links to different publications that were
10 already in our websites. So, we took advantage of that day. And
11 also, what we did, was to invite people to revisit those
12 publications such as the Bulletin and the Fuede y Verguilla. We
13 also celebrated the Women's Month, and we highlighted women from
14 the staff, women's from the Panels and Committees among others. We
15 started that campaign on March 8th, and we did it through the month
16 also.
17

18 As I mentioned, we always publish information about the seasonal
19 closures. All of the information is in English and Spanish.
20 What we do always is to try to make the message simple for the
21 people that follow us in the social media.
22

23 We are also working on short videos. As an example, I'm presenting
24 one that Marcos sent me, and we published as a short. Also, we
25 already did one with videos that we already have in the page. Our
26 plan is to continue doing that so people can revisit that content
27 and also have shorter videos to see instead of the long ones that
28 are already in the YouTube channel.
29

30 I'm presenting an example of the CFMC bulletin. We share
31 information there related to research, announcement, species and
32 seasonal closures also. I have to say that I'm very thankful for
33 all the people that contribute to the bulletin scientists, fishers.
34 Here, for example, we have James Kreglo, Nicole, Vanessa, Marcos,
35 Carlos, and then so many people that already have contributed to
36 that bulletin. So, I'm very thankful. I cannot mention all the
37 names but thank you again for all the support and the information
38 that you always provide me.
39

40 We also are using the feature of articles in ISSUU, so people,
41 instead of seeing the whole publications, they can just go to an
42 article, and we can share that in the social media too. For
43 example, this is what we did with one of the recipes of the book
44 that you saw yesterday that we presented, The Underutilized Species
45 Recipe Book. We produced an article with the recipe so people can
46 just go to a recipe instead of reading the whole book, or they can
47 continue reading it and be interested on seeing the whole
48 publication.

1
2 Also, as I mentioned in the meeting of the OEAP, I'm very thankful
3 because the Council allowed me to participate on the Council
4 Coordinating Committee Communications Group meeting in February.
5 It was in Florida. We had a team building activity. We review the
6 Council practices and how meetings are conducted. We discuss a lot
7 of communications tools, social media, artificial intelligence.
8 Again, thank you Diana, Miguel, Alida for allowing me to
9 participate in that meeting in Florida. Some pictures of Florida
10 also there.

11
12 We continue having the WhatsApp broadcast list. Those lists are
13 managed by Wilson Santiago and Nicole Greaux. They are our liaison
14 in Puerto Rico and Saint Thomas and Saint John. What we do is that
15 I send them short messages and an image, and they send that
16 information through their broadcast list so other people that maybe
17 they are not so into that social media, but they received
18 information through WhatsApp.

19
20 Thank you again. I also want to add that we have been also part of
21 the Big Fish campaign. Now, I'm going to put down this
22 presentation. I'm going to share with you a video that is the
23 trailer of the Treasure of the Caribbean that is part of the Big
24 Fish campaign. That movie will be released next week through PBS
25 TV and also through the internet. Give me a second, I have to—

26
27 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Cristina, while you look at it. I sent an email
28 with a link for that movie, next 26th of April.

29
30 (Whereupon, the trailer of Treasure of the Caribbean was played
31 and was not transcribed.)

32
33 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** As Miguel mentioned, the movie-- Miguel
34 already shared with you the link and that information will be also
35 part of our social media content. Again, if you have-- Thank you,
36 Liajay, for sharing the information in the chat. If you have any
37 questions, comments, please feel free to do them now or later if
38 you have some ideas that you want to share with me.

39
40 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Cristina, Ana Salceda, who is the author of the
41 film sent you the toolkit for social media. So, I believe that you
42 already know that.

43
44 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** I know it.

45
46 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** And we encourage everybody who have a chance to
47 watch it. It's called Treasure of the Caribbean. The name was
48 changed, and this is an effort by all countries in the Caribbean

1 that wants to protect the spawning aggregations. The poster boy
2 for the groupers is the nassau grouper for snappers is a mutton
3 snapper. Thank you, Cristina.

4
5 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Thank you very much.

6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Next presentation is the Development of Educational
8 Resources on the Shark Species.

9
10 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Por favor, Wanda, nos dices quien tu eres y de
11 más. Y de dónde vienes.

12
13 **Development of Educational Resources on the Shark Species**
14 **(Infraclass: Selachii) of Puerto Rico.**

15
16 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Hi, my name is Wanda. I know I met some of
17 you last night, but for those of you who don't know me, my name is
18 Wanda Ortiz. I'm a master student at the Department of Marine
19 Sciences in the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. I also work
20 as an educator at Sea Grant Puerto Rico and I'm currently the
21 Executive Director of an educational company called Little Women,
22 Big Sharks.

23
24 I'm here to talk to you about this project that I have been working
25 on for the past few years and is the development of educational
26 resources of the shark species of Puerto Rico as a gateway to
27 inform the local public.

28
29 We can hop into the next slide whenever you can.

30
31 This project is being supervised currently by my committee members
32 Juan Cruz Motta, Edwin Omar Rodríguez Class, who you may know as
33 Omi, Ruperto Chaparro, and Nikolaos Schizas, who is also professor
34 at the department of Marine Sciences.

35
36 You can go into the next slide, please. Thank you.

37
38 So why another book if there are so many already about the sharks?
39 So, this is a question I will be addressing throughout the
40 presentation. You can go to the next slide please. Thank you.

41
42 So, these are the subjects of these educational resources. Sharks
43 overall are cartilaginous fish. They're mostly predators with the
44 exception of one species that is a predator, but it also has been
45 determined as an omnivorous species. It can eat and also digest
46 sea grass. They have been around for around 400 million years. So
47 far, we do have 536 species documented worldwide, but the last
48 number I saw was 544 of which 46 species have been documented in

1 Puerto Rico so far.

2
3 The educational resources will cover the relevance of the roles
4 that they undertake, the niches that they occupy, and how these
5 are important for us from an ecological, economic and sociocultural
6 perspective as well. But however, sharks are currently declining.
7 They're amongst the most threatened megafauna invertebrates
8 worldwide. Currently, around 31% of shark species that have been
9 documented so far are threatened, either critically endangered,
10 endangered, or vulnerable according to the International Union for
11 the Conservation of Nature. Half of the species in Puerto Rico
12 have a global status of threaten, let it be either of those three.
13

14 We can go to the next slide.

15
16 So, these are the things that we wanted to look into or have in
17 mind while developing the educational resources. First, we wanted
18 to put out there or make people aware of this need-to-know
19 information about sharks in general and with emphasis for those
20 species in Puerto Rico.

21
22 You can go to the next slide and yeah, you can go to the next
23 slide. Thank you.

24
25 So, as a background, in these educational resources, I made sure
26 to include the general characteristics of sharks, meaning what
27 defines the sharks and whether we realize it or not we are also
28 teaching by discussing the general characteristics. We're teaching
29 people about topography, shark topography, meaning the external
30 parts of the sharks, their anatomy. We're also teaching about their
31 physiology, ethology, which is behavior, a study of behavior,
32 toxicology. And we're also making people aware of all the richness
33 within this group around the archipelago, by discussing how
34 different these general characteristics are between each shark,
35 each species and also the niches that they occupy because of the
36 characteristics they have altogether.

37
38 You can go into the next slide, please.

39
40 We emphasize that sharks, overall, many species are considered k-
41 selected species. This is due because their traits, as k-selected
42 species, in general sharks have a slow growth. They also reach
43 sexual maturity very late in life. They have infrequent
44 reproduction, which means that they don't reproduce as often as a
45 [minutillus?] fish. Some sharks even reproduce every two, three
46 years biennial, triennial cycle reproduction, and some in
47 alternate years even. They have low fecundity, which means that
48 they can have very few pups per litter. And they can have long

1 gestation periods. Something very interesting about this is that
2 the vertebrate with the longest gestation period is a shark. It is
3 actually the gulper shark, which is a species documented here in
4 Puerto Rico and it can be pregnant, the females can be pregnant
5 for up to 36 months. That's three years, right? And also, they
6 have high longevity, which means that they can have a long life,
7 or they can be around for a long time before they die from natural
8 causes. A good representation of all these characteristics is the
9 dusky shark, as you can see here.

10
11 You can go into the next slide. Thank you.

12
13 Other than this, what we want to say about sharks being a k-
14 selected species, these traits vary very much from one shark to
15 another. So, we have a high variability. We have a high
16 heterogeneity not only considering the sharks overall, but also
17 the shark species here in Puerto Rico because we have a little bit
18 of everything.

19
20 And talking about heterogeneity, we have sharks with different
21 adaptations from things as crazy as bioluminescent sharks. We have
22 actually the largest vertebrate, bioluminescent vertebrate is a
23 shark, and it's a species that is also here, which is the kitefin
24 shark. We have biofluorescent sharks as well. What I want to say
25 about these adaptations is that they could all be looked into
26 because they might have even human applications. For example,
27 biofluorescence in sharks has been determined to help sharks kill
28 eliminate harmful bacteria. Other things that we can like look
29 into are the feeding adaptations, different feeding adaptations of
30 sharks, such as filter feeding, suction feeding, parasitism,
31 omnivory, and even coprophagy. The oceanic whitetip shark, for
32 example, has been observed to follow pilot whales and eat their
33 excretions and also, follow them because they take advantage
34 basically of their echolocation and that's how they are able to
35 find prey as well.

36
37 Other things we can look into is that there is this group of sharks
38 which-- this characteristic hermaphroditism was thought to not be
39 common, but this is actual a very common characteristic within the
40 devil catshark group. And we can look into also asexual
41 reproduction in sharks. There are sharks that can reproduce
42 asexually by means of parts and parthenogenesis, which means that
43 the mother produces exact copies of her. We could also look into
44 sperm storage, polyandry, multiple paternity. There are sharks
45 that can, pretty much sharks that can give birth for pups from
46 different fathers at the same time.

47
48 We can look into natal philopatry, which Cristina mentioned to me

1 the other day that she just thought that that was only for-- natal
2 philopatry was only exhibited in sea turtles, but actually, female
3 lemon sharks are known to return to the place they were born to
4 give birth there. And also, euryhalinity. Several species of sharks
5 are known to be euryhaline, and that's when they tolerate different
6 levels of salinity and that's what makes them able to enter
7 freshwater. And other sharks in other parts of the world are able
8 to live in freshwater as well.

9
10 We also included in the materials-- we wanted to include why sharks
11 are important. These are a few examples that we usually hear about.
12 How they keep their balance? Exert top-down population controls
13 and whatnot, but things that we don't normally hear about them are
14 that sharks are actually facilitators. The way they eat by shaking
15 their heads abruptly loses pieces of their prey and these little
16 pieces of prey are then available for other organisms to feed on.
17 And this is why basically remoras follow sharks around or attach
18 to sharks so they can have those feeding opportunities. So, they
19 provide these feeding opportunities to other organisms that
20 wouldn't have those feeding opportunities otherwise.

21
22 And also, sharks are free themselves. Not all of them are top
23 predators. They're actually considered more mesopredator than top
24 predators. And they have an important role in food security.
25 They're an affordable source of protein for middle and low-income
26 families around the world. One of example of this is in Sri Lanka.

27
28 We can go into the next slide.

29
30 Another importance that I want to make sure to discuss in the
31 educational resources, is their economic and cultural importance
32 such as, shark tourism, for example. This is a million-dollar
33 industry worldwide and it creates jobs. Aside from being important
34 in arts and creating jobs for filmmakers, photographers, and
35 whatnot they're important in certain customs, beliefs, tales and
36 traditions, meaning the folklore.

37
38 They're all also the source of bioinspiration for very novel
39 designs. Meaning, for example, the shark dermal denticles allow
40 sharks to have less drag while moving in the water and this has
41 been used as something that inspired a coating based on the design
42 of those dermal denticles and this coating has been applied to
43 boats and airplanes and has actually saved them fuel in
44 transportation or money in fuel and transportation. It has also
45 inspired the speedos swimsuits that were actually banned in the
46 Olympics of 2008 because many of the swimmers that were using this
47 swimsuit broke several records, so they were banned from then on
48 because it reduces the drag in the water and increases somehow

1 their performance in the water. So, we included that.

2
3 We can go into the next slide.

4
5 However, we wanted to make sure that this information is also
6 included. Sharks are facing several threats that are increasing in
7 magnitude and speed. These threats include overfishing as the main
8 threat that they're facing. Let it be from either direct or
9 incidental fishing, but mainly at an industrial scale or industrial
10 level as a result of mixed fisheries. And they are also facing
11 habitat degradation and destruction, pollution. The effects of
12 climate change, the big deadly trio are being studied right now
13 and the effects that they have in sharks. Also, shark culling in
14 certain countries.

15
16 This is enhanced by the level of exposure from certain species
17 that are particularly large coastal and have a limited habitat
18 range. And this makes them even more susceptible, this altogether,
19 considering that their life history traits as k-selected species.
20 And in many countries, they're being poorly managed because we're
21 not considering that this life history traits might be very
22 particular from one species into another and that policy making
23 decisions and management measures need to be based on these
24 specific life history traits.

25
26 We can go into the next slide.

27
28 So overall one 31.2% of the species of sharks are threatened
29 worldwide, according to the IUCN global status, but if we go to
30 the global status of shark species in Puerto Rico, specifically,
31 half of the species here are threatened, either critically
32 endangered, endangered, which is the majority of those threatened
33 species, and/or vulnerable. So, half of our species here have a
34 global status of threatened with extinction.

35
36 We can go into the next slide.

37
38 Another thing that we wanted to address is this unrealistic and
39 negative perception that we often see and hear that people have
40 towards sharks and their vindictive behavior as well. Also, we
41 wanted to look into the fact that most of the information that's
42 available out there for people is in English and conveyed in a
43 very technical manner. This technical manner of conveying
44 information often accompanies scientific information that is
45 available.

46
47 Uh, we can go into the next slide, please. Thank you.

1 So, these are the issues that we're addressing through the
2 projects. We're basically trying to debunk misconceptions and
3 address that misinformation that is out there and in order to do
4 that, we wanted to pinpoint the source. Where are these
5 misconceptions coming from? Why is this misinformation still out
6 there? And we found out that this is because most of the
7 information that is available and accessible is in English and
8 also conveyed in a technical manner. And this, if you consider
9 this, the statistic right here, that the first language of the
10 Puerto Ricans is Spanish for 94% of the population, we realize the
11 fact that we need to develop more Spanish sources that people can
12 have there and look at. Almost 77% of the Puerto Ricans do not
13 speak English fluently, which might hinder the ability of some
14 people to understand those materials that are already in English.

15
16 And something else is that the primary sources of information are
17 conveyed in a technical manner, as I mentioned before. This might
18 be inaccessible to people that are unfamiliar with science or with
19 the topic and we want everyone to have the same opportunity to
20 learn about sharks out there. And this information could be also
21 out of reach for many reasons.

22
23 We can go to the next slide.

24
25 So, these were the objectives of this project. We wanted to address
26 common misconceptions about sharks by creating learning
27 opportunities and helping the general public understand sharks and
28 the nature of their importance, where this comes from, and make
29 people aware of the local shark species richness. Because not many
30 people are aware of how many species we have, which are those
31 species. And also, to develop educational materials to address
32 this and inform the local public about the sharks in Puerto Rico
33 and in general.

34
35 We can go into the next slide.

36
37 So, this was the process. Basically, for me, this was a 14-year
38 learning process, but it started, this project per se, started by
39 gathering information and allocation of resources about seven
40 years ago. And the creative process included gathering that
41 information and sorting it into categories for making, basically,
42 like an outline of what we wanted to do and the information we
43 wanted to include in these projects, in these resources. And the
44 writing process took about three years while gathering information
45 still.

46
47 And then, there was also the task distribution. We wanted to assign
48 illustrators to do the scientific illustrations of the different

1 species that we have and other explanatory material.

3 You can go into the next slide, please.

5 And finally, with the submission of the drafts, we ended up with
6 the book. The title-- this was the first prototype of the cover
7 page of the book but it's not going to be about the shark
8 populations in the Virgin Islands. It's going to be specific to
9 Puerto Rico. From this book, we're going to excerpt information
10 and make a little brochure for easy distribution about the more
11 commonly seen and commonly caught shark species here, with a brief
12 description of each and a poster with each scientific illustration
13 of each species of sharks.

15 We can go into the next slide.

17 For the book, which is the main resource in this project, this was
18 the outline, the final outline for that book. We have different
19 chapters. The first one includes an introduction of sharks overall.
20 Chapter two is basically defining what a shark is, disclosing their
21 general characteristics and why are they important. Chapter three
22 is about topography, the external parts that sharks are known for.
23 Anatomy as well, the organs, so we can learn also about physiology
24 in this chapter. Chapter number five, which talks about all the
25 shark species that have been documented for Puerto Rico so far. It
26 describes them and also, it's accompanied with each species overall
27 or general life history traits, at least for those that we know
28 information about, because there are some species that we don't
29 know much about them still. There's a lot of research still to be
30 done. We included importance and we subdivided this chapter between
31 the ecological importance based on their ecological roles and the
32 environment and the oceans. And we have, also, an economic
33 importance subchapter and the cultural importance subchapter.

35 We make people aware, through chapter seven, about the shark
36 decline. Why are they declining? What are the emerging issues that
37 we should be concerned about? We talk a little bit also about
38 conservation management. This chapter is very special, true or
39 false, because this chapter was based on, or it was inspired by
40 the common misconceptions and the questions I was usually asked
41 while giving talks about sharks. So, I basically compiled all these
42 questions and misconceptions, and I made a chapter out of it. So,
43 we talk about this and try to explain them and also disclose
44 whether they're true or not, and why giving them an explanation.
45 And also, human etiquette. These are the appendixes that accompany
46 or are supplemented material for this chapter.

48 We can go to the next slide.

1
2 These are excerpts from the book before they were edited. This is
3 the front page of the introduction chapter and also the front page
4 of the true or false chapter.

5
6 We can go into the next slide.

7
8 This is an excerpt page from the topography chapter and this one
9 is the anatomy chapter. Each one signals or indicates a part of a
10 shark and their description and their function. This is from the
11 species Puerto Rico chapter. We divided sharks by family, and we
12 talked about the family, described the family, and then proceeded
13 to talk about the species giving a brief information and the life
14 history traits for them.

15
16 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Wanda? Yeah, you have one minute to wrap it up.

17
18 **NATALIE MARIE BÁEZ RODRÍGUEZ:** Oh, yeah, well I'm already
19 finishing. And for the importance chapters, we made sure to include
20 supplementary information such as QR codes that refer the reader
21 to videos that help give the reader an idea of what we're already
22 explaining.

23
24 We can go into the next chapter.

25
26 So, these are the conclusions. We are addressing a persistent gap
27 of information, facilitating a learning opportunity and increasing
28 the accessibility and comprehension of information, target
29 misinformation and debunking common misconceptions out there and
30 teaching about their importance. And overall providing a synopsis
31 of the species richness around the archipelago.

32
33 We can go into the next one.

34
35 And creating awareness regarding the decline current situation in
36 Puerto Rico and providing a foundation for teachers that they can
37 use further on. There are limitations, of course, as with anything.
38 And because it has to be accompanied with communication efforts so
39 we can let people know that these are available, and we have to
40 keep updating every few years with new information and new records
41 emerging.

42
43 And these are the long-term implications and what we expect from
44 the educational part of this project. It is basically an
45 expectation of change, a change in perspective and hopefully also
46 of our behavior toward sharks. And it's providing a framework for
47 research projects, policy making decisions, and also management
48 measures and guidance as well.

1
2 So, this is what I already disclosed, and it will be a huge
3 contribution, a way of giving back to the community from everything
4 I've learned from the community while giving talks to them. So
5 yeah, and inclusion is essentially as this is a way to start
6 because this is not only addressed for Puerto Ricans. Puerto Rico
7 is also included in the narrative of this educational resource.

8
9 And yeah, these are the book production team and the collaborators.
10 Yeah, that's it for me. I would love to answer your questions and
11 take suggestions if you have any.

12 13 Questions/Comments 14

15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. I want to say that under the ecosystem-based
16 management that we are into, the knowledge about the sharks and
17 importance and all of what you expose, this is very good material,
18 very comprehensive. We might need, in the future, a little more
19 opportunity to learn to digest. The only comment I will have based
20 on the experience is I didn't see there any way to fix the problem
21 of fish id because most of the publications in the past were with
22 the regulated species and there is, for example, other species
23 that we catch and are common on the area that if you add a feature
24 of similar species and the features that distinguish the similar
25 species among each other, that will be something super helpful. I
26 know that is not an easy task, but it's possible, right?

27
28 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Yeah. Actually, with this educational
29 resource in particular, well the book in particular, we wanted to
30 take the first steps into introducing people to sharks, basically.
31 Introducing sharks to people, sorry. So, we wanted to let people
32 know what a shark is. Now, with this you know what a shark is. Why
33 should we care or why are they important? And now the next step is
34 how to tell different sharks apart. So, something I'm working on
35 right now is photographic ID guide for the species that can be
36 found here and how you can tell them apart. Which ones look very
37 similar to one another and what you can use to tell them apart. So
38 that's the next step.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just a recommendation to focus on those similar
41 species and guide them. For example, I was talking to Carlos,
42 immediately when he saw the dusky shark, "that's a Caribbean reef,
43 right?" Which is a very common shark here. We should have on the
44 Caribbean reef, on the dusky shark, the similarities and the way
45 to tell them apart on the most effective, expedite, simple way
46 possible.

47
48 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Yeah. The one in, I think it was like the

1 fourth slide, it was a dusky shark, and then the one before that
2 was the Caribbean reef shark and few species that look a lot alike
3 is the dusky shark, the Caribbean reef shark, the Galapagos shark,
4 and also the silky shark. It's very difficult to tell them apart.
5 But there are tricks and there are certain characteristics you can
6 look into that would be helpful for them.

7
8 **MARCOS HANKE:** That will help compliance and on the regulation for
9 HMS and so on. Does the HMS office have access to this publication,
10 this work that you are doing?

11
12 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** They're not published yet. We're still
13 working on the corrections of illustrations and I'm also applying
14 the editorial corrections that Cristina made. She's part of the
15 production team of the book. So, we're doing that, currently. I
16 think the foreseeable, because it's forthcoming, so the
17 foreseeable date of publication could be August 2023. So, by
18 August, hopefully that material will be already available for
19 anyone who wants to use it, including HMS.

20
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Just send me an email because I am on the AP
22 of HMS, and I want to connect you guys from now to make sure you
23 guys can work together and know what each other need and so on.

24
25 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Yeah.

26
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you.

28
29 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Okay. Perfect.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Any other question from the group? Cristina.

32
33 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Just to say congratulations to Wanda.
34 Wanda has been doing an amazing job for years. I met her many years
35 ago in Sea Grant, and she came as a volunteer and she's now going
36 to be graduating from the Marine Sciences Department. So,
37 congratulations, Wanda, and thank you for all the job that you are
38 doing in education, in marine education. Thank you very much.

39
40 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Thank you.

41
42 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel.

43
44 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. Wanda, thank you for the presentation.
45 Excellent. Because I see some names that I know, our connection
46 will be Cristina Olán, so if you think of anything that we can
47 assist, I will be more than happy to collaborate. But I'm looking
48 forward to the publication of the book in Spanish. And this

1 question relates to something that Dr. Strelcheck talk before,
2 will this be available in a digital format? So, we can put it in
3 our webpage.

4
5 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Yeah. Once we're done with the Spanish
6 version of the book. We can proceed to work on the English one.

7
8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Will it be digitized and hard copies?

9
10 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Sorry, what?

11
12 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** In a digital format and hard copy? Can I use it
13 or go to Sea Grant and download it?

14
15 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** That will be up to Sea Grant, which is the
16 program that is going to publish this work. But I think hard
17 copies, I don't know if digitalized copies, hopefully there will
18 be digitalized copies, but for now I think we're working on having
19 that hard copy. And the book will also be accessible in the sense
20 that it could be affordable because what people would have to pay
21 for to get the book, the hard copy of the book, will be the cost
22 of impression. For instance, the Marine Mammal of Puerto Rico book
23 that Grisel wrote, it's about \$20 right now and it's just to cover
24 the cost of printing. So, yeah.

25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. I don't see any other question. We're
27 going to move along. Thank you very much for your presentation.

28
29 **WANDA M. ORTIZ BÁEZ:** Yep, absolutely. Thank you.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** The next presentation-- I've received some texts
32 for a break. There's a needed break for five minutes for people to
33 stretch the legs and everything else. I'll see you guys in five
34 minutes.

35
36 (Whereupon a brief recess was taken.)

37
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Let's take your seats please.

39
40 Please take your seats, everyone. We're going to start with the
41 Liaison Officers Reports. I would like to start first with Mabel
42 Maldonado.

43
44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Not here.

45
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** Who is not here, right? Nobody is going to make it?
47 Okay. Nicole Greaux?

Liaison Officers Reports
St. Thomas/St. John, USVI - Nicole Greaux

NICOLE GREAUX: Is that better? Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Nicole Greaux. I am the outreach and education liaison for the Fishery Management Council to the islands of Saint Thomas and Saint John. You can contact me via my email, and I'd like to thank you all very much for having me here today.

So, these are some of the activities and events that have been done presently. We have information boxes, which was a project and put together through Ruth Gomez for information to be widely dispersed at different fishing ports on the island. The video on pertinent points of the lobster ruling, I was asked to do a follow up video for that, and I've done that as well, that got very nice reviews. The initial meeting with MREP was something that I'm really, really glad that I had a chance to be a part of and to attend. That's really important. We touched on MREP a few times today. The foundation building for the upcoming workshops, which is taking place this summer, I think is going to be something very productive, not only for our fishermen, but also for the understanding and for the connection between the people that make the rules and explain the rules to be there to this particular group of people and shareholders. And then my favorite thing that I've done so far for this quarter was the afternoon on the green.

So, the information boxes that I was talking about. Currently there are two boxes that are up. There's one located in Hull Bay, which is a very well known, very frequented spot for not only fishers, but for people that interact with our fisheries. That is the display that is on the right-hand side. And then in Frenchtown at the most, I suppose, populated fish vending site, there's a fish box that's located there as well. What you're looking at inside of those fish boxes is an introduction to the island-based fishery management plan. I had lots of questions about that as well. So, these are what's going into the boxes. Information about not only the fishery management plan, but any notification that involves the fishermen and our fisheries as well.

Proximo.

Ah, this is the lobster information video. So, the key points such as what the lobster video or what the lobster ruling was about; questions on why it was implemented; things about the catch limits for the surrounding waters that involves the lobster study.

Proximo.

1 And then the WhatsApp broadcast. This is something that's been
2 really useful as far as my communication efforts with several of
3 the fishermen is being able to send out the WhatsApp information
4 through via broadcast with things that I pick up off of the web,
5 the Caribbean Fishery Management Council page, and definitely
6 information that Cristina sends me that we need to get out. So, as
7 it was mentioned earlier, I don't remember by who, a lot of the
8 fishers do not have a chance to go onto social media. Some of them
9 are just not very interested in surfing or going through the
10 different webpages to find out information. Sometimes the NOAA
11 website, where a lot of this information comes from or is readily
12 available, is very difficult to manage and to navigate. So, this
13 is a really great way to get the information that's pertinent out
14 too many fishers. I'm hoping that I can have more phone numbers
15 added to that broadcast list, but this is also shared with our DAP
16 representative and the spokesperson for the Saint Thomas Fishers
17 Association. So hopefully the information can be more widespread
18 that way as well.

19
20 Proximo.

21
22 Afternoon on the Green. This has been what I think the most
23 successful outreach engagement that I have had so far. Not only
24 with fishermen attending or going to Afternoon on the Green, but
25 the general public as well.

26
27 What it is kind of like a fair of education and information and
28 everything that the University of the Virgin Islands is involved
29 in and is a part of. I had a table, and I was allowed to have space
30 there to talk about things like the species that are the most
31 prevalent in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Down in the lower corner,
32 there is a poster that was done through Sea Grant and different
33 collaborations about the different species that are found in the
34 Virgin Islands and in Puerto Rico. That was very popular. That was
35 a giveaway. Activity books were really popular too, given by the
36 Division of Fish and Wildlife. That is something that contributed
37 to a lot of conversations. And then, people were really interested
38 in just ways that they can be more sustainable when it comes to
39 utilizing our marine resources. Um, magnets and posters, I've
40 realized is a really popular way to get people interested in
41 information. So that might be something that we would want to look
42 into in the future.

43
44 Next.

45
46 And that's it. Thank you all very much.

1
2 **Questions/Comments**
3

4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for an informative and precise
5 presentation. We really appreciate that. Thank you. The next
6 presentation-- we have a question?
7

8 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Just to say thank you to Nicole for her
9 support for the newsletter and the WhatsApp broadcast list. Thank
10 you very much.
11

12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Next presentation is after Alida's question.
13

14 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** It is not a question; it is just a comment
15 that the type of work that Nicole is doing as a liaison is the
16 contact that we need with the fishers and with the consumers. It
17 doesn't matter where you are, it doesn't matter what type of
18 information, as long, of course, as the information is the right
19 one. But you can do almost anything to make contact with the
20 people. Thank you, Nicole.
21

22 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Nicole, again. Yes. Anybody else? No?
23 Then we are going to go to the next presentation, which is Wilson
24 Santiago.
25

26 **Puerto Rico - Wilson Santiago**
27

28 **WILSON SANTIAGO:** Yes. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Wilson
29 Santiago, the Puerto Rico Fisheries Liaison. This is my
30 presentation on my participation and next steps and issue from the
31 fishers of Puerto Rico.
32

33 So, in 2022 I started again coordinating the educational program
34 for commercial fishers, the PEPCO program. We are sending weekly
35 educational posts via WhatsApp, like Cristina said in her
36 presentation. Thanks for all the material that weekly she gave me.
37 Continue supporting the fishers with issues and information,
38 giving educational material for the fishers and fishing
39 communities. For this, I try to get all around the island sometimes
40 some fish houses or fishing villages. I haven't gone to all of
41 them, but I will try.
42

43 So, I work in an assessment on the impacts of Hurricane Fiona in
44 Puerto Rico fishing villages and community. This is a work together
45 with Jannette Ramos. And I also participated in the Ocean
46 Acidification workshop. That was in 2023. I did not put in in the
47 presentation, but I also participated, thanks to Vanessa Ramírez,
48 in a [conversation?] with commercial fishers next to officer Miguel

1 Borges. Miguel Borges talked about the federal water regulations
2 and I in a [conservation?] of state waters regulations.

3
4 Next, Cristina.

5
6 Okay. So, as liaison, my next step is resuming what we call the
7 PEPER, the Educational Program for Recreational Fishers. It is a
8 program that my partner Helena Antoun is working and probably--
9 this past week we just passed the flyer via the social medias, so
10 persons that want to get the workshop they have called us. We are
11 making a list to see which places we are going to start giving
12 this workshop. Continuing the Pepco program and continuing support
13 of the CFMC, DNER, Sea Grant and other agencies for the fishing
14 communities around Puerto Rico, in the social media too. Continue
15 educating in the process of license, statistics and state laws to
16 maintain the responsibility of all the fishing communities.
17 Communicate the fishers regarding the Island-Based Fisher
18 Management Plan.

19
20 So, right now, myself, I'm starting to make a second part of the
21 PEPCO program. I have a lot of topics that I want to add, but
22 naturally the PEPCO program is some basic topics. The program is
23 a three-hour workshop. So, I don't want to fill more that first
24 part. I'm starting to make a second part with another topics of
25 interest for the fishing communities.

26
27 Next one, please.

28
29 So, issues and concerns from fishers. All around the island, one
30 of the major issues is the queen and cardinal snapper state permit.
31 Right now, those are the top species in Puerto Rico that everybody,
32 new commercial fishers, and the old ones want to fish for, because
33 of the high prices. The HMS permit for Caribbean small boat permit,
34 we are attending that with the Sea Grant magazine Fuede y
35 Verguilla. And the Puerto Rico commercial fishing license and
36 permit. This is the commercial license that DNER gives. So, myself,
37 I always assist the commercial fishers and trying to help them in
38 every possible way that I can.

39
40 So that will be my presentation. And before I finish, I want to
41 say thanks to Marcos Hanke. This is my last presentation that
42 you're going to hear from me as a Chairman. This is not the last
43 one, but as a Chairman. Thank you for your guidance and all the
44 ideas that you always bring to us, and especially for me.

45
46 So, any question, comments, idea?

1 **Questions/Comments**

2
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. I have to respond to this because, Wilson, you
4 personify what we need in the Caribbean. You are sincere, you're
5 honest, you are proactive, you connect to people, and you gain the
6 trust of everybody, the managers, the fishermen, and everybody.
7 And at the same time, you don't know, maybe, or you already felt
8 it, but you are part of my extended family on a professional level
9 and beyond. Thank you very much for your job.

10
11 **WILSON SANTIAGO:** Thank you, Marco.

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Alida.

14
15 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** I also want to thank Wilson. As a liaison
16 he's my first, and many times, my only contact with the local
17 government, with the communities, with the fishing communities,
18 with anyone. When I need some information, the first person that
19 I can call and know that I'm going to get something and if it
20 doesn't work, he will do it again and again and again, it's Wilson.
21 So, Wilson, thanks a lot.

22
23 **WILSON SANTIAGO:** Very welcome. Thank you, Alida. Thank you,
24 everyone.

25
26 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Rapidito. Wilson, gracias. Lo voy a decir
27 en español. Gracias por el apoyo siempre. Un abrazo. Y por todo el
28 trabajo que haces. Igual que Alida, cada vez que uno necesita
29 alguna información tu estas ahí para brindarle ese apoyo a uno.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** En la misma nota positiva. On the same positive
32 note, we will keep moving with the meeting. The next is a break,
33 but we already had the break. I saw your face, Liajay. I'm going
34 to have a long break, but that's me. Enforcement Reports. Puerto
35 Rico Department of Environmental Resources.

36
37 **Enforcement Reports**
38 **Puerto Rico - DNER**
39

40 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Okay. This is Ricardo López for the record.
41 This is going to be only a one hour and 30 minutes presentation
42 [laughter] but I'm just going to do a summary for you.

43
44 I did have some help from the Puerto Rico, DNER Ranger Corps,
45 especially, Yamiré Pérez Román, who sent me all the data and with
46 that I was able to do this presentation.

47
48 Please, next.

1
2 Okay. As you can see there in that figure, you can see many of the
3 violations that were attained since December 1st, 2022, to March
4 31st, 2023. From those interventions we have a total of 242
5 interventions. Many of them were for the Law 430, which is Puerto
6 Rico Water Navigation and Safety Act. That was followed by the
7 Regulation 6979, which is Regulations for Registration,
8 Navigation, and Aquatic Safety. So, the majority of the
9 interventions were related to safety, but we do have some
10 interventions about fisheries.

11
12 Please, next.

13
14 As you can see here the ones that are in yellow color are the ones
15 that I really want to present to you. The first one to the left is
16 the sale in clandestine fish market of 33 groupers during the
17 closure. And then to the right, Regulations 7949 Fishery's
18 Regulations, you can see the illegal possessions of species in
19 closure dates; lobster does not measure as required by law; and
20 possession of quench conch not complying with the size limit. And
21 for the last excess queen conch possession on recreational and
22 commercial fishers. Those are the only ones that are really related
23 to the federal regulations and the reason that we are here today.

24
25 Please, next.

26
27 On that one you can see a couple of pictures, right? One with the
28 groupers and the other with what we call 'chopas.' 'Chopas' is
29 from the genus lepomis, and it's prohibited to fish them and sell
30 them in Puerto Rico. The same group of people had those fish to be
31 sold. In that intervention, we have the collaboration of Yamiré
32 Pérez Manuel Rey and Miguel Borges, who is here with us today. So,
33 I really appreciate that.

34
35 I believe this one is the last of the-- Yes. With that one I
36 finished. Those are the telephone numbers and contacts. If you
37 have any question. I'm here.

38
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Ricardo. Great format. The way you
40 presented. It's--

41
42 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Good summary.

43
44 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, it's perfect. It's based on experience. Thank
45 you very much. We have the next presentation, unless we have
46 questions. No? Next presentation then. U.S.V.I.

1 **USVI-Department of Planning and Natural Resources**

2
3 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Since the last meeting,
4 our officers have been collaborating closely with federal NOAA Law
5 Enforcement in a special operation in the Saint Croix district
6 related to illegal fish trap. As many of our officers are new,
7 which is excellent, we're adding officers, this was good for
8 training as well as collaboration between our agencies. Several
9 new vessels are going to allow the officers to be on the water
10 more often, which we hear loud and clear from our community.

11
12 In addition, as the allotments for the JEA to the U.S.V.I. have
13 decreased by more than 10% for this upcoming year, we just want to
14 state how important it has been to have a law enforcement officer
15 in the Saint Thomas/Saint John district and because we do have
16 island-based fisheries management plans, how critically important
17 it could be to have a second officer in the U.S.V.I., in the Saint
18 Croix district. Boots on the ground are worth immeasurable amounts
19 of enforcement.

20
21 So, thank you very much. That concludes our report. Director
22 Forbes, send his apologies, he couldn't make it.

23
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much. US Coast Guard. We don't have
25 a U.S. Coast Guard at this time to report. NOAA Office of Law
26 Enforcement.

27
28 **NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement**

29
30 **MATTHEW WALIA:** All right, thank you. I'm Matt Walia, the
31 compliance liaison for OLE. I'll be brief here and know we're at
32 the end of the day. Before I get into it, I was just going to do
33 a quick reintroduction to myself since I haven't been here before.
34 What I primarily do is I work a lot with the Councils, all of them
35 down here, the Caribbean, Atlantic, and the Gulf. We want to work
36 with the fishing industry and get compliance, make sure they
37 understand what to do, how to do it the right way. So, if you hear
38 concerns from your fishing folks, please reach out to me, Miguel
39 we have Alex on Saint Thomas, so don't hesitate to reach out to
40 us.

41
42 One thing I just wanted to point out to some of the discussions we
43 had going on with possession and bag limits today, just a reminder
44 that we do have a LE preset document that's made for
45 recommendations to the Council when new amendments are getting
46 proposed. Just to keep that in mind. So, it, essentially, if you
47 can simplify, make the regs easier, get rid of loopholes, it's
48 easier for enforcement. So, I just want to throw that out there

1 for compatibility considerations.

2
3 I'm going to present a couple overview-- if you can go to the next
4 slide-- since the last meeting. So, a few things you've already
5 heard, which I think is good, it shows our collaboration with the
6 partners.

7
8 Is it going again? apparently, there are issues uploading where it
9 automatically moves the slides? I do have it on a thumb drive, if
10 that helps things. All right. Hopefully it stays.

11
12 So, the top pictures you see here, this involved the patrol in
13 Bajo de Sico--

14
15 It looks like maybe it's not staying. It's going back. Do you want
16 the, do you mind giving her that really quick? It's under the
17 Caribbean folder. So, I'll talk as it goes on, just so you know,
18 while they try to figure the glitches.

19
20 Essentially, we had a patrol on Bajo de Sico. It was in March right
21 before it opened back up. Miguel was out there. There was a
22 collaboration with Customs and Border Patrol. We came across a
23 couple vessels out there that had possession of reef fish and
24 shark. So, there was a couple citations where red hind and
25 yellowfin, or yellowtail Snapper, were retained. And that's also
26 where you heard from Nelson with the DAP report that rainbow
27 runners came up. So, these boats did possess a fair number of
28 rainbow runners. Officer discretion was used to not issue fines at
29 the time since this seems relatively new, but as it is now, it
30 still is a reef fish species until that's changed.

31
32 Um, couple other highlights that Miguel did as well, as we'll see
33 as they're trying to bring it up. We did a lot of seafood
34 inspections and seafood mislabeling. That's always been a concern
35 we've heard in the region. It's been a slew of a couple different
36 things. So, red hind and goliath grouper were reported as being
37 sold at various places, whether it's a supermarket, fish trucks,
38 fish dealers, and some of it was cleared up through import
39 paperwork that was misrepresented. Something that was categorized
40 as red hind ended up being graysby imported from Brazil, so that
41 was okay.

42
43 We had something labeled as a Goliath grouper out of a food truck
44 and that raised some alarm bells obviously and ended up being a
45 misidentification. It was misty grouper that was being sold. And
46 then other cases there truly are infractions, like you just heard
47 from Puerto Rico, the infraction case of the hind that went over
48 to DNER that they handled.

1
2 Dolphin harassment also unfortunately continues. We do get reports
3 of that as well. We try to track down the accountability and verify
4 those reports as well. We have a few open cases.

5
6 Next slide, hopefully.

7
8 All right, in another aspect we focus on everywhere, divisionally,
9 nationwide involves trade monitoring. We've been having a big focus
10 with our officer in Saint Thomas where he's been able to go to the
11 airport and do a lot of inspections. These are held in coordination
12 with customs and border patrol, and he's found a slew of thing.
13 Some are good, some are bad, some have tickets, some are open. But
14 it involves everything you see up there, spiny lobster, mahi, tuna
15 conch that's been imported in that he's inspecting. And similar,
16 Miguel also was recently in Ponce and did a joint operation with
17 FDA and CBP as well, where they went to shipper facilities trying
18 to inspect seafood coming in as well from different various
19 countries to look for anything.

20
21 So, we're hoping to continue those expansions and collaborations
22 with the partners. And before you go to the next slide, I just
23 want to highlight that graphic I have in the lower right. That's
24 actually a graphic of lobster stocks and where they originate from.
25 There's been a lot of talk about lobster stocks, the importance of
26 it in the area.

27
28 If you can go to the next slide, I'll tie that in.

29
30 So, we recognize it's important. We want to protect our domestic
31 seafood and some of the recent case highlights that we want to
32 show these top two or recent cases that we collaborate with the
33 Department of Justice that involved the re-export of spiny lobster
34 from the U.S. So, it was falsely mislabeled. It was coming from
35 Florida, product of U.S., when in actuality it wasn't. You see
36 Aifa Seafood, it was actually of Haiti origin, which is the same
37 stock considered as here in Puerto Rico. And the Elite Sky Company.
38 It was Nicaragua and Belize stocks that they imported in, falsely
39 mislabeled, re-exported back out to China.

40
41 Aifa Seafood, pleaded guilty, and their sentencing is pending. And
42 you see, Elite, they got assessed \$250,000 and also a five-year
43 probation for infractions on seafood imports. So, it is something
44 that we're looking after all over the place.

45
46 And lastly, the last collaboration we have with Department of
47 Justice. It involved Operation Rock Bottom. It may sound familiar.
48 This case originates with Lynn Rios, a retired agent, so it's been

1 ongoing for a while. The last defendant was charged, he received
2 what you see there, a \$10,000 fine, probation, community service.
3 He cannot snorkel or scuba anywhere within the EEZ as well as
4 aquarium within the Marine trade. He used to take recording of the
5 marine organisms and was selling it illegally. So those are three
6 big cases that we had out of the region recently we want to
7 highlight.

8
9 Next slide.

10
11 And here, I just want-- I'm going to get into a second here. We
12 just want to recognize our partnership, the need for it. You know,
13 who we work with, how we get our job done, we usually try to focus
14 on trainings and joint patrols.

15
16 Go to the next slide.

17
18 And the reason, after you just heard from Nicole, is at the
19 beginning of this month, we did a big OP with DPNR and we actually
20 shipped in a supervisor along with two officers in addition to
21 Alex, who was stationed in Saint Thomas. We collaborate with
22 U.S.V.I. We went out on their vessels. They took us out with their
23 officers. We got underway. It was really successful. It was rough
24 seas; it was like eight-foot seas. They were slamming out there,
25 but they made it around the whole perimeter of the island. These
26 graphics here show that we made it to both federally closed areas.
27 Those are from the chart plotter, showing that we were in the
28 closed area, and we did have some boardings and inspections as
29 well.

30
31 You go to the next slide.

32
33 These are some pictures from the op. So, we came across various
34 things such as conch pulled out of shell and federal waters.
35 There's some pending cases and seizures going on with that. We had
36 undersized lobster that were seen. And we also assisted the
37 officers in territorial waters pulling traps that were more estate
38 infractions.

39
40 So, it was really successful. We want to commend their efforts for
41 U.S.V.I., for taking us out there, working together. It was a great
42 success overall, making a presence, getting out there with the
43 fishermen and getting out there. We look forward to continuing to
44 do more of that.

45
46 Next slide.

47
48 And just to highlight a few outreach things that we've done as

1 well. The top one is from Alex. So, one thing that he's been really
2 good, I've heard reports as well, is he's been real proactive
3 meeting with the fishermen. There was confusion on where to fish,
4 how to fish in the right area out on the banks for the snapper or
5 for the grouper, apologies. And he reviewed electronics, their
6 plotters, made sure they were fixed right with the right lats and
7 longs on there, how to get out there. So, he made sure that during
8 compliance, instead of issuing tickets right off the bat. We had
9 complaints of some whale in the area. So as far as protected
10 species, he was able to collaborate with Coast Guard and get safety
11 messages broadcast out on vhf.

12
13 And then what you just heard from Wilson; it's been really
14 successful. Miguel participated with a workshop that was held by
15 Vanessa. It was really successful with fisherman reaching out of
16 what to do, what the regulations are. So, we're looking forward to
17 continuing on future workshops similar to that as well.

18
19 And next slide.
20

21 And some general enforcement outreach material I want to make you
22 aware. So, a while ago we came to you, to the Council and to the
23 DAP members on our enforcement priorities. They were put on hold
24 until NOAA Fisheries strategic plan was released. So that went
25 back out to public comment; it just recently closed. So as soon as
26 this is final, we'll make sure that y'all have it. And those other
27 links that'll be on there should be in the briefing book later. It
28 is our annual report from 2020. It was just posted recently; they
29 are catching up from Covid. Then we also have an IUU partnership
30 fact sheet as well. We've done some recent work down in Central
31 and South America. We've been working with Ecuador, Peru, and
32 Colombia on some seafood and IUU fishing down there and training
33 and sending our folks down there.

34
35 Next slide.
36

37 And these also just some general links for awareness. We have our
38 main website that posts a lot of information. These reports,
39 different things you can find on there for news. If you already
40 haven't, I suggest the NOAA Fisheries bulletins, they're a good
41 resource to use. And then that last link is actually from our
42 Office of General Counsel Enforcement Section. What they do is
43 they post case updates that we hand over to them. So, if you want
44 to see actionable results of what's going on, they post that
45 periodically. I encourage you to check that out. We also have a
46 council report that we distribute out and that's also available
47 upon request.
48

1 And I believe that's it. And I'm happy to take any questions you
2 may have. Thank you.

3
4 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you very much for the presentation. Any
5 question? Julian.

6
7 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I just want to say once again, thank you for the
8 support that you've been giving us in several different areas here
9 and your teams out there. It's great to have Alex. Alex has been
10 very, very instrumental in education. You know, I said yesterday
11 in my report that he also attended our meeting on a last-minute
12 notice and spend a whole day with us and was there to give advice
13 and understand part of that process. So once again, thank you for
14 the good work that you guys are doing and the subordinate in the
15 U.S.V.I. Thank you.

16
17 **MATTHEW WALIA:** Yeah, I appreciate Julian. We may be small, but
18 we're muddy. We're trying to get out when we can and make our
19 interactions. Thank you.

20
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. And on the same note, because it is also
22 true that Miguel Borges is involved on many communications and
23 MREP participation and other activities. He is always available,
24 very kind and very patience with the processes. We really
25 appreciate that. That goes a long way in terms of education and to
26 make it better.

27
28 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** I just want to thank both of you and also Miguel,
29 because he's always accessible, especially for giving that
30 workshop that we made with Wilson, also in the Puerto Real
31 Association and it was very productive, and I hope that we can
32 bring this around the island. Thanks.

33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you.

35
36 **MIGUEL BORGES:** Marcos, very quick. I just want to say thank you
37 to Vanessa and Marcos. For me, it's a pleasure each time I have
38 the opportunity to do some workshop that provides education to all
39 the fishermen. I think that's a critical part of our job as
40 enforcement not only the, the cases we do, which are obviously our
41 core, but also the education is a big part of what we do. So, I
42 thank you for the opportunity for that, and I'm looking forward to
43 any other programs that you might have and work for me. So, Marcos,
44 if this is the last Council meeting with you as a Chairman, it's
45 been a pleasure to work with you as a leader and we are very
46 grateful and fortunate to have had a chairman of your caliber. So,
47 thank you very much. Appreciate it.

1 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, I really appreciate your words,
2 especially coming from law enforcement. Thank you. Thank you,
3 Miguel. We are ready to move along. Next presentation, which will
4 be a virtual participant presenter, I'm sorry, Using DNA Barcoding
5 to Identify Seafood Fraud, Natalie Báez. This is part of other
6 business.

7
8 **Using DNA Barcoding to Identify Seafood Fraud in Puerto Rico**
9

10 **NATALIE M. BÁEZ RODRÍGUEZ:** Hola, buenas tardes. Me escuchan. Hoy
11 voy a estar presentando los resultados que obtuve de mi maestría
12 a nivel de mis tesis de maestría el cual se titula El Uso de DNA
13 Barcoding para identificar fraude pesquero en Puerto Rico.

14
15 El fraude de pescado se comete cuando el pescado es comercializado
16 deliberadamente con el propósito de obtener algún beneficio
17 económico. Esto puede representar un riesgo para la salud pública,
18 ya que se han visto casos de envenenamiento, alergias y las
19 personas se exponen a contaminantes tales como metales pesados.
20 También se ve un riesgo para el medio ambiente, ya que se han visto
21 casos de pesca ilegales, la sobreexplotación de especies, teniendo
22 un riesgo de llevar especies a la extinción, y también se afecta
23 a la cascada trófica de la cadena alimenticia.

24
25 Existen dos tipos de fraudes comunes, el cual fueron los mismos
26 que se se observaron en mi estudio. Estos fueron la substitución
27 y el etiquetado incorrecto. Estos dos son difíciles de detectar,
28 ya que los pescados son preparados para filete y productos de
29 consumo humano, pero gracias a los avances de métodos moleculares
30 de identificación, existe una transparencia donde nos permite
31 identificar la especie, ya sea por el DNA barcoding, que codifica
32 un pequeño fragmento de DNA, o el Next-Generation, que se utiliza
33 para grandes escalas y puede codificar el genoma completo. La
34 trazabilidad de los peces es clave para combatir el fraude
35 pesquero, hacer cumplir las normas de seguridad, garantizar los
36 altos estándares de gestiones pesqueras sostenible y garantizar la
37 calidad de los puestos de los productos pesqueros, minimiza los
38 riesgos de la salud del consumidor.

39
40 Yo estuve enfocándome en los elasmobranquios. Los elasmobranquios
41 son las rayas y los tiburones. Estos son depredadores ápice, estos
42 afectan directa e indirectamente todos los niveles tróficos
43 manteniendo un balance balance en el ecosistema y un ecosistema
44 saludable.

45
46 También estuve trabajando con los chapines. Los chapines
47 pertenecen a la familia ostraciidae. Estos son caracterizados por
48 tener el cuerpos cortos, cuboides y estar encerrado a un caparazón.

1 En Puerto Rico existen cuatro especies diferentes conocidas como
2 el torito azul, chapín buffalo, chapín común y el chapín pintado.

3
4 Este estudio lo que buscaba era confirmar las especulaciones que
5 habían sobre el uso de rayas como sustituto del chapín en las
6 empanadillas y detectar la presencia de la venta de la carne de
7 tiburón gata, ya que es una especie protegida, ya sea en productos
8 de filete o en productos procesados, ya que en el 2020 se encontró
9 un estudio que estaban vendiendo su carne en las pescaderías. Esto
10 demostraría otro tipo de fraude pesquero, ya que es una especie
11 prohibida.

12
13 Se estuvo utilizando el DNA barcoding para detectar la prevalencia
14 del fraude pesquero en las empanadillas y la carne de tiburón. Yo
15 estuve recolectando mis muestras a un periodo de un año. En el
16 caso de las empanadillas, yo estuve recolectando en todo
17 restaurante, negocio local, o chinchorro, donde vendieran
18 empanadillas de chapín. Y en el caso de las carnes de tiburón,
19 estuve recolectando en restaurantes y en pescadería. En este mapa
20 les muestro los lugares donde estuve recolectando mis muestras a
21 nivel isla. El triángulo verde está representando las carnes de
22 tiburón y el círculo rojo estaba representando donde yo estuve
23 recolectando las empanadillas de chapín.

24
25 Como parte de mi metodología comenzaba con una extracción de DNA,
26 yo estuve analizando tres sub-samples por cada empanadilla. Yo
27 estuve recolectando en un total de 63 empanadilla. En el caso de
28 las carnes de tiburón, yo analicé 100 muestra donde se componía 59
29 filetes, 33 empanadillas y 8 pincho. Luego, pasábamos para para el
30 proceso de PCR, que es el trabajo molecular. En esta parte, lo que
31 buscábamos era copiar muchas veces el DNA para enviarlo a
32 secuenciar y así identificar a qué especie pertenecía cada una de
33 las muestras.

34
35 Como parte de los resultados en las empanadillas de chapín se
36 encontraron 15 especies diferentes donde se componían cuatro
37 especies de chapín, elasmobranquios, especies de agua dulce
38 importada y especies marinas. En el caso de las carnes de tiburón
39 se encontraron 9 especies diferentes donde estas estaban
40 clasificadas cerca de amenaza vulnerable, en peligro, en peligro
41 crítico. También se encontraron la presencia de especies de agua
42 dulce importada y otras especies marinas.

43
44 En los resultados obtenidos en las empanadas de chapín, de 62
45 empanadillas, que se lograron amplificar, 8 contenían chapín y de
46 esta 8 solamente 3 eran 100% chapín. También se detectó la
47 presencia de raya, de *hypanus americanus*, que es una especie cerca
48 de amenaza, en 7 muestras. También se detectó la presencia de dos

1 especies de tiburón en donde uno de ellos está protegido en el
2 Apéndice 2 por ser una especies en peligro como es el mako de aleta
3 corta, el marco de aleta corta. También se detectó la presencia de
4 tiburón tigre, que es una especie cerca de amenaza. Otras especies
5 comunes encontradas en las empanadillas son la tilapia, el striped
6 catfish, bocourt's catfish y el queen triggerfish, que es una
7 especie conocida localmente como peje puerco. Esta es una especie
8 que está cerca de amenaza.

10 En el caso de las carnes de tiburón, en mi muestra no se detectó
11 la presencia de tiburón gata, pero si se detectaron nueve especies
12 de tiburón, donde 2 de ellas están protegidas bajo el Apéndice 2
13 como es en el caso del silky shark, por ser una especie vulnerable,
14 y el great hammerhead, por ser una especie en crítico estado. Entre
15 otras especies que se encontraron, también se encontró la presencia
16 del blacktip shark, que es una especie vulnerable y una de las más
17 comunes encontradas es el Caribbean Reef Shark, que es una especie
18 en peligro. También se detectó la sustitución de la carne de
19 tiburón por otras especies. En el caso de los pinchos, se
20 encontraron el striped catfish y en las empanadillas se encontró
21 tilapia y el robalo común.

23 A pesar de que la prevalencia del fraude pesquero no se había
24 estudiado anteriormente, uno de los eventos que podrían estar
25 causando los resultados obtenidos, ya que fue el periodo donde
26 ellos recolectan las muestras, fue la pandemia. En el 2021 se
27 publicó una evaluación donde se entrevistaron 139 pescadores de
28 pequeñas escala para entender el impacto de la pandemia en Puerto
29 Rico y se detectó una reducción de un 79% en el número de viaje.
30 Una reducción de 71% en la disminución de precios y falta de
31 mercado y una reducción de un 48% en las actividades operacionales
32 por las restricciones gubernamentales.

34 En conclusión, este estudio provee evidencia de los diferentes
35 tipos de fraudes pesquero en Puerto Rico, ya sea de sustitución y
36 etiquetado incorrecto en las pescaderías y restaurantes. Es la
37 primera vez que se brinda la evidencia científicamente del uso de
38 raya como sustituto del chapín en empanadillas de chapín. Se
39 detectó la presencia del tiburón de especies cerca de amenaza,
40 vulnerables, en peligro y en peligro crítico. A pesar de que mi
41 muestreo fue bien pequeño, porque solamente recolecté 100 muestra
42 y no se detectó la presencia de tiburón gata, anteriormente si se
43 había detectado.

45 Que podemos hacer respecto. Promover la educación en las
46 comunidades de pescadores, restaurantes y el público en general
47 para que haya un mejor entendimiento del ID de los tiburones.
48 Mejorar que las personas tengan un entendimiento de la importancia

1 de los elasmobranquios en nuestro ecosistema y cuáles son los
2 riesgos de que nos podemos enfrentar cuando se sustituye una
3 especie por otra. Mejorar el conoce conocimiento de las
4 regulaciones, monitorear las ventas de especies protegidas como el
5 tiburón gata. Y podríamos también considerar adoptar las
6 regulaciones federales de tiburones en aguas locales o buscar una
7 alternativa donde se protejan las especies que están clasificadas
8 como cerca de amenaza, vulnerable, en peligro y en peligro crítico.
9 Gracias por la oportunidad.

Questions/Comments

13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Muchas gracias, Natalie. Excelente presentación.

15 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Gracias, Natalie. No para 'discourage' pero en
16 el 1974, cuando yo era el director de estadísticas pesqueras en
17 Puerto Rico, se me encomendó el 'issue' de esto de las empanadillas
18 de chapín y yo encontré-- el método que yo usaba era entrevistar
19 a los pescadores que confiaban en mí. Por eso fue que se quedó el
20 memo interno. 51 especies que se vendían como chapín, encontraron
21 en las empanadillas de chapín, incluían rayas, tiburones de varias
22 clases. Todos los peces eran marinos, no había ninguno de agua
23 dulce. Se hizo un memorándum interno y los abogados lo que nos
24 decían era, que, porque era imposible en aquel tiempo, en el '74,
25 políticamente un poquito de no bien recibido de andar detrás de
26 los pescadores y confiscarle los chapines como quería alguien y
27 ponerle multa y hasta cárcel. Así que lo que se quedo fue, un
28 pequeño esfuerzo de comunicación para que no le llamaran
29 empanadilla de chapín que le llamaran empanadilla de pescado. Así
30 era legal. En aquel tiempo no encontrábamos especies en peligro de
31 extinción en las empanadillas, pero-- es refrescante a través de
32 tantos años que se haya tomado esto otra vez. Y con un estudio tan
33 bueno como este utilizando el DNA. No sé qué van a hacer Recursos
34 Naturales o los otros, pero es algo que Puerto Rico podría tomar
35 nota y ver si, también, con alguna campaña que se pueda usar,
36 utilizando la misma diapositiva que tiene Natalie en el caso de
37 las recomendaciones que surgen del estudio de ella. Gracias, Mr.
38 Chairman.

40 **MARCOS HANKE:** Muchas gracias. Y hay una implicación que estoy
41 dando pensamiento en la presentación. Realmente, la empanadilla,
42 una vez esta echa tú puedes echar lo que sea allá adentro, 'the
43 perfect cover', y es importante ese tipo de técnica en términos de
44 intervención e identificación del contenido para evitar que los
45 nassau grouper, los goliath grouper, y otras cosas que manejamos
46 durante veda, entren al mercado de empanadilla un 'black market'.
47 Así que la relevancia de documentar de la manera que lo hiciste,
48 Natalie, si tiene una implicación practica muy importante.

1 Adelante, Ricardo.

2
3 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Natalie, gracias por excelente presentación.
4 Ricardo López, para récord. Yo quisiera presentar una pregunta a
5 Vanessa y a Nelson sobre si ellos piensan que hay suficientes
6 chapines en la pesca, si se cogen suficientes chapines, como para
7 proveer la materia prima de esas empanadilla en todo Puerto Rico.

8
9 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** En cuanto a si hay chapines, hay. La diferencia
10 está en cuanto al precio y lo que viene siendo el gasto operacional
11 de una empanadilla hecha por raya que te puede salir a \$1.50 la
12 libra, versus el chapín que el costo actual varía entre \$5 a \$7 la
13 libra.

14
15 **MARCOS HANKE:** Nelson.

16
17 **NELSON CRESPO:** Mira, Ricardo, al igual que Vanessa, concuerdo que
18 chapines hay. Incluso al norte de la isla, allá frente a las ruinas
19 de Aguadilla, hay un lance que hacen chinchorro y la cantidad de
20 chapines es impresionante, todos grande. Pero la diferencia es el
21 precio. No todos los restaurantes están dispuestos a pagar lo que
22 cuesta un chapín y por eso, pues, que truquean y, tú sabes, lo
23 mezclan con otras cosas, pero chapines hay.

24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Adelante, María.

26
27 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Si, yo quería comentar que las rayas,
28 particularmente las rayas, están prohibidas para ser pescadas en
29 aguas federales. Osea, que esto es algo, obviamente, que pues, que
30 es de conocimiento de de todo el mundo, que las empanadillas de
31 chapín saben algo más. Yo, en realidad, yo no sé si lo que yo me
32 he comido toda la vida es chapín o no es chapín, así que yo no sé
33 cómo sabe un chapín, probablemente, no? Pero yo quería recordarle
34 al público que la captura de las rayas-- 'the harvest of the rays
35 is prohibited in federal waters' --está prohibido en las aguas
36 federales a partir desde la implementación del plan de manejo de
37 Puerto Rico y también en las Islas Vírgenes. Gracias.

38
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yo creo que aquí también sale a la luz la gran
40 posibilidad de que las universidades, como la Universidad de
41 Mayagüez, que tiene la capacidad de hacer ese tipo de estudios,
42 análisis genéticos para identificar especie, coordine con el
43 gobierno estatal y con el cuerpo de vigilantes hacia el futuro
44 para poder hacer intervenciones y colectas de 'samples' y tratar
45 de ir creando una presencia en cuanto a tratar de evitar-- Porque
46 se saben que están chequeando si la empanadilla tiene o no tiene
47 lo que dice. Esa información se riega y podría ser una manera de
48 que dejen de hacerlo tanto y atajar un poco el problema. Nada,

1 dejo para los expertos que que manejen eso y seguimos.

2
3 La próxima presentación-

4
5 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos. Tienes a John aca.

6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** John, I'm sorry, I didn't see your hand. Thank you.

8
9 **JOHN WALTER, III:** Yes, thank you very much for the presentation.
10 One thing that I think that maybe might connect some of the pieces
11 is the national seafood strategy, the marketing strategy, which is
12 the promotion of an informed consumer base, might be part of it,
13 which I think here we're talking about. In some cases, not
14 necessarily a protected species, for rays yes, but for others it's
15 just promoting that the customer knows what they're getting and
16 that that informed consumer asks what the product is. That's, I
17 think, a key thing for the seafood marketing, so that the customers
18 know what they're getting and that they actually ask, which means
19 that markets then have to keep track of that because they are going
20 to want to actually put on the menu what they say is on the menu.
21 I think that perhaps that's something to pay attention to as that
22 seafood marketing strategy comes to fruition. Thank you.

23
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. María, we're going to go for the next
25 presentation, but we just had a conversation. Can you please help
26 him?

27
28 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yes. This is María López. So yesterday, when
29 I gave the presentation at the beginning of the meeting that had
30 all the actions that the Council was working on, there were a
31 couple of actions that were still pending. If you recall, I
32 mentioned that maybe the Council would like to revisit this list
33 at the end of a Council meeting and see if we could prioritize or
34 make some decisions regarding these two actions.

35
36 So, in here, let's not pay attention to everything that's on the
37 top because we already-- the Amendment 3, which is the pelagic
38 species for Puerto Rico, there's already a decision that dolphin
39 and wahoo is going to be included in the other amendment that's
40 for the U.S. Virgin Island. So particularly in here we want to
41 talk about the last two items. The action is timing of seasonal
42 area closures for the red hind grouper in the Puerto Rico EEZ. The
43 things that are in red are the things that were still pending,
44 that were actually discussed in the Council. And the other one,
45 the modification of red hind seasonal closure in the Saint Croix
46 EEZ. Again, with a couple of things pending. So, I would just like
47 to bring that to the Council's attention for further discussion.
48 Thank you.

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** I will suggest, about the timing on the seasonal
3 closure for the red hind, to request the SSC to revisit and to
4 give the expert opinion about it and to create the best scenario
5 for the Council to discuss. I would like to hear what the rest of
6 the Council members think.

7
8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** And remember, Marcos, not at this meeting, but
9 the following meeting of the SSC.

10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah. This is going to be the following meeting.
12 Yes, after the Council, receives the response from the SSC. I'd
13 like to hear from the Council members what they think. Andy.

14
15 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. Apologies because my memory is not all
16 that good, and I've missed some meetings here and there. We did
17 receive a presentation about the timing of the spawning enclosures.
18 Was that not presented to the SSC, and did they not provide
19 guidance previously? I just-- I want to make sure we're not re-
20 tasking them with the same guidance.

21
22 **MARCOS HANKE:** There was discussion, but there was not, as my
23 memory goes, not a formal petition to revise and to give back to
24 the Council an opinion.

25
26 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** And then as a follow up to that. I don't think
27 I was at the meeting when it was asked to do these informational
28 workshops with fishers, so can someone describe what we were hoping
29 to achieve with those, or is that something that would come later
30 after the SSC provides a recommendation? Because I view this as a
31 scientific issue first, and then if it translates into a management
32 decision, we will want to talk to the fishers.

33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. As far as I understand it was recommended,
35 have to be evaluated. It would really depend on what the SSC will
36 say. María.

37
38 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** I'm just trying to remember because I do
39 remember that the first time that this was brought up was at an
40 SSC meeting. That's what you were saying. And I'm not sure if there
41 was like a formal recommendation. Okay.

42
43 And then, for the informational meetings. My recollection was, as
44 to-- because, you know, some of the fishers were concerned about
45 what was going to be the implications of this change. So, the
46 scientists and the Council wanted to explain what it means, right?
47 Because I believe that the proposal was to shift the time based on
48 the lunar cycles, etcetera. So, there was a lot going on in there

1 that needed a little bit more information for the public. But
2 Andy's question about, is this something that could happen after
3 the SSC takes an opportunity to build this and make a
4 recommendation to the Council as to whether this will be something
5 that has merit to be considered for the Council as an action.

6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** Miguel.

8
9 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** The last time that we discussed the issue is
10 this, the red hind and other groupers, what we have now is December
11 1st, February 28th. Some of the scientists found that the grouper
12 also spawned after February 28th. Then, when you were talking about
13 moving the closure another month into lent, 'cuaresma' in Puerto
14 Rico, a fisherman brought the point that they would be losing a
15 lot of money because that's the time that they will sell most of
16 the catches of red hind. So, that was a socioeconomic consideration
17 versus the biological consideration.

18
19 And in the case of Saint Croix, it is similar. So, at this time,
20 what the staff, María López is asking the office is, do you want
21 to table this? You want to go further with this? If you table it,
22 the present closure period will remain the same but also you can
23 leave the door open to have more information from the SSC at the
24 following meeting not this one and then you make a decision, this
25 year, of how you would like to proceed.

26
27 **MARCOS HANKE:** I want to make a comment--

28
29 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Tienes a Vanessa también.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** --and then I'll give you the word. I think it's
32 appropriate, because we have a scientific opinion and presentation
33 to the Council about advising us the need, right? It is way more
34 proper to use the SSC, which is the body that advises us, and
35 follow the steps and the tools that we have on hand to analyze
36 this fully, and then, to take a decision to table or not to table.
37 Vanessa.

38
39 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As Miguel says, we already
40 discussed this, and at that moment the commercial sector and
41 fishing sector talked about the economic issue that it will bring
42 and also the enforcement issue because it's going to be practically
43 50 more days under the month of March and it's going to be hard,
44 not only for the fishermen, but also for the enforcement. In that
45 time, if I remember well, the studies that were presented were up
46 to 2019, and we suggested bringing some of the new studies that
47 were made in Isla Magueyes for the red hind and suggested to
48 analyze that information before taking any action.

1
2 **MARCOS HANKE:** Which is in line with my comments. Yes.

3
4 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.

5
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy.

7
8 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** So, going back to my previous comments about
9 the SSC, my staff quickly found that back in December, the briefing
10 book said that the SSC recommended moving forward the December 15th
11 through March 15th, spawning aggregation closure for consideration
12 in an amendment right. So, we have that advice already from them.
13 I'm not sure we're going to gain anything additional other than we
14 might have a new SSC that could reach a different decision. So, I
15 think the decision point for us may be less about sending it to
16 the SSC and more on whether we want to proceed with this action or
17 not.

18
19 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** That's exactly my point. If you-- because you
20 discussed this to death the last time that you discussed it, and
21 there was a concern by the fishers. We don't have that many of
22 them, but people would have other faces if we had fishermen here
23 telling you, "What is going to happen?" And also, they said, "15
24 days doesn't make a big dent in the biology of the species, but it
25 makes a lot of different for us," and then you decide to table it.

26
27 So, the decision is not the SSC, the decision is of the Council.
28 What do you want to do? Add 15 more days or keep it as this?

29
30 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah, we are not adding, I mean the discussion that
31 time was a shift, it was not adding days. It was shifting 15 days.

32
33 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, Marcos, the decision was put forward by the
34 SSC and 15 not shifted.

35
36 **MARCOS HANKE:** A shift. Which was shifting 15 days.

37
38 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Then the Council, is like Andy saying, you know,
39 because I was remembering the discussion, what is the Council
40 place, do you want to keep it as this? Or you want the staff to
41 put together a set of the alternative, the documents that you have
42 to look at the possibility of moving forward with this. So that
43 means that you will include an alternative that would close the
44 fishery 15 more days into March.

45
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** I'm going to give my rationale; my rationale is
47 that there is information present based on my experience. I haven't
48 seen on the past, before the closures and so on. Red hind, I don't

1 recall seeing them with eggs during December and after the closure,
2 recently, I did see aggregations behavior on the line that, on my
3 case, I release them anyway and it is consistent to report to
4 protect the peak or the higher spawning moment where the fish is
5 doing an activity to reproduce. That's number one.

6
7 Number two is that I don't recall now exactly, but there is some
8 time after March 15 where the fishermen can fish for red hind.
9 It's not all the month or 15 days, but like a week before 'Semana
10 Santa' ends that's available. This is exactly to prevent cherry
11 picking where fishermen that don't fish for red hind all the year
12 and they are fishing red high on that moment because it's easier
13 to catch because they are aggregated. Right? That's point number
14 two.

15
16 And the other point that I want to bring, again, to the table is
17 that it is documented that in general there is a shift for the
18 timing of the aggregation later in the season due to climate change
19 and environmental changes for multiple species. Red hind, for sure,
20 is not an exception of that and we should be responsible of that.
21 That's my opinion, my expert opinion and I leave the floor to the
22 rest of the Council.

23
24 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, but you know, that's a good opinion but
25 the Council had to go with more than that. You have the SSC that
26 went through this, and I gave you the number. The other fishermen
27 are telling you what is going to happen to them. Climate change,
28 the darn thing reproduces six month a year, we picked this three
29 because they're the top. And there will be changes, change in
30 temperature, change in pressure and they will change their moves.
31 Also, they change moves because people didn't know that these were
32 reproducing at the time that they were, now the scientists are
33 going back in the water and finding it.

34
35 So, if you want to move with this then the proper procedure is to
36 ask the staff to-- and that's what María is saying --to come back
37 with maybe a section of the auction paper that will not have the
38 opinions, that will have the SSC and they will have the data that
39 you collected. And then remember, whatever you have here, you have
40 to take it to public hearings because the document that is going
41 to be prepared is really an option paper. The action comes when
42 you complete the action paper process, you have an amendment
43 process, and then you go into a regulation that you take to the
44 public. So, until that happens, you don't have a new regulation
45 amendment. But what you haven't red here is you want to move
46 forward and in order to move forward, that's the way that the staff
47 is presenting to you.

1 In other words, you don't have to take a decision now, on any of
2 this. The decision that you need to do is whether you will allow
3 the staff to beef up the option paper and bring back to you all
4 the information needed.

5
6 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. But this is really an issue that
7 I, on my last stretch as Chairman, want to hear from the Council
8 members their opinions more than this. Uh, go ahead.

9
10 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** I could talk about our experience from this year
11 on just passing March and the last year. Practically, after
12 December 15th and January and February, yes, they were around, but
13 next week, practically after the 4th of March, no fishermen have
14 found them. This is something that is information that have the
15 fish markets in the books. You can go there, we can provide that
16 information also if you want to actualize or give a big sample,
17 especially from the Cabo Rojo area that we have 10 fish markets in
18 there, more than 115 fishermen active for the groupers and it's
19 something that we can share that information to actualize those
20 studies. But I think, and I believe that it's not necessary to
21 move that now.

22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy, then Nelson.

24
25 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah, so I appreciate the comments both by
26 Marcos and Vanessa and I hear both sides of this, right? And I
27 feel like we're kind of putting the cart before the horse in terms
28 of a decision with all the data and information before us. It's
29 been a long time since we've had the discussion of the science and
30 the concerns obviously being raised about what that could mean in
31 terms of impacts from a socioeconomic standpoint.

32
33 So, my suggestion, maybe not an options paper, we could at least
34 bring back some of the information about the science and the
35 seasonality of the spawning to the Council in August as kind of a
36 refresher and that will better inform a decision of how we proceed
37 from there. But I think it's really important when you get into
38 situations like this where you're talking on one side about the
39 biology and conservation of the resource and what the science is
40 saying that you look at that and then you balance it with obviously
41 socioeconomic considerations. That's obviously why we do these
42 amendments and why we look at a range of alternatives and why we
43 should decide whether or not to proceed based on that information.

44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** I'm just recalling for a good analysis and
46 discussion based on science and all the elements like Vanessa
47 brought to the table, not just to table it because it's easier. We
48 need to make a very honest, upfront scientific based discussion.

1 Nelson.

2
3 **NELSON CRESPO:** What I see on the red hind fishery, right now, the
4 closure, how it is right now is working perfect. We see many
5 individuals, big individuals, and from my experience, if the
6 'veda,' if you add or run 15 more days, the damage you are going
7 to cause to the economy of the fishermen, compared to the benefit
8 that you're going to have on the fishery, is going to be huge.
9 Also, running the 'veda' 15 more days all that will cause is
10 promote the illegal fishing to this fishery. I just suggest to
11 this Council to leave it as is for the moment.

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Nelson. Ricardo, then Julian.

14
15 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes. I have a question. Is it possible to
16 use calendars of the moon, you know, lunar calendars instead of
17 Gregorian calendars to regulate the fisheries?

18
19 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy.

20
21 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** It's possible, but then the challenge becomes
22 you have these shifting closures from year to year and have to
23 make sure you educate the fishermen and they're knowledgeable about
24 the timing and the closures. Whereas we have fixed seasons that
25 have been known for some time and obviously are very stable. Right?
26 And so certainly we could put into the regulations if the Council
27 approved it, dates for the next five years that the seasons will
28 be open or closed. Right? But we still have that education outreach
29 opportunity that has to happen in order to make that effective.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian

32
33 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** I have a comment to Ricardo's question. Ricardo,
34 that was discussed when we put together the reef fish FMP, I was
35 part of it, and we discarded it for various reasons. One, just as
36 he mentioned. The lawyers told us that we need to have more
37 clarity. The enforcement people told us that they preferred to
38 have fixed dates if there was something that will not jeopardize
39 what we wanted to do to protect the spawning and that's the reason
40 why. You don't need to discard it, but those were the rationales
41 used for not having the moon cycle to use. Still, the moon cycles
42 were used by scientists to figure out, before and after, how many
43 they reproduce and have more or less a percentage as they found a
44 big spawning time for those fishes.

45
46 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. Ricardo.

47
48 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Thanks for the explanation, but for me, what

1 is challenging is that the fishermen can use the lunar calendar,
2 but the officers cannot. That is challenging for me to accept.

3
4 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** The issue is that the moon moves a lot, but the
5 economy does not. That was the reason. When you are working with
6 fisheries, you have to have the biology and then the economy
7 together. That's what the law says. You have to convince the
8 secretary that you have a strong rationale for anything that you
9 do with an alternative.

10
11 **MARCOS HANKE:** Julian and then María.

12
13 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I just want to support my Puerto Rico fisherman by
14 saying that I believe it needs to stay how it is. I think something
15 close to what Ricardo was saying is what I was going to say, but
16 he got there before me. I think the few times that the scientists
17 have seen it outside of the actual closed area is when that moon
18 falls. This year it didn't happen, this year the fish was gone
19 early because the same moon that they follow here in Puerto Rico
20 is the same moon that they follow in the Virgin Islands. And the
21 fish left early this year. Some years the fish might hang around
22 a little bit longer. So, to try to chase it every time the moon is
23 going to fall a little bit outside of what rules and regulations
24 are in place right now, I don't think that-- it should stay how it
25 is. I think the red hind has had enough protection over the years
26 because our shelf is also connected to Puerto Rico. So, all of
27 that larva, and we have done a lot of studies where we saw where
28 the larvae end up. I think it's more than healthy and I think the
29 rules in place should stay where they are. Thank you.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** María.

32
33 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you for all the comments. I just want
34 to remind the Council about the discussions that we had. So, back
35 in December 2021, which we brought a paper to the Council and a
36 presentation that evaluated all of this that we are discussing
37 today, right? Not with the idea of making decisions. It was more
38 like informational paper as you requested, because, you know, the
39 same thing. It's like, what is going on? What are the possible
40 solutions? One solution is doing nothing. One solution is using
41 different years and etcetera with all the difficulties and
42 advantages of doing all of that.

43
44 So, I could suggest the Council to go back to that paper as a
45 refresher. It's in the Council's website under the December 2021
46 meeting. And then just to see, you know, what was discussed at
47 that time. And then, we recall that at that time there was a lack
48 of information about the histology of the fish to corroborate or

1 to support the seasonality of this fish for reproduction. So that
2 was a request that was made during that meeting, requesting that
3 information so that could help the Council to make a decision as
4 to whether they wanted to move forward with this action, in any
5 manner that they consider appropriate.

6
7 So, the suggestion of bringing some additional information to the
8 Council in August is something that we can definitely do. However,
9 if we don't have the information that we requested last time, then
10 we're not going to be able to bring something that is complete for
11 you. That's all I want to bring to the Council's attention.

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Okay. Nobody else? We're going to recommend
14 following your guidance, María.

15
16 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** All right. Thank you. We have another one.
17 So, the last one was a request from the Saint Croix fishers to the
18 Council, and it was to modify the red hind seasonal closure to
19 allow fishing for pelagic species during the closure.

20
21 And what happened to that? I think there was some conversations
22 about it, but Sarah, help me out on this one. Sorry.

23
24 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** After we were tasked to look into this from the
25 Council, we met with HMS staff to discuss the implications of that,
26 but that was as far as it got. It never came back to the Council.
27 It never went to the SSC for consideration, so we just had internal
28 discussions about the possibility of doing that, and HMS was
29 supportive.

30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I want to move forward with that because the
32 fishermen are asking me, both commercial and recreational, what
33 the status is. So, I would still like to move forward.

34
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Sarah.

36
37 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** If we're going to move forward, can I just ask
38 a clarifying question? Can you list what species you would like
39 the fishers to be able to fish for? Right now, in Saint Croix, the
40 pelagic species that we're managing are dolphin and wahoo, but I
41 realize that there are other non-managed pelagic species that they
42 may want to catch outside of HMS or-- yeah, HMS, it would be
43 outside of HMS.

44
45 And then also, I believe, I remember hearing that some of the
46 fishers also maybe wanted to be able to catch lionfish. So, you
47 don't have to do it now, but if you could list the species that
48 you know of, I think that would be helpful for development of this

1 document.

2
3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sure. I think what they were talking about
4 lionfish is separate because it was a core who wanted to go into
5 the closed areas to try and eradicate lionfish because they're
6 protected, because the is closed for bottom fishing. So, they
7 wanted to be able to just go specifically for that. So, that's a
8 side thing. But when it comes to the commercial and recreational
9 pelagics, it would be mahi, tuna, wahoo, kingfish, barracuda, and
10 rainbow runner.

11
12 **MARCOS HANKE:** Just for the record. HMS Species, CFMC pelagic
13 species, including the rainbow runner on that discussion. No? It
14 can't be done like that?

15
16 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I was just going to point out, rainbow runner
17 is not a managed species for Saint Croix. But we could probably
18 include non-managed pelagic species and list rainbow runner and
19 some of the other ones that you listed. We can look into that.

20
21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I'll vote for that.

22
23 **MARCOS HANKE:** Andy.

24
25 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** Yeah. And I'll talk to my team. I think with
26 the rainbow runner, because we have the pelagics amendment, that
27 might be the opportunity where we could shift the management plan
28 from reef fish to pelagics based on the information we have.

29
30 The other thing I'll mention because of the ACL accountability
31 measures presentation I gave yesterday; I'd recommend at least
32 putting it on this list. It's something that we're probably not
33 going to work on for a while, but this is always just a good
34 reminder of things that are in the queue to work on. But we'll
35 need to update those catch limits, obviously, as more data becomes
36 available through these new sampling programs.

37
38 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Anybody else? María, do you have
39 everything that you need?

40
41 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Sarah, do you have everything you need?

42
43 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes, we do. So, we're good. Thank you so much.

44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. The next presentation is U.S.V.I. grouper
46 guides for distribution. Evan Tuohy.

1 **U.S.V.I. Grouper Guides for Distribution - Evan Tuohy**

2
3 **EVAN TUOHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the Council
4 for allotting this time for this brief presentation. My name is
5 Evan Tuohy with Isla Mar Research Expeditions.
6

7 So, I'm here just to present. For the past two years now, we've
8 been developing these grouper guides specific, originally it
9 started with Puerto Rico. It outlines-- it's basically an education
10 and outreach component to be used specifically for fishers.
11

12 These are waterproof guides or slates that can be taken on the
13 boat. They outline the most common grouper species that are
14 commonly caught on the reefs here in Puerto Rico and the U.S.
15 Virgin Islands. But also, it takes it a step further and it
16 outlines the species specific and seasonal regulations for each
17 species. And then it also outlines the closed areas, primarily on
18 the west coast of Puerto Rico, but their locations, the timing of
19 the closures and the regulations that are allowed or not allowed
20 within that seasonal or annual closure.
21

22 These were developed with input from various stakeholders, members
23 of the scientific community, members of the Council, NOAA Law
24 Enforcement, and also fishers themselves devoted some very
25 valuable information that was all included in these guides. And
26 we're happy to announce, with the continued support from the
27 Council, that they have now been adapted for the Virgin Islands as
28 well. So, we have these guides for Saint Croix and Saint Thomas
29 and Saint John. So, I'm basically here just to present them, but
30 then also ask for the points of contact of who will be responsible
31 for distributing those to the respective islands. I have, I believe
32 about a hundred guides for each island for Saint Thomas and Saint
33 John and Saint Croix. So, I would just like to identify those
34 people and please come to find me at the end of the meeting. I'll
35 be sitting right back there, and I'd be happy to pass those guides
36 out for you.
37

38 I do have some additional guides for Puerto Rico as well, so if
39 there's anybody who might know of anybody who can use them,
40 Vanessa, I'd be happy to pass them off to you as well. Yep. Thank
41 you very much to the Council for your continued support.
42

43 **Questions/Comments**

44
45 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Miguel.
46

47 **MIGUEL BORGES:** Yeah. I just want to say, thank you for that and
48 that I've boarded just a few vessels and in one or two of them

1 they've had it on board, like on the console. So, they're using
2 it. They said it was really good and I use it personally on my
3 job. So, thank you, they're really good. So, thanks.

4
5 **EVAN TUOHY:** Excellent. Excellent. Thank you very much.

6
7 **MARCOS HANKE:** And Vanessa.

8
9 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to make
10 a comment that we use these guides in the MREP and were very
11 helpful for the fishermen that go there. And of course, please, I
12 will need a lot of them. Especially for our fishermen in Cabo Rojo.
13 We are going to be traveling to Culebra and Vieques also, and I
14 will appreciate to have more copies of that.

15
16 **EVAN TUOHY:** Okay, perfect. Yeah, I have some more to give to you,
17 so thank you very much. I also want to point out too, there is a
18 website associated with this. It's geared to the original version,
19 which was for the Puerto Rico guides, but we're looking to
20 incorporate the information for the Virgin Islands as well. So,
21 you have actually more detailed information for the Virgin Island
22 grouper, the grouper fish, and closed areas as well for those
23 respective islands.

24
25 **MARCOS HANKE:** Evan, thank you for the presentation. Some
26 recommendation. Abdiel, from Vieques, that made the presentation
27 to us with the video and so on with the school.

28
29 **EVAN TUOHY:** Mm-hmm.

30
31 **MARCOS HANKE:** I don't know if he is around.

32
33 **EVAN TUOHY:** Yes.

34
35 **MARCOS HANKE:** I think it'll be nice to give to him as material
36 for the school.

37
38 **EVAN TUOHY:** Okay. Excellent.

39
40 **MARCOS HANKE:** That's in Vieques. And also, we are going to have
41 40 people on the next MREP. Right, Vanessa? Maybe give some to me
42 or to Vanessa, 40 of those to reserve to each participant of the
43 MREP to have it. Or you can send directly to Lauren or Courtney or
44 any of them, we can help you out.

45
46 **EVAN TUOHY:** Okay.

47
48 **MARCOS HANKE:** And I want to state that the U.S. Coast Guard on

1 their information, they already integrated your information, they
2 have access. Tomorrow I'm going to continue many, many years of
3 supporting the Coast Guard for the fish ID exercise. I don't know
4 if Miguel is going to be there at this time, but yes, I will I'll
5 see you tomorrow. And please give me some to take it with me. It
6 is always handy to give around because there are new people. It's
7 a waterproof, they can move to and from when they board the boat
8 with them or give-- you know, it's just a very important tool.
9 Thank you very much.

10
11 **EVAN TUOHY:** Excellent. Yeah. Thank you very much Marcos. And for
12 the MREP, when is the next meeting? We were at the last one and we
13 distributed quite a few but we can be sure that there'll be more
14 available for the next MREP meeting as well.

15
16 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes. The next one in Puerto Rico is going to be
17 in the East Coast and it's for August. Next August.

18
19 **EVAN TUOHY:** Okay.

20
21 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Any other question here none, thank you
22 very much, Evan.

23
24 **EVAN TUOHY:** All right, thank you.

25
26 **MARCOS HANKE:** And we are now in public comment, if I don't miss
27 anything here. Anybody from the public? Nelson, on the public
28 comment?

29
30 **Other Business**

31
32 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is a sweet and sour
33 moment, but Marcos, you left a legacy that will last for a long
34 time.

35
36 I'm happy for you because now you will have more time to do what
37 you love most, educate and fishing. During all those years, you've
38 always been open to give a hand, build bridges, and I appreciate
39 that. I hope now, and listen to this, that you are going to have
40 more free time, we can go out to fish together.

41
42 Marcos, thank you very much for all your support, but above all,
43 thank you more for your friendship. [applause]

44
45 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos?

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes.

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** The same holds true from the staff. We met Marcos
2 18 years ago and he kept working with us and learning and more and
3 more. I guess we are going to be calling you more than you think;
4 you offered to assist. Whenever we have an opportunity, we would
5 like to give that [inaudible].
6

7 So, whenever we have an opportunity vacant at the DAP Puerto Rico,
8 we will allow you to consider accepting a position for the meeting.
9 The DAP of Puerto Rico. Yeah, the guy died. You have to wait. And
10 so that will mean that after Augusts 10th, if we have a vacancy, I
11 personally believe that the Council should consider asking you to
12 participate.
13

14 The other thing is that you work with the HMS in your personal
15 capacity, and also with the ICCAT subcommittee and other
16 subcommittees and the information I got is that you can continue
17 to participate in your capacity as a person, as an individual in
18 those meetings. But we would also like to hear any opinion that
19 you may have on things that you will bring from those meetings
20 that the Council can take action on. So, for that, we are very,
21 really grateful.
22

23 **MARCOS HANKE:** I am very, very honor and I feel like when I have
24 the same strong feeling as when my dad passed away, last January,
25 that I have to think hard and hold on, right? and to be focused
26 because the feeling is the same, because this is part of my life,
27 18 years, it's part of the family and so on. And I'm very, very
28 honored and what I enjoy the most maybe sounds super strange, is
29 that I love to agree to disagree and to be able to overcome the
30 discussion and to get to the common ground, to the benefit of
31 everybody. And that's the message that I want by example and with
32 my words. When I disagree with Miguel, when I Carlos, with Nelson,
33 with Julian, we all have that, but they are still my friends, just
34 with my wife, my kids, my family. And there is no difference if
35 you have your heart on the right position.
36

37 Please keep doing what this Council especially does, which is being
38 proactive to the fishing community, being proactive to the fishing
39 resource but don't forget the respect and don't forget the reason
40 you are here. We can all be way more productive like that, finding
41 the common grounds. Thank you very much to all.
42

43 **DIANA T. MARTINO:** No, I just want Marcos to thank you. Not for
44 what you did for us for yesterday's activity. Marcos provided a
45 lot of the fish that we ate yesterday just because he wanted to.
46 He fished it, he filleted the fish, and he gave it to me. I mean,
47 on a Sunday or Saturday. Thank you, Marcos.
48

1 But not only for that, for just being there always when we have
2 needed you. For caring not only about the fisheries, but about us
3 too.

4
5 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you.

6
7 **DIANA T. MARTINO:** You're an amazing person.

8
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Sorry about the
10 kisses, the time, and everything, but this is one time of my life.
11 I'm going to enjoy it. I don't care. Miguel-- I will go with Andy.
12 I just want to mention that I am available in any capacity I can
13 to help the Council if they decide for me to be part of my brothers
14 there on the DAP, on the meetings, it'll be an honor. This is
15 actually a better fit for me because my family asked me, "what do
16 you do, Marcos? Are you a marine biologist?" "No, I am a
17 fisherman." This is where I belong. And about the HMS also and we
18 are going to facilitate and try to capacitate other people to
19 follow and have the historical knowledge too, because it cannot
20 depend on a single person. Andy.

21
22 **ANDREW STRELCHECK:** So, everyone beat me to it because I was going
23 to make a recommendation on another business to talk about you.
24 Rather than roast you and tell jokes, because you're such a nice
25 guy, I just wanted to thank you as well on behalf of NOAA Fisheries.
26 It takes a huge commitment obviously to serve on the Council. All
27 of you that serve on the Council. And your time is valuable. You
28 are taken away from your family, you are taken away from your
29 business and we are certainly indebted to you for all of the
30 service that you provided to this Council over the years. I've
31 only known you for a couple of years, but I've known you a lot
32 longer than that because of what Roy said about you and all the
33 great things you did for this Council. And so, I have immense
34 respect for you, and I look forward to continuing to work with you
35 going forward.

36
37 I also want to say one last thing. Of the three Councils I work
38 with, you're the one Council Chair that doesn't give me gray hair,
39 so I appreciate that. Thank you, Marcos. [laughter]

40
41 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Marcos, I want to add something else to that.
42 I want to say personally thank you on behalf of Sarah and I because
43 you have helped us so much to understand the fisheries in the
44 Caribbean. For your availability at 7:00 PM, 10:00 PM, 6:00 AM in
45 the morning. It's like, I don't understand, please help me and you
46 connect me with the right people. You always have patience. You
47 are my friend. You know, I still can't believe that you are not
48 going to be here, but I don't think it matters because I know that

1 I can count on you for any questions. And I appreciate a lot and
2 I know I talk from Sarah's side too, for being that liaison with
3 the fishers in our office, you know. Because we have been able to,
4 and I think we have been able to create like a really good
5 relationship, like a trust relationship with our fishers and that
6 makes us really, really happy and in part it's because of what you
7 have done and the doors that you have opened. So, I want to thank
8 you very much for that. And I'm going to miss our calls, you know,
9 to talk about a little bit about everything. So, whomever is the
10 next Chair we prepare because we're going to be calling. Thank
11 you, Marcos. Un abrazo.

12

13 **MARCOS HANKE:** I will not change my phone. Julian.

14

15 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Well, you know, I got to get my words in there.
16 I've been-- I grew in this Council with you for many years. I've
17 been in the process with you. The people of the Virgin Islands,
18 especially the fishers of the Saint Thomas/Saint John District,
19 are very happy and pleased for all that you have done for us. You
20 worked alongside of Tony for nine solid years, and you guys are
21 like brothers. You guys called each other all the time to discuss.
22 And you've been there for me in many situations, and our fishers,
23 where you have defused issues that have could have gone the
24 opposite way. And I want to give you my gratitude from me and my
25 people and look forward for us to continue this relationship. I
26 look forward to seeing you on the Puerto Rico, DAP.

27

28 And keep that phone line open because we are fishers, like you
29 said, and we need to keep in contact because even though we have
30 gone to Island-Based Fishery Management Plans, there's still a lot
31 that we have in common, and we need each other's support and
32 questions to be answered. So, thank you again for all that you
33 have done and good luck. Enjoy the break.

34

35 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. And I was looking-- before you say
36 something, Alida. I was looking to you and seeing the eyes of
37 Alida. Edgardo is not here, right? Edgardo, Cedar, Luis Negrón,
38 Sastre and all my professors at University of Humacao, they didn't
39 get tired. They never got tired of making us think and making us
40 follow the curriculum, but the same time expecting us to look for
41 things to change and to make it better. This lady that is there
42 gave me the freedom to make a transit in Seven Seas all the way
43 across Seven Seas with a disposable camera to collect pictures of
44 the algae. That probably doesn't mean anything, but it means to me
45 and to Willie, he was one of the students that was with me, the
46 opportunity to empower and to try to do something extra, something
47 better. And this is what Alida seeded and put on my heart. Thank
48 you, Alida.

1
2 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** I'm so proud of him. He's been one of my
3 best students and not only student, he's like my child. Because,
4 you know, when something didn't work at the university, it worked
5 at home. So, I'm very, very proud and I feel so happy when I hear
6 you and I remember saying that in Fajardo or in Guánica, "Oh,
7 really? Great." So, best of luck.

8
9 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, thank you. Think we are ready to--

10
11 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Bueno, no espérate, sorry. Marcos, de mi
12 parte estoy bien agradecida por todo. Por todo el aprecio, el
13 cariño, toda la guía, el conocimiento que nos has dado y nada,
14 decirte la gracias y que estamos ahí para seguir colaborando y por
15 la confianza y el amor. Gracias, de verdad que sí. No voy a decir
16 más nada porque lloro.

17
18 **MARCOS HANKE:** Vamos pa'lante juntos.

19
20 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Yo también. No voy a decir mucho porque
21 termino aquí llorando. Siendo recién entrada, fuiste de las
22 primeras personas que me dio esa recibida tan cálida y lo
23 agradezco. Rompió el hielo y específicamente contigo fue algo que
24 pude abrirme a las demás personas aquí en el Consejo así que, de
25 verdad, muchas gracias y gracias por las historias y que sigan
26 contándose y que se sigan creando.

27
28 **MARCOS HANKE:** Gracias, Liajay. Gracias, Cristina. Vanessa.

29
30 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Lo siento Marcos, pero te tengo que decirlo.
31 Para mí, como primera mujer que ocupo esta silla, fue bien
32 importante el que tú me recibieras en Santa Cruz hace cuatro años
33 atrás. Y no tan solo eso si no las palabras que tú me has dado
34 durante todos estos años. Te considero mi mentor y cuando sea
35 grande quiero ser como tú. Gracias y éxito. [laughter]

36
37 **MARCOS HANKE:** Hay que comer mucho, sabes. Gracias, mi amor.

38
39 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Let's stick with the agenda now. Public comment
40 period. We have Julian Magras.

41
42 **Public Comment Period**
43

44 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I would like to read this letter into the record.
45 It's written to Mr. Chairman Hanke. This is correspondence to the
46 board and members from the Saint Thomas Fisherman's Association
47 formally requesting consideration of the nomination of Elizabeth
48 Kadison or Dr. Virginia Shervette to fill the vacant seat of the

1 Scientific and Statistical Panel Committee.

2
3 There's a vacant seat of a retiree, and the Saint Thomas Fisherman
4 Association is confident that either one of these individuals poses
5 the education and experience needed to provide critical input for
6 fisheries management. I have submitted a package to you yesterday
7 and it includes the resume of both of these individuals. We are
8 asking that the Council, when the time is right, can consider one
9 of these individuals, which actually has a lot of information and
10 background from work being done in the U.S. Virgin Islands. So,
11 thank you.

12
13 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you. Your recommendation and the group are
14 very valuable. The package is already transferred to Miguel because
15 I'm not going to be here, but the process is going to be an honest,
16 open process in which the Council will be evaluated in the future.
17 Any more public comments. Vanessa.

18
19 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to make a comment
20 on behalf of Ricardo Lugo. He can be today in the evening during
21 the virtual meeting, but he wants to ask for some point of
22 clarification about an information that he received past Monday in
23 public hearing in Puerto Rico. They said-- and I will translate
24 his message --that he was given the information that all those
25 grants that were made by funds of Fish and Wildlife in the area,
26 cannot be used by commercial fishermen. So, he was just asking if
27 someone in the table can give some guidance on that.

28
29 **MARCOS HANKE:** Who made those statements on a public hearing?

30
31 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** He was in the public hearing, and it was someone
32 from the legal department of DNER Puerto Rico.

33
34 **MARCOS HANKE:** It's already said. Anybody would like to make a
35 comment? No?

36
37 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** What he wants to know if someone in this room
38 can or has the knowledge, if that's right, that the grants that
39 are made by the funds of fish and wildlife are only for the
40 recreational and they could be closed for the commercial fishermen?
41 or if they are open?

42
43 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** If I may. That something between the local
44 government and the fish and wildlife, I don't know if Ricardo has
45 better information.

46
47 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes. To that question, Magaly Massanet is
48 the person to talk to. She's in the main office of DNR; I can

1 provide you the telephone soon.

2
3 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you for guiding the discussion, Ricardo. Any
4 further comment? I don't see anybody. There's nobody on my back
5 that wants to make a comment. Not nobody in front or on the side.
6 We are clear. No public comment. Next meeting, Miguel?

7
8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. Diana and I talking with the Westin and
9 for a meeting in August or December. the Westin in Saint Thomas is
10 a former Frenchman Reef and the advised us that they are going to
11 open after May, but we don't know yet whether they will be
12 available for the August meeting. So, Diana and I are talking with
13 the people in charge, and we want to start going back to the routes
14 that we used to have. One meeting in Saint Croix, another Puerto
15 Rican, another in Saint Thomas. So, the next two, we will try to
16 have one of those in Saint Thomas.

17
18 The reason why we are not meeting there yet, is because of the Wi-
19 Fi. The Westin is the only one that has a Wi-Fi that is trustful.
20 The Windward told us that they only have five mega and it doesn't
21 work. And yeah. So anyway, we will advise you if the meeting cannot
22 be in Saint Thomas for August, probably will be in Puerto Rico.

23
24 **MARCOS HANKE:** Thank you, Miguel. Miguel, we'll get in touch with
25 you guys with more information soon when they have the information
26 clearer.

27
28 The meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much. See you all. If you
29 want to look for me, I am on the water. Okay.

30
31 (Whereupon the meeting adjourned on April 10, 2023.)
32