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TABLE OF MOTIONS

[Page 33](#): Move to approve the terms of reference and proceed with the schedule presented for spiny lobster (SEDAR 91) for all islands. Motion by Vanessa Ramírez and seconded by Jean-Pierre Oriol. [The motion carried on page 34.](#)

[Page 44](#): Motion to move forward with the queen triggerfish amendment to the Puerto Rico FMP. Motion by Vanessa Ramírez and seconded by Jean-Pierre Oriol. [The motion carried on page 45.](#)

[Page 51](#): The Council moves to approve Framework Amendment 2, Update the Overfishing Limit, Acceptable Biological Catch, and Annual Catch Limit for spiny lobster to the Puerto Rico, Saint Croix, Saint Thomas/Saint John Fishery Management Plans with Alternative 3 selected as the preferred alternative for each action, and submit the amendment to the Secretary of Commerce for approval. Motion by James Kreglo and seconded by Jean-Pierre Oriol. [The motion carried on page 52.](#)

[Page 53](#): The Council moves to allow staff to make editorial non-substantive changes to Framework Amendment 2. Any changes will be reviewed by the Council Chair. Motion by Jean-Pierre Oriol and seconded by James Kreglo. [The motion carried on page 54.](#)

[Page 54](#): The Council moves to deem the regulations presented by staff as necessary and appropriate for implementing Framework Amendment 2 and to give the Council Chair, the authority to deem any modifications made to the proposed rule as necessary and appropriate for implementing Framework Amendment 2. Motion by Jean-Pierre Oriol and seconded by James Kreglo. [The motion carried on page 54.](#)

[Page 81](#): Move to allow the staff to make changes to Sub-alternative 2b of Actions 2(b) and 3(b) for Saint Croix and the Saint Thomas/Saint John, respectively, as discussed by the Council staff. Motion by Jean-Pierre Oriol and seconded by James Kreglo. [The motion carried on page 81.](#)

[Page 86](#): Move to allow staff to make changes to Sub-alternative 2b of Action 1(b) for Puerto Rico as discussed by the Council. Motion by Vanessa Ramírez and seconded by James Kreglo. [The motion carried on page 86.](#)

[Page 98](#): Puerto Rico Dolphinfish Size Limit, Action 1a. Move to select Alternative 3: Establish a 24-inch fork length minimum size limit for the commercial and recreational harvest of dolphinfish in federal waters around Puerto Rico. Motion by Vanessa Ramírez

and seconded by James Kreglo. [The motion carried on page 98.](#)

[Page 98](#): Puerto Rico Dolphinfish Recreational Bag Limit, Action 1b. Move to select Alternative 3: Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around Puerto Rico for 5 dolphinfish per person per day, not to exceed 15 dolphinfish per vessel per day, whichever is less. Motion by Vanessa Ramírez and seconded by James Kreglo. [The motion carried on page 99.](#)

[Page 108](#): Puerto Rico Wahoo Size Limits, Action 2a. Move for Alternative 2: Establish a 32-inch fork length minimum size limit for commercial and recreational harvest of wahoo in federal waters around Puerto Rico. Motion by Vanessa Ramírez and seconded by Jean-Pierre Oriol. [The motion carried on page 110.](#)

[Page 112](#): Wahoo Recreational Bag Limit, Action 2b. Move for Alternative 2: Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around Puerto Rico of five wahoo per person per day, not to exceed 10 wahoo per vessel per day, whichever is less. Motion by Vanessa Ramírez and seconded by Jean-Pierre Oriol. [The motion carried on page 113.](#)

[Page 115](#): Size Limits for Wahoo in Saint Croix, Action 4a, and Saint Thomas/Saint John, Action 6a. Move for Alternative 2: Establish 32-inch fork length minimum size limit for the commercial and recreational harvest of wahoo in the federal waters around Saint Croix, Saint Thomas/Saint John. Motion by Jack McGovern and seconded by Jean-Pierre Oriol. [The motion carried on page 117.](#)

[Page 120](#): Recreational Bag Limit for Wahoo in Saint Croix, Action 4b, and Saint Thomas/Saint John, Action 6b. Move for Alternative 3: Established recreational bag limit in federal waters around Saint Croix, Saint Thomas/Saint John of 2 wahoo per person per day, not to exceed 10 wahoo per vessel per day, whichever is less. Motion By James Kreglo and seconded by Vanessa Ramírez. [The motion carried on page 122.](#)

[Page 144](#): Move to direct staff to begin an amendment to reclassify rainbow runner from a reef fish species to a pelagic species under the Puerto Rico FMP. Motion By James Kreglo and seconded by Vanessa Ramírez. [The motion carried on page 146.](#)

[Page 249](#): Move to direct staff to develop white paper to address the points make in the letter presented by the Saint Thomas Fishermen's Association. Motion by James Kreglo seconded by Jack McGovern. [The motion carried on page 250.](#)

[Page 265](#): Move to direct staff to develop a white paper to address

issues requested for Nassau grouper (and others) in the Bajo de Sico area. Motion by Vanessa Ramírez seconded by James Kreglo. [The motion carried on page 265.](#)

**CARIBBEAN FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
182ND REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
HYBRID MEETING
EMBASSY SUITES HOTEL
CAROLINA, PUERTO RICO**

AUGUST 15-16, 2023

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council convened on Tuesday morning, August 15, 2023, and was called to order at 9:03 a.m. by Chairman Carlos Farchette.

Call to Order and Roll Call

CARLOS FARCHETTE: Okay. So, good morning. We're going to call this Council meeting to order, the 182nd Caribbean Fisheries Management Council meeting is called to order. It's 9:03 AM on August 15th, 2023. We'll do a roll call. I'm going to start with Cristina on my left.

CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ: Good morning. Cristina Olán, Council staff.

LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA: Buenos días. Liajay Rivera García, Council staff.

KEVIN MCCARTHY: Good morning. Kevin McCarthy, Southeast Fishery Science Center.

JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL: Good morning. Jean Pierre Oriel, U.S. Virgin Islands.

CARLOS FARCHETTE: Carl Farchette, Vice-Chair Council.

MIGUEL A. ROLÓN: Miguel Rolón, Council Staff.

DIANA T. MARTINO: Diana Martino, Council Staff.

JACK MCGOVERN: Jack McGovern, NOAA Fisheries.

KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI: Kate Zamboni, NOAA's Office of General Counsel.

VANESSA RAMÍREZ: Vanessa Ramírez, Council Member, Commercial Fisherman, Puerto Rico.

ROBERTO SABATER: Roberto Sabater, possible Nominee and sports fisherman in Puerto Rico.

1
2 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Good morning. María López, NOAA Fisheries.
3
4 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Buenos días. Graciela García-Moliner,
5 Council Staff.
6
7 **MARÍA DE LOS A. IRIZARRY:** María Irizarry, Council Staff.
8
9 **NELSON CRESPO:** Good morning, everyone. Nelson Crespo, DAP Chair,
10 Puerto Rico.
11
12 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras, DAP chair, Saint Thomas/Saint John.
13
14 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Gerson Martínez, DAP chair, Saint Croix.
15
16 **MIGUEL BORGES:** Miguel Borges, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement.
17
18 **MANNY ANTONARAS:** Good morning. Manny Antonaras, NOAA Office of
19 Law Enforcement.
20
21 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Buenos Dias. Alida Ortiz, Outreach and
22 Education and Technical Advisory Panel.
23
24 **VANCE VICENTE:** Good morning. Vance Vicente, Scientific and
25 Statistical Committee.
26
27 **HOWARD FORBES:** Good morning. Howard Forbes, DPNR Enforcement.
28
29 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Good morning. Nicole Angeli, DPNR Fish and
30 Wildlife.
31
32 **LIANDRY A. DE LA CRUZ:** Buenas. Liandry De La Cruz, port sampler,
33 DPNR DFW.
34
35 **NICOLE GREAUX:** Good morning. Nicole Greaux, Fisheries Liaison for
36 Saint Thomas/Saint John.
37
38 **RUTH GOMEZ:** Ruth Gomez, Saint Thomas Fishermen's Association.
39
40 **KATHERINE GODWIN:** Good morning. Katherine Godwin, CIMAS.
41
42 **DAVID BEHRINGER:** David Behringer, CIMAS.
43
44 **RACHEL ECKLEY:** Hi, good morning. Rachel Eckley, Southeast
45 Fisheries Science Center.
46
47 **WILSON SANTIAGO:** Good morning. Wilson Santiago, Puerto Rico
48 Fishery Liaison.

REFIK ORHUN: Good morning. Rafiq Orhun, Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

MIGUEL A. ROLÓN: ¿Cristina, puedes leer los nombres de las personas que están en zoom?

CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ: People in Zoom: Georgina Bustamante, Guillermo Cordero, Aurea Rodríguez-Santiago, Cindy Grace-McCaskey, Dwame, Jesús Rivera Hernández, Kelly Denit, Laura Cimo, Martha Prada, Morgan Corey, Noemí Peña, Rachel O'Malley, Ricardo López.

MIGUEL A. ROLÓN: Mr. Chair?

CARLOS FARCHETTE: Miguel.

MIGUEL A. ROLÓN: Yeah, for the record, Ricardo López has a family issue with COVID. That's the reason why he's participating virtually, but he will be able to vote.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce Mr. Roberto Sabater. Roberto Sabater has been selected by the Secretary of Commerce effective September 16th. So, we now invite him to be at the table so he can be familiarized with the Council process and everything. And Mr. Roberto Sabater has been a recreational fisherman for a long time. Can you say something about yourself, your profession and where you live?

Roberto, el botoncito.

ROBERTO SABATER: Ah, el botón. I graduated from Colegio Mayaguez as a civil engineer. Spent two years in active duty in the army from 66 to 69. I joined Bird Construction as a project engineer and as a partner. I was president of the American General Contractors, director of two schools, president of the My Park, President of various condominiums. And right now, I'm retired for the past 13 years. Thank you.

MIGUEL A. ROLÓN: Thank you, Roberto. I believe that Roberto will be an asset to the Council representing the recreational sector from now on. He'll be serving after September 16th and, as you know, that's a requirement for new Council members. So, welcome to the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council.

ROBERTO SABATER: Oh, excuse me, I forgot. I'm a member of the Club Nautico de San Juan, Puerto Rico, Cangrejos Yacht Club in Puerto Rico, and the Puerto Rico Light Tackle Anchorage, which I'm treasurer.

1
2 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Thank you.
3

4 **Election of Officials**
5

6 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, next on the agenda, we have the election of
7 officials.
8

9 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** So, I'd like to make a motion. I'd like to
10 move. I'd like to nominate Carlos Farchette to serve as Chair and
11 Vanessa Ramírez to serve as Vice-Chair for the Council. I so move.
12

13 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Anybody--
14

15 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Second. Jack McGovern.
16

17 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yes, with Robert's Rules, for nomination you
18 don't need a second, but that's better getting every second from
19 the RA. Everybody in favor say aye.
20

21 The reason I'm running this is because the Coast Guard is not here.
22 Vanessa, would you like to sit next to our Chair? And welcome,
23 this is the first woman as Chair of the Council for a long time.
24

25 Don't we want to have a round of applause for Vanessa? [applause]
26

27 Now for Carlos, we know this guy for a long time, so. So, go ahead,
28 Carlos.
29

30 **Adoption of Agenda**
31

32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, thanks everyone for the vote of
33 confidence. Next on the agenda is the adoption of the agenda and
34 we have a couple changes. At 9:30 we'll have a presentation by
35 Kelly Denit regarding the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act.) Right
36 after her presentation, we'll have Wendy Morrison from ANPR, she'll
37 be discussing National Standard 4, 8, and 9 and possible changes.
38 Graciela?
39

40 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, Mr. Chair, we also have a request
41 from Dr. Sennai Habtes to see, if he doesn't make it today, to
42 move his presentation on the EBFM TAB for tomorrow.
43

44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, we'll make a note of that. Also, on
45 that same subject James Kreglo, Council Member for the Saint Thomas
46 District, is on his way here right now. His flight was canceled
47 yesterday, but he should be here within the hour.
48

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Dejame decir algo about flights.

2
3 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Talking about flight before I forget. The next
4 Council meeting will be on December 4 and 7. Those are the two
5 travel days. I'd encourage everybody to start making your airplane
6 reservations. It's a nightmare. And Diana and I, the last time we
7 spent six hours there, Julian lost a flight and now we have
8 [inaudible]. So, I encourage everybody planning to attend the
9 Council meeting to start making your reservations, now, as soon as
10 possible. To give you an idea, Christmas time is the heaviest
11 season. One of the airlines have three planes and when Diana and
12 I took one, the other two were out of service. So, to give you an
13 idea. And if you hate little planes, try to make your reservation
14 on a big one as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Miguel. So, we need a motion to
17 accept the changes to the agenda. Jack?

18
19 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Actually, I have two corrections to the minutes on
20 page-- Oh, I'm sorry. I second

21
22 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** All in favor, say aye.

23
24 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Motion for agenda?

25
26 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, no, no.

27
28 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Motion to adopt the amended agenda.

29
30 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Second.

31
32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** All in favor say aye. So now we go to the--

33
34 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Hold on a second. Cristina, dile a Ricardo que
35 tiene que votar.

36
37 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes. Good morning. I'm here. I'm in favor.

38
39 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. Thank you, Ricardo.

40
41 **Consideration of 181st Council Meeting Verbatim Transcriptions**

42
43 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, So, now we're moving forward to the
44 consideration of the 181st Council meeting for bait and
45 transcriptions. Jack. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Two corrections to the
46 minutes on page 87. María López says the action name is to modify
47 because we named the action. "We don't know what curse you guys
48 are going." I think she means to say "course." And then again, on

1 page 100 María López is discussing on line nine, descending
2 devices, and she says, it states, "it's basically requiring that
3 old fishers have descending devices on board," and I think she
4 means, it should say "all," not "old."

5
6 Thank you.

7
8 So, thank you for that, Jack. I have those same corrections on my
9 notes. And I'd like to add a couple more.

10
11 Page 31, where Sarah was describing the difference between ACL and
12 ACTs. line 29, delete the word bunny. When she was referring to
13 "stock pelagic, reef fish, bunny, lobster." So, delete "bunny."
14 Page 69, line 27, where Kreglo was talking about his lobster
15 experience. He put, "I live lobster." I think that should be, "I
16 dive lobster."

17
18 And then, page 71, line 20, change "Sun Croix" to "Saint Croix."
19 And I have Jack's, and then I have one more. Oh, down in page 141.
20 Where Abdiel Connelly used the word sea, he meant S E A for sea,
21 and that both lines 33 and 34 have S E E, So, we want to change
22 that. Delete S E E and put S E A on both lines. Thank you.

23
24 So, if no one else has any corrections on the verbatim minutes,
25 we'll win a motion to accept the verbatim minutes as corrected.

26
27 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOLO:** So, move.

28
29 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Jack McGovern, second.

30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** It's moved by Jean-Pierre Oriol and seconded by
32 Jack McGovern. Any nays? Abstentions? All in favor say aye.

33
34 **GROUP:** Aye.

35
36 **Executive Director's Report**

37
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Nays? Any abstentions? Hearing none, motion
39 carries.

40
41 So, following that on the agenda is Executive Director's report,
42 Miguel Rolón.

43
44 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Also, for the record,
45 please identify yourself. So, when you talk— I'm guilty of not
46 identifying myself. So, I'm Miguel Rolón, for the record.

47
48 Today we have two presentations during my report. Before that, I

1 want to mention that the Western Central Atlantic Fishery
2 Commission is going to meet in September and our chairman now is
3 going to represent the Council. As I said, I myself will be
4 virtually participating. It will be held in Barbados.

5
6 The CFMC has been an active participant on all the WECAFC projects
7 since the beginning of the 80s. When the Council was created in
8 1976, we found that promoting Pan-Caribbean Management is one of
9 the main goals of the Council because many of the species that we
10 have here are shared by all the other countries. And also, upstream
11 we have actions that may jeopardize, or may affect, not jeopardize,
12 but may affect the species that we manage in our area. So, it is
13 important that we continue working with WECAFC.

14
15 The NOAA Fisheries participates by attending the meetings, working
16 with the working groups. The point of contact for the Southeast
17 Region is María López. And then, in the case of the Office of
18 International Trade and Commerce, NOAA Fisheries, we have Laura
19 Cimo and others that participate depending on the topics that we
20 discuss.

21
22 We will have Marine Special Planning. We have two workshops for
23 data gathering. Graciela, do you have the dates? The one in Marine
24 Special Planning.

25
26 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, the dates. There are going to be two
27 meetings. One in Saint Croix, and one in Puerto Rico. So, it's
28 August 28th and 29th in Saint Croix. And August 31st and September
29 1st in Puerto Rico at the Buccaneer and at the Isla Verde Marriott
30 Courtyard. Here. So, it's a full day the first day, half a day on
31 the second.

32
33 It's a meeting by invitation by the MSP group but it has been
34 announced and we're looking forward to receiving information on
35 data that are missing, data gaps that have been identified for
36 Marine Spatial Planning. Thank you.

37
38 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Thank you, Graciela. We were asked for the people
39 to be included there were fishers, so the three chairs will be
40 participating in those meetings.

41
42 The other announcement is that we have, the highly migratory
43 species, as you know, they have an event today. It is a public
44 meeting. And it is suspected that many people can attend.

45
46 Tomorrow, in the evening, Ana Salceda is going to meet with some
47 key fishers and the Council members have been invited to discuss
48 the Big Fish campaign. She will have a presentation tomorrow and

1 you will see what we have been doing with the Big Fish campaign.
2 That campaign is an international effort to promote conservation
3 of marine species that aggregate to spawn. Snappers, grouper,
4 etcetera.

5
6 It's an activity under the WECAFC, the Western Central Atlantic
7 Fishery Commission, with the participation of the Caribbean
8 Regional Fisheries Mechanism, the CRFM, OSPESCA, who is an
9 organization that encompasses Central America countries, and, of
10 course, the United States, in this case, the Council and the U.S.
11 Caribbean.

12
13 Mr. Chairman, I have a minute to kill until 9:30, but I believe,
14 if you're ready and Kelly's ready we can have that presentation
15 now. Kelly Denit is the director of the Sustainable Fisheries
16 Office at National Marine Fisheries Service NOAA Fisheries in
17 Washington. She graciously accepted to have this presentation in
18 front of the Council. She gave this at the CCC this past spring.

19
20 The Presentation is related to the funds that have been approved
21 by the president to combat the inflation. So, it's something that
22 we should be mindful of. The actual spending of the money will be
23 coordinated with the National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA
24 Fisheries. The Executive Director will have a meeting on August 22
25 to continue these efforts. In the case of Puerto Rico and the U.S.
26 Virgin Islands, Graciela and I are supposed to work together with
27 the V.I. to work on this effort.

28
29 So, Mr. Chairman, can you allow Kelly to do the presentation?

30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Miguel. So, are we ready for Kelly?

32
33 **Inflation Reduction Act Funding-Kelly Denit**

34
35 **KELLY DENIT:** I'm here, Chair. I'm ready to begin if you can pull
36 those slides up there, in the room, for everyone.

37
38 Okay, great. Good morning. Thank you for that introduction, Miguel.
39 This morning, I'm going to talk with you about the Inflation
40 Reduction Act funding that's been made available to NOAA Fisheries.

41
42 There are three buckets of funding. NOAA Fisheries has equities in
43 all three. The first is the Coastal Communities and Climate
44 Resilience. The second is related to Forecasting. And the third is
45 related to our facilities. Also, please let me know if I start
46 going too quickly for the interpretation. I will try to make sure
47 that I speak slowly, so there's opportunity for that. Okay, great.
48 Thank you.

1
2 Okay, So, our main focus is on bucket one, the Coastal Communities
3 and Climate Resilience.

4
5 So, please go ahead to the next slide.

6
7 What I will do this morning is walk you through the breakdown of
8 all of those funds, so you have a sense of how it's distributed
9 across the different areas within the National Marine Fisheries
10 Service. And then, I'll spend a little specific time on the funding
11 for the Regional Fishery Management Councils.

12
13 So, first let me step through overall, NOAA received 3.3 billion
14 dollars. Approximately 1.2 of that is coming to NOAA Fisheries for
15 work. And you see the boxes along the bottom there. The one with
16 the arrows pointed to it is the Climate Ready Fisheries, which is
17 where we'll spend most of our time this morning in the
18 presentation, talking through the components of that specifically.
19 But there is also funding specific to tribal priorities, that's
20 the yellow box. Funding for habitat restoration and conservation,
21 which is the green box. The purple box is our facility's needs,
22 specifically in the mid-Atlantic and Northwest. And then there's
23 Arctic research and some funding to facilitate permitting and
24 reviews with respect to various energy related projects.

25
26 So go ahead to the next slide and we're going to dig in on that
27 dark blue box, the 349 million.

28
29 Okay, I apologize that there's a lot of acronyms here on this
30 slide, but we'll start on the upper left. So, this is our essential
31 data acquisitions and advanced technologies, which is focused on
32 our improvements to our stock assessment enterprise. And I'll talk
33 some more about that in our next slide. The next box down is the
34 Climate Ecosystem and Fisheries Initiative with \$40 million. The
35 next one is our modernizing data, which is another \$40 million.
36 So, that's about 200 million directed towards improving our
37 scientific enterprise and helping make adjustments to be more
38 climate ready with respect to our scientific work. The next three
39 areas, Red Snapper, North Atlantic Right Whale, which is the NARW
40 on the upper right and Pacific Salmon are species or stock specific
41 efforts that the agency identified as key priorities that we wanted
42 to focus some funding towards.

43
44 And then finally, we have the bucket with all the arrows there
45 that is specific to the Regional Fishery Management Councils at 20
46 million. and then we have funding in that very last bucket specific
47 to our overhead.

1 You can go ahead to the next slide.

2
3 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** We need a second. We're having a
4 technical difficulty with the video. Sorry to interrupt. Thanks.

5
6 **KELLY DENIT:** No problem. If you'd like, Chair, I can go ahead
7 without the slides while they're continuing to get those brought
8 up.

9
10 Excellent. Ready?

11
12 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Yes, we are ready. Thank you.

13
14 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Go ahead, Kelly. We're ready.

15
16 **KELLY DENIT:** Okay. Please go to the next slide.

17
18 So, on the next slide we're going to-- I'm going to talk a little
19 bit about the specifics of the Essential Data Acquisition and The
20 Advanced Technologies. There we go. Perfect. Thank you.

21
22 So, the focus of this funding, which is \$105 million is supporting
23 our efforts to expand and modernize stock assessments. We recognize
24 that as the climate is changing across the country, we're going to
25 need to be able to expand our survey coverage in the coming years
26 in order to manage our fisheries and protected species.

27
28 So, this funding is focused in looking at our ability to continue
29 to have ship-based surveys, but also look at the application and
30 use of advanced technologies in order to increase our ability and
31 improve our ability for coverage in areas where we might not
32 otherwise be able to get to with ship-based examples. And so, here
33 we're talking specifically about potential opportunities to use
34 camera technology or survey coverage to get into areas that we
35 currently can't, but where fish may be moving. And that includes
36 our protected species as well.

37
38 With respect to the bucket on the upper right, are Modernizing
39 Data. As we all know electronic technology is everywhere and the
40 agency needs to invest in our ability to not only take advantage
41 of that technology, but also make our data more accessible both
42 internally and externally. So, this funding will be focused on
43 establishing clear data standards, moving more of our systems to
44 cloud based technologies in order to facilitate that access which
45 connects to those bottom two bullets of enabling open science and
46 looking at an operating model that is more modernized than what we
47 have currently.

1 And then, this final bucket is the Climate Ecosystems and Fisheries
2 Initiative which hopefully you have heard about and is a cross
3 wide NOAA effort to advance our ocean ecosystem prediction
4 capabilities. So, the focus here is to try to take many of the
5 more global ocean modeling and bring it down to the scales both in
6 time and space that are useful for fisheries managers. And we
7 recognize that that will look very different across our different
8 regions because of the data availability in each region but the
9 point is to try to get towards more ability to forecast and provide
10 projections on potential climate impacts to both our fisheries and
11 protected species.

12
13 Go ahead to the next slide.

14
15 So, here we have some species-specific examples. I won't spend a
16 ton of time here, since I don't think we're going to see any
17 Pacific Salmon showing up in the Caribbean, despite climate change.
18 So, North Atlantic Right Whale, the focus here is on modeling and
19 monitoring and also two main threats to that species, special
20 strikes, and also gear, fishery gear interactions. And so, trying
21 to move towards ropeless gear.

22
23 With respect to red snapper, the main focus is threefold. One,
24 investing in the data infrastructure to support the Gulf States
25 Marine Fisheries Commission as the clearinghouse for our
26 recreational data. And then also, to improve our estimates of
27 fishing effort, recreational fishing effort in particular, in the
28 Gulf of Mexico, as well as investing in improving our estimates of
29 recreational discards. And then, finally for Pacific salmon the
30 focus is on our ability to scientifically evaluate our habitat
31 restoration and reintroduction strategies and how we can help
32 facilitate and make sure we're investing our funding in those two
33 areas to support salmon in the best way possible.

34
35 Go ahead to the next slide.

36
37 So, I'd be happy, Chair, to take questions on that first part or
38 if you prefer, I can go right into the specifics of the Council
39 funding and then take all the questions at the end. Let me know
40 your preference.

41
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So yeah, we would prefer that you finish and
43 then we'll ask questions later.

44
45 **KELLY DENIT:** Okay, thank you, Chair. Okay, go ahead to the next
46 slide. And go ahead to the next slide.

47
48 So, now I'll dig into the details of the \$20 million for the

1 Regional Fishery Management Councils. The focus here is on the two
2 goals that are highlighted with those hollow bullets.

3
4 The focus is on fishery management and governance and achieving
5 those two goals, which are the implementation of fishery management
6 measures necessary to advance climate ready fisheries, and also
7 the development and advancement of climate related fisheries
8 management planning and implementation, in particular in support
9 of underserved communities.

10
11 So, these goals are fairly broad because we recognize that each
12 Council has very different fisheries and very different potential
13 impacts from climate on said fisheries and fishing communities.

14
15 Go ahead to the next slide.

16
17 So, we tried to identify some very broad priorities that we will
18 fund with this IRA money. They are listed here, and these are
19 currently up for discussion and input and feedback from the
20 Regional Fishery Management Councils. The Council Executive
21 Directors, as Miguel noted, have provided some initial feedback.
22 The point here is, again, to provide some broad priorities that
23 allow each Council to focus on the areas that are most relevant to
24 their fisheries and fishing communities.

25
26 So, examples here talk about operationalizing our fishery climate
27 vulnerability assessments and other scientific products such as
28 ecosystem status reports, moving forward with recommendations from
29 climate scenario planning, efforts that have been undertaken,
30 implementing management changes to address climate vulnerability.
31 And then the last two, implementing measures that increase
32 responsiveness of allocations or other management measures to
33 climate impacts. So, here we are talking more about focusing on
34 opportunities to streamline our processes to make our ability to
35 react to changes more quick. And then finally, the last bullet is
36 targeted at investments in planning for climate change. Some
37 Councils have not had an opportunity to dig into what are the
38 potential impacts to their fisheries and fishing communities. And
39 so, there's the possibility to use some of these funds to
40 facilitate workshops or engagements in that regard.

41
42 Go ahead to the next slide.

43
44 So, overall, our plan it to create specific grants for each
45 regional fishery management Council and each Council will provide
46 proposals to the agency for our review. The focus on our criteria-
47 - Yeah, you're good. You're on the right slide. --is to make sure
48 that any projects that are put forward by the Councils, one, are

1 able to be completely implemented or in the final phases of
2 approval by 2027. The reason for that is the Inflation Reduction
3 Act funds have an end date. We cannot provide funds beyond FY '26,
4 the federal fiscal year '26. And the other main point is that
5 actions that we implement using the IRA funds have to be able to
6 be sustained with no additional funding after the IRA funds. So,
7 we will need to, this is essentially a pulse of funding, we will
8 need to be able to continue whatever it is that we invest in,
9 recognizing that we'll be back to our baseline funding.

10
11 So, we've identified some areas that we will give high priority
12 to, and those are actions that leverage existing tools such as
13 ecosystem status reports or other products that are being produced
14 by the agency already, actions that will be completed within three
15 years, and any cross-Council projects and initiatives where that
16 is relevant. That may not be relevant for all of the Council areas.

17
18 Go ahead to the next slide. And there's just two more slides here.

19
20 So, the process is focused on establishing specific grants for
21 each Council, and we are in the process of getting that kicked
22 off. As Miguel noted, we have a meeting with the Council Executive
23 Directors next week to discuss the specific mechanics of that. And
24 then our plan in out years is to run a proposal process where the
25 Councils, we'll put forward the key projects that they want to
26 prioritize for this funding and the agency will review those to
27 ensure that we have the capacity to match that since we are key
28 partners with the Councils in getting any projects fully
29 implemented. And then go ahead to the last slide, which is
30 essentially just a recap of what I've noted.

31
32 So, we currently will be refining our priorities and criteria based
33 on feedback from the Councils. Our next steps, here in the fall,
34 will be to get those IRA specific grants to each Council
35 established. And then later, here in 2023, we will initiate that
36 proposal process so that the Councils can submit those and then
37 complete our review and selection process here by hopefully early
38 2024 so each of the Councils can have the funding to begin
39 executing their work. And with all that I'd be happy to take any
40 questions, Mr. Chair.

41 42 **Questions/Comments**

43
44 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Kelly, we couldn't hear you at the end.
45 I think that you said any questions. Is that correct?

46
47 **KELLY DENIT:** Correct.
48

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Thank you, Kelly. The floor is open for
2 questions if any. Okay. Julian.

3
4 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Good morning. Julian Magras, for the record. After
5 looking at this, I think this is very important and what's being
6 proposed here. What I think is a very important aspect of all of
7 what's going on is to make sure that we include the fishers in
8 this process. This is due to the fact that we're seeing the
9 different changes with climate change hands on, and we have seen
10 where things have changed but it has not changed drastically.

11
12 What we're seeing is more like it's changed from one month to
13 another month and I think with the information that we're
14 collecting, which is very important to how we fish and move
15 forward, it would be very good to include us in this process so
16 that we don't think something is-- let's use an example of going
17 into extinction or being overfished or something, but it has
18 decided to do a different cycle in a different area. And I think
19 that's very important to have this information for each one of the
20 different sectors: Puerto Rico, Saint Croix, Saint Thomas, Saint
21 John, moving forward, so when we sit to the table to make
22 decisions, we could understand what's going on in each one of the
23 fisheries pertaining to the climate change. Thank you.

24
25 **KELLY DENIT:** Yeah, thank you. It broke up just a little bit there
26 at the end. But I certainly hear your point with respect to using
27 some of these funds to directly engage with our fishing communities
28 and get their input on what they are seeing on the water and what
29 the potential impacts are.

30
31 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Kelly, we are not hearing you. We are not
32 hearing you completely. Maybe you can turn off your camera and use
33 more of your bandwidth for audio instead of video.

34
35 **KELLY DENIT:** Is that better?

36
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Jean-Pierre.

38
39 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Jean-Pierre Oriol.
40 So, I guess this question is for Miguel and Council staff. So,
41 according to the schedule, it says the request for proposals is
42 going to open up soon and then you're going to discuss the
43 proposals in October, which is about six to eight weeks. How is
44 the Council coming up with the preliminary list of projects and
45 those types of things?

46
47 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. All the eight Councils are really working
48 on that, and we have a list of possible alternatives. Actually,

1 going back to what Julian mentioned, Graciela and I have been
2 discussing-- I tell you; this will include biological component
3 and socio economical component. The socio economical component,
4 that's where we want the fishers in. Because many of the things
5 that are happening now, the people who receive the impact, the
6 people who have the experience out there, are the fishers. So, any
7 proposal that we have, we intend to include the science, the socio-
8 economic science, economic science, and the biological science.
9 And of course, included in that will be representation of the
10 fishers. Actually, the proposal that we might be working together
11 will depend on whatever we discuss, there was 22.

12
13 Like Kelly is saying, the important, those high priorities include
14 the tools that we have for fishery management and the ecosystem.
15 So, what we need to do before September 30 is to have a list of
16 topics that we want to address. Once we have that accepted, and if
17 they copy, because they're still working on how they are really
18 going to distribute this funding. If they're going to adopt this
19 system that they have for habitat, like Graciela is very familiar
20 with, and myself, then it would be a matter to submit a proposal
21 to National Marine Fisheries Service. They are the one who approves
22 the proposal. Once they approve the proposal, then we go ahead
23 with it.

24
25 So, by the December meeting, we should have a list of those
26 proposals, who's going to do what and when and where. And we have
27 to finish by 2027. So, it's kind of interesting that some of the
28 actions, the activities that we have might have a continuity but
29 there's no money after '27 for that continuation. So, the Chairman
30 of one Council raised that point and he was literally confused
31 about it. So, I believe and the Councilors, the eight Councilors,
32 are working with the fisheries, NOAA fisheries, to make sure,
33 number one, that we use the funding according to the IRA and number
34 two, that we do it on time.

35
36 For this Council, we already have a person who worked with us as
37 PI for other activities, so she might be able to work with us. And
38 we may need to even have an assistant for Angie for the
39 accountability of this funding. If you look at the-- remember the
40 minimum amount of money for the proposal would be 300K. \$300,000.
41 So, depending on how much they appropriate to us, to the eight
42 Councils, and they have a formula that will do that, we will be
43 able then to say, "okay, these are the things that we can do." And
44 then, we need to look at what the SSC have recommended in research
45 priorities in the past, and the TAP for the ecosystem.

46
47 Once we have those two elements, then we can present to the NOAA
48 fisheries, these are the items that we would like to include in

1 the possible proposals and then we report back to you. We may need
2 to have, probably, a virtual meeting with the voting members of
3 the Council and the Chairs of the groups when we have something to
4 present to you. This way you will know where we are with this and
5 we can receive the comments, especially what Julian mentioned, so
6 we have a solid proposal for the use of this funding.

7
8 We would like to, as much as possible, use the local folks from
9 universities and agencies. So, we will do the work, but also, we
10 will enhance the capacity of the agencies and the scientists in
11 this area rather than bringing, you know, Mr. Jemison from outside
12 and we don't want to do that.

13
14 Any other comment or question for Kelly now that she's here?

15
16 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Kelly Denit wrote in the chat, "To
17 clarify, in October, we will discuss the process, not the proposals
18 themselves. The proposals will be submitted by the end of 2023.
19 And to the first question, engagement with the fishing community
20 or activities that can be supported with this funding.

21
22 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Any other comment?

23
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any more questions for Kelly? Hearing none.

25
26 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Kelly, we would like to thank you for your time
27 and patience. Sorry for the issues with the electronics. We're
28 fishing on that. We're looking forward to talking to you a little
29 bit further between here and October to finish the process. And
30 for that, we are really, really grateful for your time to address
31 the Council today.

32
33 **KELLY DENIT:** My pleasure. Thank you So, much, Miguel and Mr.
34 Chair. Gracias a todos.

35
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Kelly. So, next on the agenda is
37 Wendy Morrison.

38
39 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Good morning. Can you hear me okay?

40
41 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yep.

42
43 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Awesome. Would you like me to leave my camera
44 off, given some of the challenges you're having right now with the
45 internet?

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay.

1 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Okay. And then are you going to pull up the
2 presentation, or shall I?

3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I'm going to check with Cristina here.

5
6 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Hi Wendy. We're going to make you co-host
7 So, you can share your presentation from your side. Thank you.

8
9 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Okay, good. Because I don't see where the share
10 button is, so I'm glad.

11
12 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Wendy, we made you co-host so you should
13 be able to share your screen. Down there is a green button that
14 says, "share screen." Perfect.

15
16 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Okay, let me put it in. Does that work?

17
18 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Yes, but we are looking at the PowerPoint
19 version, not the full screen mode.

20
21 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** So, you have the full screen. Awesome. I will
22 go ahead and—

23
24 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** No, we don't have the full screen. We
25 don't see the full screen. You can do the full screen, and in
26 case you have some problems, we have your presentation here also.

27
28 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Okay, stop sharing. Let me try it again. Is
29 that better?

30
31 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Yes.

32
33 **Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking-Wendy Morrison**

34
35 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Awesome.

36
37 Okay. So, thank you. I really appreciate you putting me on the
38 schedule today. What I'm going to talk about is, we have out an
39 advance notice of proposed rulemaking. We are considering if we
40 want to update our guidelines for National Standards 4, 8, and 9.
41 So, I'll walk you through a little bit of what we're thinking right
42 now.

43
44 So, the objective of this project is to determine if updates to
45 the guidelines are needed, and we are focusing just on three of
46 the National Standards right now. So, national standards four,
47 eight, and nine.

1 A little background. I'm sure you know this, but Magnuson-Stevens
2 Act is our main law for fisheries management, and there are 10
3 National Standards within that law that all fishery measures must
4 agree to, must follow. And NOAA has been given the task of writing
5 guidelines on how we implement those National Standards. And so,
6 those are the guidelines we're talking about today. So, right now
7 we are going out and we're soliciting public input on the current
8 guidelines and areas that may benefit from revisions.

9
10 So, a little background on the three National Standards we're
11 considering. The first one is National Standard four. And the
12 shorthand for this is allocations. So, this is dealing with any
13 fishery management measures that choose and give out allocations,
14 and what it says is "allocations shall be fair and equitable;
15 should promote conservation; and do not result in excessive
16 shares." The second one, is National Standard 8, and this one
17 considers impacts to communities. So, you can see I've highlighted
18 the shorthand for each of these. The National Standard 8 says that
19 "we must provide for sustained participation; minimize adverse
20 economic impacts to the extent practicable to communities." The
21 final one is National Standard 9, which is dealing with bycatch.
22 And it says, "we need to minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality to
23 the extent practicable."

24
25 So, the advanced notice of proposed rulemaking, we identify two
26 current challenges that we are going to pay attention to and
27 determine if, due to these challenges, we need to make some updates
28 to the guidelines. The first one is related to climate change. The
29 second one is related to promoting equity and environmental
30 justice.

31
32 Okay. So, I'm now going to go into each of these. The interactions
33 of the National Standards and those two issues, one at a time. The
34 first one is National Standard 4, which is on allocation and how
35 it interacts with some of the challenges we've had with climate.
36 So, as you know changing ocean conditions are affecting the
37 location and the productivity of fish stocks. I just heard some of
38 the discussion with Kelly Denit. And so, your fishermen are seeing
39 some of these changes on the water. So, this does affect our
40 ability to manage those stocks. Those changes also can cause
41 social, economic and other impacts to the fisheries and the fishing
42 dependent communities.

43
44 And so, we want to look at these climate issues and determine if
45 there's updates to the guidelines needed. So, we're asking,
46 specifically, for input on whether we need to look at approaches
47 for balancing access for the historical users, for any marginalized
48 individuals who may have been excluded historically and for new

1 users. We do have from 2016, an allocation policy related to any
2 allocation that exists in regulations needs to identify a trigger
3 in the Caribbean. There aren't any allocations that require a
4 trigger so that's less relevant to your Council. And then we're
5 also asking if there's types of documentation, analyses or
6 alternative approaches that could be considered for allocations.

7
8 When you're looking at National Standard eight, which is the
9 standard related to communities or National Standard nine, which
10 deals with bycatch, same climate issues, changes in distribution
11 and and productivity of the stocks does affect, you know, the
12 communities and bycatch. So, we're asking for if we need to update
13 our guidelines to improve the ability of communities to adapt to
14 the shifting stocks and shifting productivities or do we need to
15 update our guidelines to better account for when target stocks
16 bycatch interact? Especially when it's with protected resources.

17
18 Okay. Moving on to challenges related to equity and environmental
19 justice. Under National Standard four, which is again the
20 allocation National Standard. We're asking for similar to what we
21 said under climate change but approaches to improve the
22 consideration of underserved and underrepresented communities
23 previously excluded entrants or new entrants. And then the same
24 question about, are there documentation or analyses that you think
25 are needed that would improve the allocation process?

26
27 So, under National Standard Eight, which is the one for
28 communities, and the intersection with equity and environmental
29 justice, we have a couple of slides on this. The current National
30 Standard Eight guidelines have a definition of fishing community
31 and we're considering if we need to update that definition within
32 our guidelines. So, the current definition defines "community" as
33 place based. And we're wondering if we want to extend that
34 definition to allow communities to be not place based, but instead,
35 maybe communities of interest. So, are there advantages to allowing
36 communities to be defined on interest that is not focused on a
37 place?

38
39 With that same definition the National Standard Eight deals with
40 dependence of communities and engagement of communities in
41 fishing. And we're pondering if we want to update that definition
42 to shift the balance between dependence and engagement. Our
43 thoughts here are as the stocks shift their distributions or adjust
44 their productivities, the communities that are dependent on
45 historical stocks may do better if they are less dependent on some
46 of those stocks as those stocks, you know, move or change. And so,
47 maybe we want to focus more on engagement in fishing in general.
48 And so, we're putting these ideas out there and want to hear from

1 you and if you have any thoughts on this aspect.

2
3 And finally, this is my final slide on National Standard Eight
4 with EEJ. Again, we're really trying to understand how to balance
5 the requirements of sustained participation of fishing
6 communities, but also understand that at some point we're going to
7 need new entrance. We need to look at these underserved,
8 underrepresented communities, maybe people who were excluded in
9 the past and communities with high levels of social or climate
10 vulnerabilities. So, are there revisions to the guidelines that
11 would would improve our ability to do this?

12
13 So, we also have been looking at bycatch and equity environmental
14 justice. There are some challenges and some other Fishery
15 Management Councils where the shifting of stocks and
16 productivities has impacted when there's a target fishery-- A
17 target for a stock that that stock is also bycatch in another
18 fishery. How do we balance the needs of those two groups? And so,
19 that's something we're looking at in the guidelines. Are there
20 some revisions that are needed to help balance the needs of if a
21 stock is target and bycatch in different fisheries. Especially if
22 a community is underserved.

23
24 And then finally, we have two other challenges we mentioned in the
25 ANPR that are outside of climate and EEJ issues. And so, the first
26 one is National Standard Nine. It requires us to minimize bycatch
27 to the extent practicable. And so, we want to mention that
28 practicability standard. We would like to assert that the current
29 discussion of practicability within our guidelines appropriately
30 balances the complexities of fisheries management, given how
31 different they are around the different regions, but we would like
32 some input if there are some thoughts on how that discussion of
33 practicability could be updated within the guidelines. And then,
34 in some regions, less so in the Caribbean, there are fishery
35 management measures that create required discarding. And so, that
36 creates a little bit of waste if fishermen catch fish and then are
37 required to discard them. We're looking to see if there's any
38 revisions we could do, that would incentivize reducing that waste.
39 So, reducing the regulatory discards.

40
41 Our timeline. So, we published, in the federal register, the
42 advanced notice of proposed rulemaking on May 15th. We have given
43 presentations to the Council Coordination Committee and then this
44 is the last Council. We've given presentations to all Councils
45 between June and August. We have given two tribal and one national
46 webinar and the public comment period closes September 12th. We
47 will take all this in, there's a chance that we will look at all
48 the comments and decide that the current guidelines are great, are

1 sufficient and no changes are needed, but we also may decide that
2 some changes might be a good idea. If so, we will begin drafting
3 a proposed rule in the fall of 2023.

4
5 Okay, that's it. I'm happy to take questions as needed.

6 7 **Questions/Comments**

8
9 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Wendy. I have María.

10
11 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you, Wendy, for the presentation. This
12 is María López with NOAA fisheries SERO. I just want to ask you,
13 if people are able, people that do not speak English, are they
14 able to provide comments on this proposed item in Spanish or any
15 other language, if you know that.

16
17 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Yes! That's a great question. If they want to
18 provide a comment, we will find a translation. So, yes, we would
19 love comments in Spanish or any other language. In office we have
20 a translator that can translate Spanish but if we need to go
21 elsewhere, we can find a way. Yes. I would love any comments.

22
23 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you. And we're available, too, in our
24 office to provide assistance with any comments that come from the
25 Caribbean region. If you guys have any questions on that, feel
26 free to contact me and SERO or Sarah Stephenson as well. Thank
27 you, Wendy.

28
29 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Perfect, thank you.

30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Any more questions for Wendy? Or
32 comments?

33
34 Vance?

35
36 **VANCE VICENTE:** Yes Vance Vicente, SSC. What's ANPR?

37
38 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** It's Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.
39 So, it's very similar to when, if you have a regulation and you do
40 a scoping, when you go out and say, are there issues? What are the
41 challenges? what do we need to potentially fix? So, it's a step
42 before we put out a proposed rule. So, we're just kind of going
43 out and doing scoping.

44
45 **VANCE VICENTE:** Thank you.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** No more questions. I see no other hands. Miguel?

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No. Just to ask Wendy. Wendy, thank you for the
2 presentation. What are the next steps? What is expected to happen
3 following this? You know, the next steps for the Councils and for
4 the National Marine Fisheries Service.

5
6 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Good question. Thank you. As I noted, this is
7 a scoping and so when we compile all the comments that we receive,
8 we will look at that and decide if a next step is necessary. We
9 may look at the comments and decide that we do not need to update
10 our guidelines, and therefore we would probably just send out an
11 email and just say we're good and then no changes would be made.

12
13 If we decide that there are changes to the guidelines that may be
14 a good idea, we would put together a proposed rule and then we
15 would put that out again for public comment and we would come back
16 to the Council and say, "Here's our proposed rule." We would give
17 you a presentation and give you the chance to provide us with input
18 on any proposed changes before we would actually implement them.

19
20 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Thank you, Wendy. Because one of the topics that
21 she addresses is the definition of community, fishing community.
22 Saint Croix had been appointed or declared a fishing community a
23 long time ago. If we change this to expand it to a fishing group,
24 we don't know whether that would be good or bad for the proposals
25 that you receive on your fishing community and the consideration
26 of your fishing community about NGOs, etc.

27
28 So, and there are other things regarding what she presented that
29 the group may be interested in. If you have any questions, as María
30 said, we can help you question and answer. So, during the scoping
31 process, you will be able to have a better grasp of what is intended
32 to be done. So, you don't have to wait until the proposed
33 regulation is in place to react to it.

34
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Miguel.

36
37 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Was there-- I'm sorry. Was there a question in
38 there? I would love your thoughts on whether changes to the
39 definition of fishing community could be harmful. So, any thoughts
40 you have on that would be very welcome.

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Well, I discussed this a long time ago when we
43 were working on this. For some communities when you are place
44 based, let's take the example of Saint Croix, and then also you
45 have communities that are affected by the EEJ now, there are some
46 considerations that people that put together proposal and agencies
47 that give the money take into consideration whether this is a
48 fishing community or not. Because the definition of the fishing

1 community carries many other attributes that are important for
2 those proposals.

3
4 For example, one time I was working with a proposal to look at the
5 socio-economy of the Puerto Rico fisheries. Puerto Rico, at that
6 time, was not declared a fishing community. The lady told me, "You
7 know, that would be something that the local government could do."
8 See if we can apply for a definition of Puerto Rico as a fishing
9 community definition, but then the administration changed and that
10 was the end of it.

11
12 I remember that Saint Croix is still a fishing community in some
13 level, some consideration. So, I don't know whether eliminating
14 the place-based fishing community will be having any effect on
15 future projects, future considerations of the area. Another part
16 of the coin is that if you call all the commercial fishers, the
17 fishing community of the U.S. Caribbean, then you may be able to
18 have a better response from agencies and donors and NGOs to work
19 on particular species, particular project, particular issues
20 regarding the socio-economy of the commercial fisheries and/or
21 recreational fisheries of the U.S. Caribbean.

22
23 So, that's all, Wendy, that's what we wanted to do because in this
24 case most people don't know what we're talking about when we talk
25 about National Standards unless you are touched by one of them.
26 And this is a very good opportunity then for the people to present
27 their inputs, give their input on everything, but they need to be
28 aware of what is it. And we have Dr. Alida Ortiz here. She's the
29 Chair of the OEAP, our advisory body for outreach and education.
30 So, if you think that we could put together a fact sheet outlining
31 what is the purpose of this scoping, spell out the acronyms for
32 Vance and other people like me that don't know what we were talking
33 about before, it will be good to have that in Spanish and English.
34 So, we may be able to offer you our social network to get more
35 information, to get more comments for the purpose of what you're
36 doing on these scoping meetings. If you think that that's something
37 that will help, we are willing to help you with that.

38
39 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** That sounds great. I would appreciate that.
40 Yes, please.

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. So, we will be in touch with you, Alida
43 and myself, and see if we can put something together, especially
44 Alida, so we can convey the message to the fishing community of
45 the U.S. Caribbean and the agencies.

46
47 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** Great.
48

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Thank you so much, Wendy. Anyone else?
2 Any other comments for Wendy? Okay. Hearing none, I'm going to
3 move forward on the agenda. Approval of the Southeast Data
4 Assessment and Review for the Caribbean Spiny Lobster Terms of
5 Reference. That's María. Oh, Kevin. Sorry. Kevin.

6
7 **WENDY E. MORRISON:** All right. Thank you!

8
9 **Approval of the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR)**
10 **91 Caribbean Spiny Lobster Terms of Reference**
11

12 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm Kevin McCarthy. I'm with
13 the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. I'm going to present to
14 you an overview of the terms of reference for SEDAR 91, which will
15 be spiny lobster.

16
17 So, SEDAR, for those of you who have been through the process, but
18 don't really know what that acronym means, is the Southeast Data
19 Assessment and Review. So, it is a process. This is SEDAR 91. I
20 think I started on SEDAR 4. Every time I do one of these, I learn
21 something new, and it always has a surprise or two. That doesn't
22 mean it's a bad thing.

23
24 Next slide, please.

25
26 So just some milestones that we need to think about. This process
27 is really in three steps. So, there'll be a data workshop, which
28 will be in person. There'll be an assessment workshop, which will
29 be a series of webinars. And there'll be a review workshop, which
30 again will be in person. Just a couple of important marks that we
31 need to hit. So, workshop appointments will be finalized at your
32 meeting next April. So, I'll need to be working with Council staff
33 and with Julie Neer at SEDAR to get those appointments made. There
34 are appointments that SEDAR pays for, there are appointments that
35 the Science Center pays for, those are usually Science Center
36 staff. And the Council can appoint people and pay for them to
37 attend. These are public meetings, so people can go on their own
38 dime if they so choose. But we certainly have workshop appointments
39 for people that are expected to be active participants and add
40 information to the process.

41
42 So, we'll then have a data scoping call in June. We just had one
43 for SEDAR 84. And basically, that's a a webinar where we discuss
44 those data sets that are available. We don't get into the gory
45 details, but we do want to be made available of potential data
46 sets. There are some data submission deadlines in September and
47 October of next year. The data workshop, right now, is penciled in
48 for November of 2024. There are some assessment webinars from

1 January to April. And then, the review workshop is scheduled for
2 August. So, it's a long process. We've got to have time for the
3 analysts to do their jobs. But these workshops in particular are
4 when we get a lot of input from all of the stakeholders involved
5 in the process.

6
7 So, next slide, please.

8
9 So, these are the terms of reference. There are terms of reference
10 for each of those steps, the data step, the assessment step, and
11 the review step. The SSC has already approved these. We can spend
12 as long or as little amount of time as the Council would like. I
13 will spare you from my reading each of these slides, but I'll try
14 and summarize them.

15
16 So, in this case, these are the terms of reference for the data
17 workshop. Basically, the idea behind the data workshop is to review
18 those data sets that are available as inputs or potential inputs
19 to the stock assessment models. So, they include things like the
20 commercial and recreational landings and discards, if we've got
21 them, length and age composition data, life history and other
22 ecological information, indices of abundance, those are things
23 like catch per unit effort series. We will want to include data
24 through at least 2022. Recommendations for future research are
25 also provided at these data workshops.

26
27 We're looking for specific guidance there for how we can make this
28 better in the future and there's a report that's prepared. So, I
29 will keep going unless you all have specific questions on any one
30 of these slides.

31
32 So, next slide please.

33
34 So, we've got another set of terms of reference for the assessment
35 workshop. These are a little more detailed and technical. Again,
36 the terms of reference provide guidance for how the process will
37 work, and the kinds of things we're trying to achieve at each step
38 of the process. So, in the assessment workshop, we're essentially
39 trying to develop and apply assessment tools that are compatible
40 with the available data. So, if we don't have data to do a
41 particular kind of approach in assessment model, we may have data
42 that support a different kind of approach. So, that's really what
43 we're trying to figure out leading up to and during this assessment
44 workshop.

45
46 And then, there's some things that we're trying to focus on that
47 are centered around uncertainty. We want to understand how much
48 uncertainty is there in the data inputs? How much uncertainty is

1 there within the model? How can we quantify that? And what does it
2 mean for the results?

3
4 Next slide.

5
6 And then, there are some series of acronyms that we have to get
7 numbers for. Things like Maximum Fishing Mortality Threshold or
8 MFMT. Maximum Sustainable Yield or a proxy for that. Minimum Stock
9 Size Threshold. These are all metrics that we're trying to estimate
10 with this stock assessment procedure. There may be an alternative.
11 If we can't get to these numbers, there is another alternative
12 approach that we might use. So, these again are guidance for what
13 we're trying to achieve during the stock assessment process. And
14 these are all the things that we need to get to. This is the kind
15 of management advice information that we're trying to get to.

16
17 Next slide.

18
19 And then again, another set of metrics and management advice to
20 supply to the SSC and to you all. A lot of that stuff at the bottom
21 there where you see an F, what we're talking about with F, that's
22 fishing mortality. So, what is the impact of the fishery on the
23 population? So, there's a series of F's that we're trying to get
24 to, particularly if the stock is overfished.

25
26 Next slide.

27
28 And then there are some reports that are produced at the end of
29 the assessment workshop as well. And we're looking, again, at
30 research recommendations for the future. We always want to-- part
31 of the process is to make the next assessment better and so we can
32 identify gaps in our data and in our analyses that we could improve
33 upon next time.

34
35 Next slide.

36
37 And then we've got a series of guidance or terms of reference for
38 the review workshop. And so, typically the review workshop involves
39 some members of the SSC as well as independent reviewers who come
40 in. Center for Independent Experts. They're hired to come in and
41 serve as impartial reviewers. And so, these terms of reference
42 really guide that review. So, they're asking these kinds of
43 questions. Are data decisions that were made in the data workshop
44 and the assessment workshop, did they make sense? Where they the
45 right decision? Do we understand the data uncertainties? And how
46 are they handled within the modeling framework? Were the methods
47 used scientifically sound? Do the assessment models, do they make
48 sense? Were they configured properly? Were they used consistently

1 with standard practices? Those kinds of of questions will be the
2 consideration of this review panel.

3
4 Next slide.

5
6 And then, can the results be used to inform management? That's
7 really sort of the most basic question, isn't it? So, that's
8 something that this review panel will consider. Are we completely
9 off the mark during this process or does it make sense, and can
10 the results be used to develop annual catch recommendations?

11
12 I'm just going to give you a moment to sort of scan these things.
13 Like I said, I don't want to read them to you, but I don't want to
14 dwell on them too long either, unless you have questions. Again,
15 the SSC has already given their okay to these, so it's really up
16 to you all to give the final approval.

17
18 Next slide.

19
20 And again, as with every step the review workshop can make research
21 recommendations. They can provide guidance on areas to improve the
22 data or the modeling approaches. They can provide recommendations
23 on possible ways to improve the entire process. Maybe the way the
24 SEDAR process is working isn't the best fit for this particular
25 kind of data and the kinds of things we need to be doing here in
26 the region. And of course, they provide a summary of their
27 conclusions and recommendations.

28
29 Next slide.

30
31 Oh, I think that's it. So, any questions? I know that was quick
32 and there were a lot of words and a lot of concepts on all of
33 those, but I'm happy to take any questions or backup and review
34 anything you'd like to see again.

35 36 Questions/Comments

37
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Kevin. Miguel?

39
40 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Kevin, do you need any motion from the Council
41 to accept what you just presented?

42
43 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** I think so, yes. I think we need to make that.

44
45 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Jack?

46
47 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Just one question. I
48 assume this applies to all three island-based FMPs and we wind up

1 with separate A, B, C Resulting from it. Just like previously.

2
3 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Correct. So, yeah, there'll be three assessments.
4 They'll all have the same terms of reference. These are pretty
5 general and pretty standard. There's nothing that is specifically
6 applicable to one island versus the other. But we'll have three
7 assessments.

8
9 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Julian?

10
11 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Julian Magras, for the record. So, the question,
12 Kevin, the Caribbean has experienced multiple major events,
13 natural disasters, COVID, that impact fishing landings related to
14 data collection. Can a statement about evaluating those to ensure
15 they are accounted for in indices?

16
17 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thanks, Julian. Yeah, we'll definitely want to
18 understand that. So, a big part of having the fishers and other
19 members of the community as part of this process and being
20 especially at the data workshop. The data workshop is where we
21 really get into the data to understand what are the patterns we're
22 seeing, what may have driven them. And so, the input from the
23 fishers with their experiences day in and day out is really
24 important. So, that's a really important part of that process. And
25 those kinds of decisions are made-- All the decisions that are
26 made during the SEDAR process are a consensus decision, especially
27 during the data phase. So, we'll make those kinds of decisions
28 about how to approach those very questions during that process.

29
30 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** One more question. Julian, again, for the record.
31 Also, I had this other question that I don't know if it applies to
32 this. If studies that have been done and fishers feel they were
33 not done correctly, like studies done in the U.S.V.I. Let's say
34 we're talking about lobsters and we feel like the study was not
35 carried out correctly and we can prove that the results are not
36 the results that would have come out if it was done correctly,
37 does that information get excluded or does that study get excluded
38 from the overall picture that we're looking at when we're looking
39 at all the data or it's just that that note will be made that
40 fishers feel that that study was done incorrectly? How would that
41 work?

42
43 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** So, all of the data sets that would go into the
44 assessment are critically reviewed. So, there's nothing sacred.
45 Nothing's going to absolutely go in. Everything gets reviewed, so
46 that would be part of that review process. And then the group
47 itself sees the pros and cons and makes a decision. So, I can't
48 say at this time what would go in, what wouldn't go in, but

1 everything would be reviewed.

2
3 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Thank you very much.

4
5 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Graciela?

6
7 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, Kevin, one of the issues that is
8 always raised is the gap that we have in the recreational landings
9 and that applies, specifically, to the invertebrates. So, spiny
10 lobster in this case. That's something that I just want the Council
11 to be aware of because it's going to be-- I don't think we'll have
12 any new data from the recreational sector in 2024.

13
14 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Right. Thanks, Graciela. Yeah, we likely won't--
15 We certainly won't have a time series, but what we may have a
16 snapshot between now and then as to the magnitude of recreational
17 landings versus commercial landings. And again, it won't be a lot
18 of data, but it may inform a little bit. The tricky part, of
19 course, is what did that look like 20 years ago? Was it relatively
20 the same? Was it not? So, again, this is a conversation during
21 this whole process that what do we do about these data gaps?
22 Whether it's recreational or, you know, subsistence fishing in the
23 case of some species, maybe not lobster, maybe so. You know, how
24 do we, how do we account for that? Is that caught up in the
25 uncertainty part or what exactly? So, it's part of the process.
26 But yeah, that's a conversation that we've got to have.

27
28 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I'll have Vanessa.

29
30 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, the last thing is that we do quite
31 a bit of outreach in terms of gathering or getting people to
32 collaborate with this process. And in that case, you know, the
33 recreational sector would be the one that would be least
34 represented in most cases. So, we're starting the process now and
35 making that call for data from the recreational sector.

36
37 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Right. And that's exactly why you and I and others
38 need to work on those, the people who get appointed to be part of
39 the process, especially in the data part. Because we so often need
40 to have that kind of anecdotal reporting where we are missing
41 survey data.

42
43 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mr. Chairman, just to inform Kevin. I just got
44 word from Puerto Rico that they are about to finish the data set
45 for recreational and they are going to write you an email regarding
46 the information, what type of information and when that could be
47 available.

1 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** That's great news. Yeah. And we've been working
2 with Grisel on some of that. Yeah.

3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I think I have Vanessa.

5
6 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez, for the
7 record. Kevin, thank you for the presentation. Some of the
8 questions that I had, Graciela clarified already, but especially
9 with the workshops and the research that is made in the spiny
10 lobster, it's always a big issue in the commercial sector.

11
12 We know that is one of the most species that we catch and from my
13 experience during the past year of research, the participation of
14 the divers has been practically lost because, usually, the people
15 that we receive are focused on traps or are focused in other areas
16 that are not in the area where the biggest catch is made, like the
17 West and the East Coast.

18
19 So just to be sure and for the record. Please, try to, when the
20 people you select to make this research and especially when the
21 workshop starts, that we have that participation from the sectors
22 and the areas in Puerto Rico. I think it's the same also for the
23 islands. Thanks.

24
25 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Yeah, thank you. Yeah. And we're going to call
26 you to get some names of who needs to be involved. Because I don't
27 know them, but you do, right? And so, that's a big part of the
28 process. That's why I put that first, finalizing the appointees in
29 next April. Because between now and then we've got to identify the
30 people and then we've got to get them to be willing to participate.

31
32 So, that's the other part of it, right? We can identify some of
33 these folks and then we have to convince them that it is in their
34 best interest to be part of the process. Because we absolutely
35 have to have all the sectors that we can get. We'd have to have
36 them represented so that we're not misunderstanding they're part
37 of the fishery, right? We need to get the information from them so
38 that we're characterizing it well.

39
40 One of the big things that we didn't have last time for the stock
41 assessment was an index of abundance. That will probably come from
42 the fishery itself and that's a tricky kind of analysis to do if
43 you don't understand the fishery because you'll see patterns that
44 have nothing to do with abundance but have everything to do with
45 the way the fishery works. If we don't understand that, we're going
46 to misinterpret it so it's critical that they're involved. So,
47 thanks for that comment.

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Vance.
2
3 **VANCE VICENTE:** Recently, the Department of Natural Resources and
4 Environment reported that there are 85,000 vessels registered in
5 Puerto Rico, out of which maybe, what, 2,000 are commercial, the
6 rest are recreational. That just points out a very serious menace
7 to the marine environment in various ways, not only fisheries wise,
8 but recreational party waste, like has been reported in the
9 newspaper. That's my comment.
10
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Vance. So, we're going to put up a
12 motion. I can't read that up there. I don't know what that-- Should
13 I just read this out? Yeah.
14
15 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** *To present the motion to approve the terms of*
16 *reference and proceed with the SEDAR 91 for spiny lobster for all*
17 *islands.*
18
19 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿Vanessa, esa es tu moción?
20
21 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.
22
23 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Second?
24
25 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Second.
26
27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, the motion reads, "Motion to approve the
28 terms of reference and proceed with the schedule presented for
29 spiny lobster (SEDAR 91) for all islands. Motion by Vanessa and
30 seconded by Jean-Pierre Oriol."
31
32 All in favor say "aye."
33
34 **GROUP:** Aye.
35
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** *Any nays? Any abstentions? Hearing none, motion*
37 *carries.*
38
39 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Well, Ricardo-- Cristina, preguntale a Ricardo.
40
41 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes, I agree. Ricardo Lopez, for the record.
42 I agree.
43
44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes. Okay, thank you, Ricardo.
45
46 Okay. We're going to go for a quick break, but I'm requesting that
47 everybody just take a short four to five minutes because we're
48 lagging a little behind. Thank you.

1
2 (Whereupon a brief recess was taken.)
3

4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. breaks over. Okay. let's take our seats.
5 We've got to get started. We're getting short on time here. You
6 ready? Okay. It's open. Okay. So, one second.
7

8 So, continuing with the agenda, we have María López with the
9 Fisheries Management Plan Amendments and Actions Updates.
10

11 **Fishery Management Plans Amendments and Actions Updates— María**
12 **López-Mercer, NOAA Fisheries**
13
14

15 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is María López
16 with NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office. I'm going to be
17 discussing the status of the amendments to the Island Based
18 Fisheries Management Plans. We're waiting for the presentation to
19 be shown on the screen.
20

21 So, in the meantime. These are the slides that we normally present
22 at the beginning of each meeting where we give the Council an
23 update on all of the actions that the Council is currently
24 discussing and some of the pending items so that the Council can
25 decide how to move forward and prioritize actions.
26

27 It's not that one. The amendments. Okay the presentation is going
28 to be set soon, but in the meantime, I don't think we need this
29 slide for this.
30

31 So, we all know that since October 13, 2022, we are operating under
32 the Puerto Rico FMP, the Saint Croix FMP, and the Saint Thomas and
33 Saint John FMP. For the benefit of our new Council member these
34 are the management plans that we are operating under to manage
35 fisheries in the federal waters of Puerto Rico, Saint Thomas/Saint
36 John, and Saint Croix. This replaces the previous management plans,
37 which were the reef fish, spiny lobster, queen conch, and corals
38 in associated plants and invertebrates.
39

40 Okay, next slide, please. Thank you, Cristina.
41

42 Okay, So, that was the first item on the table. The second item on
43 the table is Framework Amendment 1 to the Island-Based FMPs. This
44 is the Spiny Lobster Reference Points; this is the first one. It
45 became effective on April 15, 2023, and this one was based on
46 updates from SEDAR 57 Spiny Lobster Assessment. I'm just mentioning
47 this to let you know that this was our first amendment that became
48 effective, Amendment to the Island-Based FMPs, and it had new

1 reference points for Spiny Lobster.

2
3 Other amendments that we are going to be discussing today, and
4 that are currently under review, is the Amendment 1 to the Island-
5 Based FMPs, which is the buoy gear definition and use. As you can
6 recall, this is the amendment that would prohibit buoy gear use
7 for the recreational sector and would allow up to 25 hooks on the
8 buoy gear for the commercial fishers.

9
10 The final rule for this amendment published on July 20, 2023, those
11 numbers that are in there are the reference for the final rule, so
12 you can find it in the federal register if you're interested in
13 reading it. Now the regulations for this, for the buoy gear
14 amendment, are going to become effective on August 21, 2023. This
15 means that once these regulations are effective, buoy gear is going
16 to be prohibited for use by the recreational sector and then
17 fishers that are engaging in the buoy gear fishery, commercial
18 fishers, are going to be able to continue to be allowed up to 25
19 hooks on the buoy gear.

20
21 The next item that we are going to be currently discussing is
22 Amendment 2 to the Island-Based FMPs, trawl net gear and descending
23 devices. This is the amendment that will modify the use of all
24 trawl gear in the EEZ, in the Exclusive Economic Zone of all three
25 islands, prohibit the use of gillnets or modify the use of
26 gillnets, I may say, trammel nets, purse seines, in the EEZ, and
27 require that descending devices are available and ready for use
28 when fishing for reef fish in the exclusive economic zone.

29
30 Now, as you recall back in April, in the meeting in April, the
31 Council finalized the selection of preferred alternatives for all
32 the actions that were included. However, the interdisciplinary
33 planning team that has been developing this amendment would like
34 the Council to clarify some items with respect to the gillnet
35 action before moving forward with final action for this item. So,
36 that means that the final action after this is all discussed later
37 this morning may be postponed to December 2023.

38
39 The next amendment that we're going to be discussing today is the
40 Framework Amendment 2, also to all the island-based FMPs. This is
41 the update on the overfishing limit, the ABC, and the ACL for spiny
42 lobster. This is based on the 2022 update assessment to the SEDAR
43 57 spiny lobster assessment. It will provide new ACLs for lobster
44 under each FMP. This amendment was already discussed during the
45 April meeting, and at this meeting, the Council can decide to take
46 final action to approve this amendment to be submitted to the
47 Secretary of Commerce for the development of the regulations. This
48 is also an amendment that we're going to be discussing this

1 morning.

2
3 The other amendment that we're going to be discussing today is
4 Amendment 3 to each one of the Island-Based FMPs. And this one is
5 the one that will deal with new management measures for dolphin
6 and wahoo in all three islands. This amendment will establish
7 recreational bag limits and size limits for all fishing for dolphin
8 and wahoo stocks in all three islands.

9
10 During the last Council meeting, the Council reviewed the document
11 and chose preferred alternatives for some of the actions related
12 to the U.S. Virgin Islands. At this meeting, the Council would be
13 reviewing and if that is the desire of the Council, choose
14 preferred for Puerto Rico, for the actions that are specific to
15 Puerto Rico. Also, there are some of the actions in the U.S. Virgin
16 Islands that still need some discussion and the Council can decide
17 to revisit those actions or if they would like to take preferred
18 alternatives at this time. So, this is an amendment that is still
19 under development, and we are going to be discussing this this
20 afternoon.

21
22 Next page.

23
24 Okay. So, all of the actions that are on this slide, this is almost
25 my last slide, are actions that are not currently being developed
26 as an amendment. Okay. These are actions that the Council has
27 discussed that they wanted to discuss and put into consideration
28 for creating an amendment in the future or have a little bit more
29 discussion. So, I'm going to go through each one of them and at
30 the end, I'm going to go back to three of those actions that the
31 Council may need to make some decisions before we move forward.

32
33 There's an action to develop a federal permit system for the EEZ
34 for the U.S. Virgin Islands and for Puerto Rico. This would
35 evaluate general permits, limited permits, or any other actions
36 that the Council would like to take. We will be discussing this at
37 the December 2023 Council meeting instead of during this meeting.
38 So, we're requesting the Council and staff to be able to discuss
39 that instead in December.

40
41 The idea at that time is that we will provide a presentation and
42 we will engage in the discussion so that the Council can provide
43 guidance as to whether they want to move forward with the
44 development of a federal permit system, because as you know, this
45 is a complex action and the more guidance the Council can provide
46 to staff in terms of what they would like to see happening with
47 this permit system, the better it will be so we can focus on it.
48 So, I would encourage everybody to think a little bit about that.

1
2 Another action that we have the Council has had some interest in
3 the past is a Trap Reduction Plan for U.S. Virgin Island. There's
4 no updates from this one at this point. This one is the one that
5 would evaluate compatibility with U.S.V.I. trap reduction program.
6 We will continue having conversations with our U.S.V.I. government
7 partners to see where and when they would like to move forward
8 with something and if and we'll bring back some updates to the
9 Council at that time.

10
11 Another action is the timing of seasonal area closures for the Red
12 Hind Grouper in the Puerto Rico EEZ. This is an action that the
13 Council discussed some time ago regarding a potential shift in the
14 timing of the seasonal area closures for the red hind grouper in
15 Western Puerto Rico. At this point, we're still gathering
16 information. There was a meeting with some of the scientists where
17 we were able to collect some additional information for this action
18 and there's some research that is ongoing. So, the request will
19 probably be for the Council to wait until all of this information
20 is available to bring it back to the table.

21
22 I would like to see if Graciela has anything that she would like
23 to say regarding this.

24
25 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** The Council participates in the coral
26 reef conservation program grants. One of the grants that is ongoing
27 right now, specifically deals with Abrir La Sierra and the
28 comparison of technologies to determine the population or the stock
29 of red hinds in one of the sites and to evaluate the different
30 methodology to determine whether it's two red hinds that make
31 noise, or if it's a hundred of them that make noise.

32
33 The reason for that is because the acoustics have given us quite
34 a bit of information regarding the presence of individuals at the
35 spawning sites, but we still don't know how many. So, currently,
36 we are on the second year of that comparison, and the third year
37 we'll move that comparison to Lang Bank. So, in the next two years
38 we'll have information on the abundance of the red hind at these
39 spawning sites in two of the protected areas, one in Puerto Rico,
40 the other one in Saint Croix and a determination of which
41 methodology to apply to all of the other MPAs that the Council has
42 in the EEZ. So having said that, the red hind is being discussed,
43 but the data will not come in until the next year and a half, two
44 years.

45
46 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you, Graciela. Okay, So, I think with
47 that said, I mean, unless the Council has anything else to comment
48 on that red hind, I think it should be something that perhaps the

1 guidance to staff could be, just to wait a little bit until that
2 information is available. If you all agree.

3
4 There's another action that has to do with the red hind, but this
5 time it's the seasonal closures in the Saint Croix EEZ. The Lang
6 Bank seasonal closure. This was a request that was made to the
7 Council to evaluate modifying the Lang Bank closure during the
8 three months that it's closed to allow fishing for pelagic species
9 during the closure and other species, because right now during the
10 closure, there's no fishing.

11
12 So, the Council tasked staff to move forward with this action and
13 then staff is planning to bring an options paper to the December
14 23, 2023, meeting to scope a little bit more about this. The
15 Council could, if there was a need to, bring a little bit more
16 information for this, it would be advisable to have a District
17 Advisory Panel meeting for Saint Croix to gather that information,
18 but I would leave that to the discretion of the Council. So, that's
19 something that can be discussed too.

20
21 There are two more actions. This is about the rainbow runner and
22 specifically for Puerto Rico. Right now, the rainbow runner is
23 classified as a reef fish in the Puerto Rico FMP, but in reality,
24 and based on testimony from fishers, recreational fishers mostly,
25 this is caught as a pelagic species. So, there was a request that
26 was brought from the District Advisory Panel of Puerto Rico
27 requesting the Council to reconsider reclassifying the rainbow
28 runner as a pelagic species. So, this item was reviewed by the SSC
29 at their last meeting that was in May, and they will be providing
30 recommendations at this meeting with this regard. I think for this
31 one, we can wait until the SSC gives their recommendation and their
32 rationale and then the Council will need to decide if they want to
33 move forward with an amendment to make this change. So, we can
34 talk about that once the SSC provides their recommendation.

35
36 The last item is the 2023 accountability measure discussion. This
37 was a discussion that we had at the past meeting regarding stocks
38 that may continue to exceed their ACLs due to enhanced reporting
39 because there have been changes. Obviously, when we move from the
40 old FMPs to the new FMPs and then there was changes in the way
41 that the stocks were grouped. So, there will be stocks that they
42 exceed their ACL, however, it was determined by the Science Center
43 that it was due to the enhanced reporting. So, to prevent this
44 from continuing to occur in the future the Council needs to take
45 action to revise those stocks so the ACLs can be revisited.

46
47 So, the Council will be tasking the SSC with looking into this.
48 So, there's a need for further guidance. At this time, what we

1 would probably like to request is that the Council, perhaps commits
2 into tasking the SSC at a not too late meeting. Obviously, there's
3 an agenda that the SSC has and somethings that they need to be
4 done as well. So just to set it up as a priority and just to set
5 a date as to when the SSC should be discussing this.

6
7 Okay, last slide.

8
9 So, I went into this right now. So, 2023 Mr. Chair I think at this
10 point, because this is the only time that we're going to be
11 discussing these things during this meeting, perhaps this is a
12 good opportunity if you think it's okay to see if you would like
13 to send this to the SSC at some point.

14
15 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah. You're talking about the AM discussion?

16
17 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** I'm talking about-- I'm sorry, the 2023 AM
18 Discussion. The first one.

19
20 So, just to rephrase. Do you think the Council is interested in
21 sending this to the SSC for further guidance and do you think this
22 is something that can be completed within a certain timeframe?
23 Graciela, we may need to look at you too. Or maybe bounce this
24 here too, if this is something that could be taken care of perhaps
25 during the next couple of meetings.

26
27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Graciela?

28
29 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, actually this would be the
30 involvement of the Science Center in terms of allowing for new
31 data to be considered as not being detrimental to the fishers. So,
32 the conversation needs to happen between the Science Center and
33 the SSC in terms of when do we stop considering new data as new
34 data. So, I think that we should put that in the agenda for the
35 SSC, but we need to sit down and make sure that the presentations
36 are provided to the SSC to make that determination.

37
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Kevin?

39
40 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Yeah, Graciela, that's a great idea. In terms of
41 the new data, I mean, this applies to the SEDAR process as well.
42 At some point, you have to go with what you have, right? You can
43 always revisit in the future as new data comes in. I mean, that's
44 sort of the way science works. But if you wait until all the data
45 are in, you'll never make a decision about anything. Now, this is
46 not a comment about this issue in particular, just more in general,
47 that sometimes you have to go with the best available information
48 at the time because next year there may be something new at which

1 time you can revisit. But if you continue to wait on everything,
2 we'd never get a stock assessment done, for example.

3
4 So, the information that you have is likely better than what you
5 use to make the decision five years ago, or 10 years ago. So, I
6 would caution that inactivity, waiting for the ultimate data set,
7 you're going to wait a long time because there'll always be an
8 improvement. But I agree with you on your earlier point about the
9 Science Center working with the SSC.

10
11 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, one of the issues really has to do
12 with the changes in the reporting methodology that we keep asking
13 the fishers to do. So, that's one of the things that I'm hoping
14 that I have leveled off and we are on the right track. Because
15 that would really deal directly with enhanced reporting.

16
17 And secondly, the surveys that are taking place, [inaudible] and
18 the like will have a lot of information provided to the SSC
19 regarding whether it's enhanced reporting, what we're seeing, or
20 if it's really the population that is being reflected in those
21 fishery independent surveys. So, this conversation needs to
22 happen. The Council will have to provide a letter or a memo to the
23 Science Center in the direction that we're trying to figure out
24 when enhanced reporting is done, and this is the data that we have,
25 and this is what we have to use in order to change or to determine
26 that we have overrun the ACLs.

27
28 But again, it's a collaborative effort between the Science Center
29 and the Regional Office and the Council, etcetera.

30
31 Kevin?

32
33 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Yeah. And, Graciela, as you know and maybe as
34 everybody in the room knows, if there is an overage, there's
35 usually a request to the Science Center to investigate that very
36 issue. It's a difficult question. Sometimes it's straightforward,
37 but not always. It can be very difficult. So, as with any data
38 collection program, when you have changes in methodology, you
39 really have to understand how that impacts your data time series.

40
41 So, it's very true that as the forms change it changes the pattern
42 in the data and it may not mean that there are fewer fish or more
43 fish, there's better or not as good reporting depending upon the
44 impact of how fishers or fishery independent surveys are run. You
45 know, when you expand it, things change.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, I have Ricardo on a chat there, but I would
48 prefer him to come on audio.

1
2 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Let me say something for the record too. Those
3 people who are via Zoom the record of your intervention will be
4 the audio, not the chat. So, Cristina, you can tell Ricardo, if
5 he's available, so he can talk.
6

7 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Thanks for the opportunity and for
8 considering me. Ricardo López, for the record. Yes, when we talk
9 about the red hind, I would like to emphasize that I know there
10 are some difficulties in order to use the Lunar calendar, but I
11 still prefer that way. I would like to study, if it's possible,
12 that possibility of using the Lunar calendar in the regulations
13 for the red hind and maybe others, instead of the Gregorian
14 calendar. Recognizing that it could be difficult for law
15 enforcement and for the regulation itself. Thanks for the
16 opportunity.
17

18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Ricardo. Before I go to Julian, I
19 want to recognize Council Member James Kreglo and mark him as
20 present for the record and also for our previous motion he was
21 absent. So, I want to mark him as absent in the previous motion
22 before the break. Thanks.
23

24 Julian?
25

26 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** As it pertains here to the process that we've been
27 working on for the queen triggerfish for the Saint Thomas/Saint
28 John District. I know there was a lot of discussion on the sizes
29 of the fish that the fishermen were harvesting, and they were not
30 seeing the smallest sizes. I just wanted to put here, in the record
31 so when the SSC looks at it again. I provided Virginia Shervette
32 with those small ones that I retained last month for her to get
33 the life history and that information.
34

35 I was able to bring in, I think it was 24 or 25 of the small ones.
36 We don't like to bring them in because, you know, that's our
37 future. But because they were not seeing that in the assessment,
38 I myself collected those individuals and brought them in so she
39 could do the life history on those species.
40

41 So, hopefully, I know Kevin said we can't continue to get new
42 information but I know that was one of the big issues and question
43 at our SSC meeting since we didn't have any of that information.
44 So, at least we'll have that small amount that can be provided to
45 that assessment since it's not completed as yet. Thank you.
46

47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Kevin?
48

1 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Just to be clear, Julian, we always want new
2 information. We just can't always delay a decision until we have
3 all that we will ever have. Because we'll never have all we'll
4 ever have. I think we're in agreement.

5
6 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Nelson Crespo.

7
8 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm curious. Maybe Daniel
9 Matos or Ricardo can answer this question. Eh, what is the status
10 between the new data collection, electronic reporting versus the
11 trip ticket, the paper one? What is the percentage? Did the
12 electronic data reporting increase or is more or less, you know,
13 level 50/50? Because I know that's to improve the data collection.

14
15 **DANIEL MATOS CARABALLO:** The answer for this question is, right
16 now, the paper trip ticket is around 60% of the data collection,
17 and the e-reporting, the electronic trip ticket, is 40%. So, it's
18 increasing the electronic reporting. Thank you for the question.

19
20 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Daniel. I still want to María to go
21 back to your request about the SSC. I don't--

22
23 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** For this one, for the-- you know, because
24 we're talking about different topics here. So, just real quick.
25 Back to the '23 AM Discussion. I think everybody has the guidance
26 that they need. I mean, there's going to be a request for
27 information and then the Southeast Regional Office will work with
28 the Science Center and the Council to gather all the information
29 that is needed to pursue this.

30
31 So, I think at the next Council meeting, we can probably make a
32 decision as to, if this is ready for SSC review or something like
33 that. So, I just have one more topic. It is queen triggerfish, the
34 reference points. Here in the presentation it says "SSC will
35 report," but it's not really the SSC, it's the Science Center. I
36 apologize for that.

37
38 So, when Kevin is giving his presentation, he will touch on the
39 SEDAR 80, the Queen Triggerfish Assessment. As you all know, Puerto
40 Rico has been completed, this was something that was discussed,
41 I'm going to say like two or three meetings ago, where you all
42 made some decisions regarding the-- In the 180th meeting this was
43 discussed. And then, in U.S. Virgin Islands the stock assessment
44 was still not completed. So, it's very possible that during this
45 Council meeting, because Puerto Rico is completed the Council could
46 task staff to begin developing an amendment to implement this for
47 Puerto Rico.

1 So, this definitely, we can bring this conversation once Kevin is
2 discussing that. Just to be aware that this is something that the
3 staff will be prepared to work in, because the information is
4 already there. And then, for the U.S. Virgin Islands, once that's
5 ready, then that will be brought back to the Council to report on
6 the outcomes. And correct me if I'm wrong, Kevin, but I think
7 that's what the plan is. And then, at that time, the Council can
8 decide to move forward with amending the plan so this can be
9 implemented but right now it's just Puerto Rico.

10
11 Okay, So, this is all I have. Are there any questions? and if not,
12 we can start discussing the amendments and the actions but I'm
13 open for questions.

14 **Questions/Comments**

15
16
17 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel and then Vance.

18
19 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay, thank you Mr. Chairman. The easiest one to
20 get out of the way would be, following Kevin and María's
21 intervention, Puerto Rico's amendment we can move it forward. You
22 can have a motion to move that forward so we get the ball rolling
23 on that one.

24
25 The other consideration that we have is to allow Graciela, María,
26 and Kevin to put together the question that we need for the SSC to
27 answer. So, if anything, then the chair will work with Graciela to
28 put together that meeting for anything that you need from that.
29 But at this time, Mr. Chairman, probably a motion that will be in
30 order for the Puerto Rican Amendment to move forward.

31
32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay Vance.

33
34 **VANCE VICENTE:** Yeah, real quickly, because I'm going to be
35 discussing this in my presentation this afternoon. Nelson, one of
36 our research priorities is to specifically, statistically and
37 scientifically, compare the landing data reported electronically
38 versus the written form. So, that's one of our research priorities.

39
40 And second, regarding the rainbow runner. I remember that you
41 requested in the last meeting for me to include it as part of the
42 discussion, even though it wasn't in the agenda. And as you may
43 remember, we did discuss it. The Southeast Fishery Science Center
44 person, I can't remember her name, I'm sorry, she said that she
45 had to look back into this pelagic versus benthic reef behavior of
46 the rainbow runner. But from what I remember, I think that she
47 agreed that it was more pelagic than benthic reef associated. I
48 don't know. Do you remember Nelson? That's as far as I--

1
2 **NELSON CRESPO:** I thought that the SSC said to move forward to
3 move the rainbow runner to a pelagic species.
4
5 **VANCE VICENTE:** Thank you.
6
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, we need to do a motion here. So, we
8 want to put up a screen for a motion. Do you need language?
9
10 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you for the help with the language. *I*
11 *present a motion to move forward with the queen triggerfish*
12 *amendment to the IBFMP for Puerto Rico.*
13
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We need a second.
15
16 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Second.
17
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, we have a motion by Vanessa to move
19 forward with the queen triggerfish amendment to the IBFMP for
20 Puerto Rico. Seconded by J.P. Oriol.
21
22 Discussion, sorry. Jack?
23
24 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. just want to, you know,
25 the Council discussed that assessment back in December. They have
26 an ABC recommendation from the SSC. I think what was discussed
27 there that we needed to update was the ABC OFL and the ACLs and
28 that there may also be a need to update the accountability measures
29 in that amendment as well. And, you know, the IPT will have
30 recommendations for the Council and maybe other things that they
31 want us to look at as well. So, I just want to have that on the
32 record.
33
34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Katherine?
35
36 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** In the motion, it's not necessary to refer
37 to the island-based FMP for Puerto Rico. When we're dealing with
38 just one of the FMPs, we can just call it the Puerto Rico FMP.
39
40 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay.
41
42 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes, I accept the language.
43
44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Does the seconder agree with that change?
45
46 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Yes.
47
48 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any further discussion? So, we'll take it to a

1 vote. So, all in favor say "aye."

2
3 **GROUP:** Aye.

4
5 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Ricardo, I didn't hear you. Did he say it?

6
7 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** He's writing to me that he agrees with
8 the motion and he's having problems with the audio.

9
10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. As long as he agrees. *Any nays? Any*
11 *abstentions? Motion carries.*

12
13 Now we have Next on the agenda, final action for Framework
14 Amendment 2 to the island-based FMP's update to the spiny lobster
15 overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch and annual catch
16 limits by Sarah Stephenson.

17
18 **Final Action for Framework Amendment 2 to the Island-Based FMPs:**
19 **Updates to the Spiny Lobster Overfishing Limit, Acceptable**
20 **Biological Catch, and Annual Catch Limit—Sarah Stephenson, NOAA**
21 **Fisheries**

22
23
24 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Hi, this is Sarah Stephenson. Can you hear me
25 okay?

26
27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah.

28
29 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay. Thank you, Cristina, for driving. I'm
30 going to give a quick update on Framework Amendment 2, which is
31 going to update the overfishing limit, acceptable biological
32 catch, and annual catch limit for each island for spiny lobster.
33 And that was based on the 2022 update assessment that was done for
34 the 2019, SEDAR 57 Spiny Lobster Stock Assessments. And there was
35 a stock assessment for each island. So, the update updated each
36 island's values.

37
38 Next slide, please.

39
40 So, at the last meeting that we had, the Council selected preferred
41 alternatives for each island, which set the ACL for spiny lobster
42 equal to 95 percent of the acceptable biological catch that was
43 recommended by the Council's SSC, stemming from that 2022 update.
44 So, the final draft of the amendment was prepared between the April
45 meeting and now and is ready for your review and final action at
46 this meeting. If you approve the amendment as is, you could submit
47 the amendment for review by the Secretary of Commerce and then we
48 would begin the rulemaking process.

1
2 Next slide. Thank you.

3
4 So, Framework Amendment 2, which is available in the briefing book
5 for this meeting, would update those three values for spiny lobster
6 for each island. It is based on best scientific information
7 available because it's based on that 2022 update assessment to the
8 stock assessment. And then if approved, the updated ACLs would be
9 implemented for the next fishing year, the 2024 fishing year. And
10 here, in this table, are the comparison of the ACL. If we take no
11 action, which is that second column, and then the ACLs that are
12 resulting from the preferred alternatives in framework amendment.
13 So, you can see how they change.

14
15 Next slide.

16
17 So, the amendment, as it is part of what was developed between
18 April and August was a full kind of analysis of the effects. So,
19 biological/ecological effects, the social/economic-- That should
20 say economic, not ecological again. Apologies. --and analyzed each
21 island's change individually.

22
23 So, for both Saint Croix and Saint Thomas/Saint John, the ACLs
24 will actually increase from what the baseline is, to what the
25 proposed new ACLs are. So, for those effects, you might have short
26 term negative effects, from more lobster being removed, but long-
27 term positive effects from managing to the maximum sustainable
28 yield. Because that's what the stock assessments do, they want to
29 get us at that MSY level.

30
31 On the social economic analysis, you would have short-term positive
32 effects from increased revenues and fishing opportunities. And
33 then, long-term positive effects from sustainably managing the
34 stock. And you'll see that double asterisk there, those benefits
35 would really only be applicable if fishermen do take advantage of
36 the increased fishing opportunities and harvest to that new higher
37 ACL. If they choose to continue harvesting at the rate that they're
38 at, then there likely wouldn't be any positive or negative changes
39 to the fishers.

40
41 So, for Puerto Rico, which the ACL decreases slightly from the
42 baseline to the proposed ones for your biological/ecological
43 effects, you're going to have short term positive effects from
44 decreased removals, meaning they wouldn't be able to take as many
45 lobsters.

46
47 Sorry, my computer just crashed. Hopefully you didn't lose me.
48

1 So, decrease in ACL, biological/ecological. But that decrease
2 removal is really only applicable if they're fishing in federal
3 waters because these ACLs are only applicable in federal waters.
4 it doesn't govern state waters. So, but they would also have long
5 term positive effects from managing to the MSY.

6
7 For the social/economic, you would have short term negative effects
8 from not being able to harvest as much lobster and the decrease in
9 fishing opportunities. Again, that's specific to where they fish,
10 state versus federal waters. But there would be long term positive
11 effects from sustainably managing the stock.

12
13 Next slide.

14
15 And then as part of the briefing book, we also submitted the
16 regulatory text, which is kind of a preview of what the regulations
17 are going to look like online. And so, just in case you wanted to
18 see it, the draft regulatory text will state, for Puerto Rico,
19 which is part 622.440, the ACL is 357,629 pounds, round weight,
20 and it has a conversion in kilograms. And then Saint Croix, the
21 ACL is 137,254. And then for Saint Thomas/Saint John the ACL is
22 133,207.

23
24 So, that's what the regulatory text is. There's a header which is
25 applicable to each of those parts. So, the header does say spiny
26 lobster. So, even though these statements don't say spiny lobster,
27 it's clear that those ACLs are applicable to lobster.

28
29 And I believe-- Next slide. I believe that's it. Oh, no, there's
30 next steps. Next slide, please. Sorry, I'm seeing--

31
32 Okay, So, next steps. So, you can, if you approve the framework as
33 it is, you can submit that today for secretarial review and that
34 would be by motion. There is a section of the amendment that isn't
35 completed or wasn't completed at the time. The amendment was
36 submitted to the briefing book, and it was just missing some costs
37 associated with preparing the amendment. We've since received
38 those from the economist, but they will just need to be updated
39 from what's the version that's in the briefing book. So, in light
40 of that and any other minor editorial changes that might be found
41 in doing a final kind of review of the amendment, you could allow
42 the chair to approve any editorial changes made to the amendment
43 and that would be another motion to do so.

44
45 And then, if you do make those motions, NMFS would begin
46 rulemaking. There would be a proposed rule that would include
47 opportunity for the public to comment. And then, the final rule
48 would likely be completed sometime in early 2024, and that's when

1 those new regulations, the new ACLs would be effective.

2
3 And next slide. With that, I'll take any questions if you have
4 any.

5
6 **Question/Comments**
7

8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Not a question, but, Cristina, can you go back
9 to the next steps? Okay, Sarah, for the next step, Council submits
10 framework amendment 2 for secretarial review. So, that would be
11 the motion at this time during this day?

12
13 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Right. So, I believe the motion would say
14 something along the lines of that the Council approves the
15 framework amendment 2 to you know, each of the FMPs. The Puerto
16 Rico FMP, the Saint Croix FMP and the Saint Thomas/Saint John FMP
17 with alternative 3 selected. So, that's stating that you would
18 like to set the ACL at 95 percent of the ABC and then you submit
19 the amendment to the Secretary of Commerce for approval.

20
21 So that would kind of, it's a long motion, but it would be something
22 along that that encompasses, you've seen the amendment, you agree
23 with the preferred alternative that was selected and you're ready
24 to the secretary. So, that would be kind of the language you would
25 want for that course.

26
27 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Sarah, can we have use your abilities with the
28 chat and you can write that language in the chat so we can put it
29 on the screen?

30
31 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Sure. I can work with-- Is it Cristina? I can
32 work with Cristina.

33
34 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yes. So, we have a chance to start the motion.

35
36 Mr. Chairman, while we write the motion, does anybody have a
37 question regarding the presentation of Sarah at this time?

38
39 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Vanessa?

40
41 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** I have a question, in the case of Puerto Rico,
42 about the numbers. If we already know that for the past two years,
43 we have gotten closures because of the best data available and we
44 already know that the data is increasing, we also know that we
45 have more fishermen now and that these numbers are going up, why
46 is the data and the ACL going down?

47
48 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, thank you Vanessa for that question. The

1 numbers are kind of resultant directly from the update assessment.
2 And so, this wasn't a full SEDAR assessment with new data streams
3 and new information like what you just suggested, it was just
4 strictly an update based on the data that was used in that original
5 one. So, it's kind of limited in what it can consider in my opinion-
6 - And sorry, this is just my opinion, so if the Science Center
7 wants to weigh in with additional information, I would love that.
8 But it was just a straight, kind of like, let's take the numbers
9 that were used for the SEDAR and let's refresh them with more
10 recent years of data, but not necessarily new types, new
11 information like what you just suggested about, you know, we have
12 more fissures and that kind of information.

13
14 So that information, what you just suggested or explained would be
15 used in the next full SEDAR assessment for spiny lobster, which is
16 what we were just discussing earlier with the terms of reference.
17 So, for now even though it's still considered best scientific
18 information because it was an update to an assessment, like I said,
19 it can only handle what was put into it. And so, we are aware that
20 we had an accountability measure triggered and applied for last
21 year for lobster. And a lot of that is as I mentioned in the
22 presentation--

23
24 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Sarah, we are not hearing you. Do you
25 hear us?

26
27 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Oh, sorry. I can hear you. You can't hear me?
28 No. Um.

29
30 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Sarah, do you hear us now?

31
32 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I can hear you. Can you hear me?

33
34 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Yes.

35
36 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay, okay. I see that they can hear me. Sorry
37 about that. Did you hear any of my, kind of, response or none of
38 it?

39
40 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** We heard a little bit.

41
42 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** A little bit. Okay. So, Vanessa, from what you
43 did hear, does that answer your question or no? Would you like me
44 to keep explaining?

45
46 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Well, I just want to ask you if there's any
47 possibility that we stay, in the case of Puerto Rico, with no
48 action?

1
2 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I don't believe so, because this is based on an
3 update to a stock assessment. And so, we're required to kind of,
4 when new information like that comes in that's been deemed best
5 scientific information, we're required to use it.

6
7 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Okay, thanks.

8
9 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay, thank you.

10
11 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, Sarah, the language for the motion I will
12 read it for the record. "Motion to approve the Framework Amendment
13 2: Update the Overfishing Limit, Acceptable Biological Catch and
14 Annual Catch Limit for spiny lobster." Is that correct? Or do we
15 need to add something else?

16
17 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** I'm going to add something to the tail end of
18 that real quick. Okay. Sorry, I wasn't doing two things at once,
19 so when I started talking, my hands stopped typing. So, I just
20 dropped it in the chat, Cristina, hopefully you can see it. And
21 it's just really to kind of add to that statement that it's to
22 each of the FMPs with the alternative three selected as the
23 preferred and to submit it to the Secretary of Commerce for
24 approval. So, it's just kind of--

25
26 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Sarah, could you write your comment to
27 the one that says presentations?

28
29 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes. Okay.

30
31 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Thank you.

32
33 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, you could probably just copy all of that
34 and put it right after the word spiny lobster. And then, just put
35 "to." After lobster, put the word "to" T O. And then, the rest of
36 it should just read okay. And that kind of just cements all of the
37 actions and alternatives as they were presented in the framework
38 and the Council's intent for those.

39
40 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Jack.

41
42 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Jack McGovern, for the
43 record. I think you could add to that, that the Council moves to
44 approve framework amendment 2 and then the rest of that text.

45
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Did you get that, Cristina?

47
48 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Council moves-- up on top, right? In the

1 beginning, Jack? In the beginning, right? Yeah.
2
3 James, do you want to read that out? As a motion?
4
5 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** James Kreglo, for the record. *The Council moves*
6 *to approve Framework Amendment 2, Update the Overfishing Limit,*
7 *Acceptable Biological Catch, and Annual Catch Limit for spiny*
8 *lobster to the Puerto Rico, Saint Croix, Saint Thomas/Saint John*
9 *Fishery Management Plans with Alternative 3 selected as the*
10 *preferred alternative for each action, and submit the amendment to*
11 *the Secretary of Commerce for approval.*
12
13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Need a second?
14
15 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Second.
16
17 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any discussion? Okay, all in favor say "aye."
18
19 **GROUP:** Aye.
20
21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any nays?
22
23 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** No.
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any abstentions. Okay. So, we have five "yes"
25 and one "no." No, four and one.
26
27 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** I'm sorry. I do not agree.
28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Oh, Ricardo. Right, Ricardo. I'm sorry, I didn't
30 get Ricardo's response. What was it?
31
32 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** He said, "no."
33
34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Oh, okay, So, two no's. Four and two.
35
36 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Cristina, son cuatro "yes," dos "no."
37
38 Mr. Chairman, I suggest to do a roll call for the vote. So, you
39 don't have any [inaudible] like this, you know.
40
41 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Yeah, that'll be a little more organized.
42 So, I'll start with Kreglo.
43
44 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yes.
45
46 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Yes.
47
48 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** No.

1
2 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Yes.

3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Ricardo.

5
6 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** I changed my decision. Yes.

7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

9
10 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Ahora son cinco y uno.

11
12 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, the motion is, *"The Council moves to approve*
13 *Framework Amendment 2: Update the Overfishing Limit, Acceptable*
14 *Biological Catch, and Annual Catch Limit for spiny lobster to the*
15 *Puerto Rico, Saint Croix, and Saint Thomas/Saint John Fishery*
16 *Management Plan with Alternative 3 selected as a preferred*
17 *alternative for each action and submit the amendment to the*
18 *Secretary of Commerce for approval."*

19
20 *We have five "yes" and one "no."* Miguel?

21
22 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, Mr. Chairman, Graciela and I were talking
23 and rather than cutting the next presentation and discussion Diana
24 is going to check on lunch. So, we can have lunch but instead of
25 coming back at 1:30, we propose to come back at 1 o'clock. So,
26 we're going to lose that amount of time.

27
28 María?

29
30 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** We have not finished with this action. There
31 are still some things that need to be taken care of before we move
32 forward. I would allow Sarah to continue.

33
34 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Can she do that in 10 minutes, or can she come
35 back at one o'clock?

36
37 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Oh, yes. This is fast.

38
39 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay.

40
41 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you. Go ahead, Sarah.

42
43 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes. Thank you, María. It's really just to make
44 those other two small motions to allow the Chair to review any
45 editorial changes and then also for the Council to approve the
46 regulatory texts.

47
48 So, I did put both of those in the chat. The first one, the Council

1 moves to allow staff to make editorial non substantive changes to
2 Framework Amendment 2. Any changes will be reviewed by the Council
3 Chair. So, that's the first motion, and then the motion to redeem
4 the regulations. The Council moves to redeem the regulations
5 presented as necessary and appropriate for implementing Framework
6 Amendment 2 and to give the Council Chair the authority to deem
7 any modifications made to the proposed rule as necessary and
8 appropriate for implementing framework amendment 2.

9
10 So, it's very wordy, but there they have it. And so, feel free to
11 change the language if you like. But that will help us just walk
12 away from this meeting with everything that we know we need to do
13 and start rulemaking for you.

14
15 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, Mr. Chairman. We have the two motions on the
16 screen and we need somebody to move it, second it and go forward
17 with it.

18
19 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** *The Council move to allow staff to make*
20 *editorial non-substantive changes to Framework Amendment 2. Any*
21 *changes will be reviewed by the Council Chair.* I So, move.

22
23 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Second?

24
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We need a second.

26
27 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.

28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any discussion on that? All in favor say "aye."

30
31 **GROUP:** Aye.

32
33 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any nays?

34
35 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Ricardo's vote?

36
37 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes, I agree.

38
39 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Ricardo. *Any nays? Any abstentions?*
40 *Hearing none, motion carries.*

41
42 Second one?

43
44 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So again, we need a mover for this one.

45
46 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** *The Council moves to deem the regulations*
47 *presented by staff as necessary and appropriate for implementing*
48 *Framework Amendment 2 and to give the Council Chair, the authority*

1 *to deem any modifications made to the proposed rule as necessary*
2 *and appropriate for implementing Framework Amendment 2.*

3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Need a second.

5
6 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.

7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, James. Any discussion? Hearing none.
9 All in favor say "aye."

10
11 **GROUP:** Aye.

12
13 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes.

14
15 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Ricardo. Any nays? Any abstention?
16 *Hearing none, motion carries.*

17
18 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿María, ya terminamos? So, Mr. Chairman. So, if
19 you all agree, lunch is across the door, and then we can go back
20 at one o'clock to save time? You will all do that?

21
22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, yes So, we're breaking for lunch. We're
23 on recess, be back at one.

24
25 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on August 15, 2023.)

26
27 - - -

28
29 AUGUST 15, 2023

30
31 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

32
33 - - -

34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, we're going to get started any second there
35 now, since it's six after one. Seven after one. ¿Estamos, Cristina?
36 ¿Estoy bien? Okay.

37
38 So, we're going to continue with the agenda. It will be the Review
39 on Final Action for Amendment 2 to the Island-Based FMPs: Trawl
40 and Net Gear and Descending Device, with María.

41
42 **Review and Final Action for Amendment 2 to the Island-Based**
43 **FMPs: Trawl and Net Gear and Descending Devices—María López-**
44 **Mercer, NOAA Fisheries**
45

46 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to clarify, we
47 are, as we discussed earlier this morning, at this time, we're not
48 going to be requesting final action because there's still a couple

1 of things that need to be addressed. But we will be discussing
2 this amendment in full.

3
4 So, okay. So, Cristina, if you can put the presentation.

5
6 So, this is an amendment to each one of the fishery management
7 plans. This one deals with trawl gear other types of net gear such
8 as gillnet, trammel net, purse seines, and also the use of
9 descending devices for reducing fish mortality. This is an
10 amendment that you have all seen and discussed several meetings.

11
12 Next slide.

13
14 During the last Council meeting in April, the Council reviewed
15 version number three of the amendment and selected preferred
16 alternatives for all action. The IPT finalized the development of
17 Amendment 2, there's a version 3.2 in the briefing book that was
18 included in the briefing book a couple of weeks ago for your
19 review. But the IPT is now requesting revision of actions 1B, 2B,
20 and 3B, which is the one that deals with gillnets in all three
21 islands, before moving forward. That table that I'm showing in
22 here is so you can orient yourselves in terms of how the actions
23 were organized per request of the Council.

24
25 Action 1 deals with Puerto Rico, all trawl, gillnets, trammel nets,
26 and purse seines. As you can see, if you follow the column, Action
27 1(a) is trawl, Action 1(b) is gillnets, 1(c) is Trammels, and
28 Action 1(d) is Purse seines. And there's a similar organization
29 for Saint Croix, which is Action 2, with the sub actions being
30 2(a), 2(b), 2(c), and 2(d). And then, for Saint Thomas and Saint
31 John, it's Action 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d). So, most of these
32 sub-actions are pretty much the same. And the way that the Council
33 decided to go, in terms of deciding what was going to be the
34 preferred alternative, is very similar among the three islands.

35
36 Action number four we didn't divide it by island like this, but
37 the Council had the opportunity to choose something different for
38 each one of the islands, and this one is the one that deals with
39 the descending devices.

40
41 So, in the next slide-- if you can go, please. I'm going to discuss
42 the purpose and need first, and then in the next slide I'm going
43 to give you just a high overview of the actions and what you chose
44 as a preferred alternative. I don't think at this time, unless the
45 Council wants to go revisit any one of them, I think you already
46 had a good rationale for making the decisions on the preferred
47 alternative. However, again, we're going to be discussing again
48 the action for the gillnets. But before that, I just wanted to

1 show you the statement of the purpose and need, because we're going
2 to need to review it a little bit to ensure that whatever we are
3 doing complies with this purpose and need.

4
5 So, the purpose of this amendment is to prevent potential damage
6 to habitats, including essential fish habitat, from certain gear
7 types. Protect species associated with such habitats, as well as
8 to promote best fishing practices and enhance the survival of
9 released fish in the exclusive economic zones around Puerto Rico,
10 Saint Croix and Saint Thomas and Saint John. The need for this
11 amendment is to minimize potentially adverse effects of fishing to
12 habitats and associated species, and to minimize the mortality of
13 bycatch species. And for the benefits of our new member, in all of
14 the amendments that we have, we include a statement of a purpose
15 and need, which is something that will guide the way that we
16 develop our actions and the alternatives that we're using to answer
17 that question.

18
19 Okay, next slide.

20
21 Okay. In here, this is the summary of the actions with their
22 preferred alternative as included in the draft amendment, in the
23 document that was included in your briefing book. For actions 1(a),
24 2(a), and 3(a), remember everything that has a 1 is Puerto Rico,
25 everything that has a 2 is Saint Croix, everything with a 3 is
26 Saint Thomas and Saint John. These actions will modify the use of
27 trawl gear in federal waters around each one of the islands. You
28 all chose Prefer Alternative 3 for each one of the islands, which
29 is prohibit the use of trawl gear for all fishing in the EEZ around
30 Puerto Rico, or Saint Croix, or Saint Thomas and Saint John. For
31 Action 1(c), 2(c), and 3(c)-- note that I skipped (b) because it's
32 a gillnet and we'll go through that in detail soon --this one will
33 modify the use of trammel nets in federal waters around Puerto
34 Rico, San Croix, and Saint Thomas/Saint John, respectively. You
35 chose as a preferred alternative, Alternative 2, which is to
36 prohibit the use of trammel nets for all fishing in the EEZ around
37 Puerto Rico, Saint Croix, or Saint Thomas and Saint John. Actions
38 1(d), 2(d), and 3(d) modify the use of purse seines in federal
39 waters around Puerto Rico, Saint Croix, and Saint Thomas, and Saint
40 John, respectively. You all--

41
42 I'm sorry, what happened? I think we're having some issues with
43 the internet. Give us a moment. Please. There you go. Thank you.

44
45 So, I was in purse seine, So, you all chose alternative two, which
46 is prohibit the use of purse seines for all fishing in the EEZ
47 around each one of the islands. The rationale for all of these
48 decisions that you made and an analysis of each one of the

1 alternatives is included in the document. I invite you to review
2 the document in case you have any questions. I will be happy to
3 answer questions about this.

4
5 The next slide, please. Can you go to the next one first, please?
6 I think I'm missing-- Let's see. Can you go back? Two more please.
7 I think we skipped one. Go back. Back. That one. One more. Yeah.
8 Sorry for that. Nope. Nope. Nope. We're going too fast. The next
9 one. This one. Okay.

10
11
12 Action four. So, this is the last action. I apologize for that.
13 It's the requirements for the use of descending devices in the
14 reef fish component of the Puerto Rico, Saint Croix in Saint
15 Thomas/Saint John. This is the Alternative 2, that you all chose
16 as a preferred and it is to require that a descending device be on
17 board a commercial or recreational vessel and readily available
18 for use while fishing for or possessing species in the reef fish
19 component of the Puerto Rico, Saint Croix, and Saint Thomas, and
20 Saint John. And I'm not going to go into detail because we already
21 discussed that during our past meeting unless there are questions.
22 but these are the definition and the requirements that you all
23 decided to include in the definition of the descending device.

24
25 And to remind you, the descending device, this is not a requirement
26 to use the descending device because of course the use of a
27 descending device will depend on the condition of the fish. The
28 requirement is for you to have a descending device, which can be
29 easily made, you can, you can make one in your house with materials
30 that you probably already have. The amendment also have some
31 information and I believe that the Outreach and Education Advisory
32 Panel has some information on how to obtain descending devices or
33 how to prepare some descending devices too. But you should have
34 one on board in case the fish, the reef fish, the managed reef
35 fish that you are fishing for, want to fish for, is showing signs
36 of barotrauma so you can return it to the water. In this sense we
37 are trying to reduce or minimize the fishing mortality of this
38 fish that you're returning because it's usually some sort of
39 bycatch.

40
41 Okay, let's go to the next slide.

42
43 Okay, so, the way that we decided to do this presentation is taking
44 this action by itself. This is the action of the gillnets. During
45 the last time, you had already made decisions about how you wanted
46 to see the alternatives, and you made a decision of which one you
47 wanted to do as a preferred.

1 So, as I mentioned earlier, the IPT had some questions about things
2 that perhaps could be included in an alternative, if the Council
3 wants, to make the alternative more clear[inaudible] easier to
4 enforce, and also to comply with the purpose and the need of the
5 amendment.

6
7 So, the way that I'm going to do this, I would like to go through
8 the alternative, say what we have, the differences. And then, in
9 the next slides, I'm going to explain what is the type of
10 information that we need, so we can all start thinking about how
11 we want to address this. I also have some examples of suggestions
12 of how we can do this. And then, I'm going to separate this by
13 island. So, I'm going to start with Saint Croix, then Saint Thomas,
14 and then Puerto Rico. Because there are some differences. And
15 again, this is what island-based is for, right? So, when I am
16 discussing Saint Croix and Saint Thomas, I would like for the
17 representatives of Puerto Rico to pay some attention to what we
18 are discussing to see if there's any benefit of doing the things
19 that we are discussing for the U.S. Virgin Islands for Puerto Rico.

20
21 Okay. So, let's do this. So, the Alternative 1, the way that you
22 have it in the amendment, it says no auction, No action. Retain
23 gillnets as an authorized gear type for the commercial harvest of
24 federally managed and non-federally managed pelagic species and
25 the commercial harvest of non-federally managed species in the EEZ
26 around Puerto Rico or Saint Croix, or Saint Thomas-- Remember it's
27 the same alternative for everybody. It's just that it's divided by
28 island. --and as a prohibited gear type for reef fish and spiny
29 lobster in the EEZ around Puerto Rico or Saint Croix, or Saint
30 Thomas/ Saint John and inside Council Seasonally Closed Areas or
31 Council Marine Managed Areas.

32
33 This is the no action alternative. As you know, this is management
34 as it currently exists. What we call the action alternatives are
35 the alternatives that come after this one. In this case,
36 Alternative 2 and then difference of alternatives. It could be
37 another Alternative 3. But in this case, we have divided
38 alternative 2, 2a, 2b, 2c Those are called the actions alternative,
39 which is what is being proposed for change.

40
41 Alternative 2 will prohibit the use of gillnets in the EEZ around
42 Puerto Rico or Saint Croix or Saint Thomas/Saint John, and then
43 Sub-alternative 2a will say, well, let's prohibit that for all
44 fishing, which means that in federal waters of the EEZ around each
45 one of these islands, there's no use of gillnets. I want to remind,
46 remind you guys that, right now, I know that Alternative 1 is a
47 little convoluted here, but right now there is no use of gillnets
48 allowed for reef fish or for spiny lobster in federal waters. This

1 has been in place for many years.

2
3 From the managed species, the only species that can still be
4 harvested with gillnets, in federal waters, will be the pelagic
5 species because this pelagic species are new to management. We
6 just recently started doing this, managing this species and that
7 is the reason why the Council requested we address this, right?
8 So, we can manage the species with the consistent regulations like
9 we do for reef fish. Because, you know, looking at the effects on
10 the populations that potentially cause bycatch to those pelagic
11 species.

12
13 Again, this sub-alternative 2a will then prohibit the use of
14 gillnets in all federal waters. If you prohibit the use of the
15 gillnets, then there's no worries here about bycatch of species
16 that are managed or on species that are undersized or juveniles,
17 etcetera. So, that reduces that impact, biological impact.

18
19 Sub-alternative 2b is the one that the Council chose as the
20 preferred for all three islands. It says, Prohibit the use of
21 gillnets in the EEZ around Puerto Rico or Saint Croix or Saint
22 Thomas and John for all fishing except for the following fish
23 species belonging to the halfbeaks, the gar, and flyingfish. The
24 sub-alternative 2b, for Puerto Rico, includes those three
25 families, but also included the bigeye scad or the goggleeye, which
26 is something that Virgin Islands did not want to include in their
27 alternative.

28
29 I will continue reading the sub-alternative 2b. A surface gillnet
30 used in the EEZ around Puerto Rico or Saint Croix or Saint
31 Thomas/Saint John to fish for any baitfish must be tended at all
32 times. Mesh size must not be smaller than 0.75-inch square or 1.
33 5-inch stretch. Must be used 20 feet or more above the bottom.
34 This is what we currently have-- what we present, sorry --what we
35 presented to you during the last Council meeting where you made
36 this decision. There was a sub-alternative 2c, which is basically
37 prohibiting the use of gillnets in the EEZ around each one of the
38 islands for fishing for managed pelagics, federally managed
39 pelagics.

40
41 So, we are requesting clarification to ensure compliance with the
42 purpose and need, authority under the Magnuson-Stevens Act for
43 regulating non-FMP species and consistency with state regulations
44 where applicable or needed.

45
46 Okay. Can we go to the next slide, please?

47
48 So, these are the items that we would like to address. Number one,

1 species that are not managed by the Council, or what we call in
2 here non-FMP species, and how they relate to the purpose and need
3 of Amendment 2. What this means is that you saw in sub-alternative
4 2b, in the text above-- can you go to the previous one real quick,
5 I want to show it so we don't get a little bit lost here.

6
7 That sub-alternative 2b, those fish species belonging to the
8 halfbeaks, gar, and flyingfish, those are species that we do not
9 manage. The Council doesn't manage them right now. So, this is
10 what we call non-FMP species. So, it's important for the Council
11 to clarify, how they want those gillnet requirements to apply to
12 those non-FMP species and we will have some suggestions on how to
13 address this. Because these are species that are obviously not
14 managed by the Council, so we have to ensure that what we do with
15 those species is for the benefit of managed species and these are
16 action that we can actually take.

17
18 So, that's one thing. Let's go to the next one, please. I'll
19 provide more details soon.

20
21 So basically, the second one, is that there needs to be more
22 specification on the mesh size for the surface gillnet because we
23 have been talking about a surface gillnet in here and some other
24 requirements. We need to also discuss consistency of regulations
25 with the state as needed. For example, the way that the alternative
26 is phrased right now is the same way that very similar to what the
27 U.S. Virgin Islands has in their regulations. So, it will be
28 important for the Council to discuss if their interest to have
29 consistency with these regulations or if there's any other changes
30 that are needed.

31
32 We should probably start thinking about if there are any
33 enforcement issues, if there are differences between what we will
34 allow in federal waters versus what we have in state waters,
35 obviously depending on the need, because we know that there are
36 some fisheries that are conducted in state waters and others that
37 are not, and therefore federal waters. We can talk about landing
38 species and the number of fishes participating in the net
39 fisheries, because if you remember from the last time there was
40 testimony from the fishers that barely nobody uses gillnets in
41 federal waters. It's very minimal, because of course this type of
42 gillnets, surface gillnets, is mostly used for certain species of
43 baitfish and this is a fishery that mostly occurs in state waters.
44 So, we can talk about that and then we'll see what the landings
45 are telling us about it.

46
47 We can clarify, what do we mean with those baitfish species if
48 there is a need to not call them baitfish species and then just

1 use a different term, right? As long as we are all good with what
2 is the purpose, what we want to accomplish with that sub-
3 alternative.

4
5 Okay, the last one clarified whether there is a need to distinguish
6 between non-FMP pelagic species and other non-FMP species, and
7 we'll leave that one for the end.

8
9 So, let's go to the next slide.

10
11 Okay. So, for the first one. Non-FMP species and how they relate
12 to the purpose and need of Amendment 2. These are just some guiding
13 questions. This action includes regulations that pertain to
14 fishing for non-managed species. And as you know, we currently
15 allow gillnets in federal waters for the harvest of non-managed
16 species. So basically, this action is asking to further restrict
17 that usage. So, that's something to keep in mind. Does the action
18 provide benefit to federally managed species? Does it comply with
19 the purpose of reducing bycatch of target or not target species?
20 And this is not meant for you to answer it right now, but just a
21 little bit of thinking about the kind of information that we need.

22
23 For specifying surface gillnet mesh size and other requirements.
24 This is something that perhaps the Council will want to get some
25 clarification, because the way that the alternative is created
26 right now, it says that the size of the mesh cannot be less than
27 0.75 or 1.5 stretch. And one of the things that the IPT was
28 requesting was that the size of the mesh needs to be specified.
29 It's either that specific size or is it a different size that have
30 a minimum or a maximum so that it can be enforced, because
31 otherwise, it will be very difficult to enforce.

32
33 For number three, consistency of regulation with states as needed.
34 Enforcement issues. We want to ensure that the Council's intent,
35 if that was the intent, was that Puerto Rico, Saint Croix, and
36 Saint Thomas/Saint John have consistent gillnet regulations among
37 them, because this is the way we kind of said it last time. Because
38 the three islands chose the same thing, but we need to see if this
39 is the best route. If you guys are okay with it, we'll move forward.
40 If not, then, you know, this is a good opportunity to have more
41 discussions.

42
43 Okay, and then-- So, I'm just going to go to the questions. How
44 does the Council want to specify the mesh size requirements in a
45 way that makes it clear that it will reduce the potential for
46 bycatch? For example, can the mesh size in sub-alternative 2b
47 include a specific size or a minimum/max size? Which is what I
48 just said.

1
2 Intent. Are we wanting to be consistent? Is it okay to have a
3 difference as long as it's enforceable? Is there a need? Because
4 as you have said, there's some species that are caught in state
5 water versus others that are in federal waters. Should the sub-
6 alternative specify the number of surface nets allowed per boat?
7 What will be the implication if a fishing vessel possesses a
8 gillnet that does not meet these specifications?

9
10 Let's go to the next slide. I plan to stop at some point so we can
11 start answering these questions and have this discussion.

12
13 This is an example from the regulations of the U.S. Virgin Islands.
14 I took this from the commercial fishing guide. As you can see,
15 it's very similar to what you guys already have in Sub-alternative
16 2b, but the difference is, when it says, in the second it says,
17 Surface gillnets must be tended at all times, which we already
18 have. May not be more than 1,800 feet in length as measured by the
19 float line; we don't have that. And may not be used within 20 feet
20 of the bottom; we do have that. Mesh size may not be smaller than
21 0.75-inch square or 1.5-inch stretch. Only one 18 foot bait net is
22 permitted per boat. We do need, it will be advisable for the
23 Council to specify, how many nets are allowed in a boat.

24
25 The more conservative you are with these regulations the better it
26 is for the purpose and need, because we are trying to reduce
27 bycatch of species that we manage. Restricted gill and trammel
28 nets may not be possessed onboard vessels in Territorial waters.
29 Again, these are the regulations, exactly as I took them from the
30 Fisher's booklet. Okay. We don't have any restrictions, right now,
31 set for possession, but it's advisable to include that on the text
32 of the regulation.

33
34 Okay, next slide.

35
36 Now, I just want to give a little bit of background. None of this
37 information is new. We have discussed this in the past, but this
38 is important and relevant for this topic.

39
40 Net gear types reported to catch managed and non-managed reef fish
41 and pelagic species and other non-managed species in federal and
42 state waters around Saint Croix include gillnets, such as surface
43 gillnets that are used with scuba, cast nets, drop nets, seine
44 net, and beach seines. This is strictly from your commercial catch
45 report forms and from the literature.

46
47 Federal regulations allow for the use of gillnets for the
48 commercial harvest of non-federally managed species (for example,

1 ballyhoo or flying fish, pelagics)-- It doesn't specify which
2 species, right? Because those are species we don't manage, except
3 for the pelagics that we're managing now, but this is an example
4 of what these gillnets are used or may be used for in the federal
5 waters at this time. --subject to a requirement that the gear be
6 tended at all times, and the use of gillnets is prohibited year-
7 round for fishing for spiny lobster and federally managed reef
8 fish.

9
10 U.S.V.I. regulations prohibit the use of gillnets in territorial
11 waters, except for surface gillnets for the harvest of certain
12 species of baitfish, which is what you just saw. Most of the
13 gillnet landings reported from Saint Croix waters are from surface
14 gillnets.

15
16 Okay, let's go to the next slide.

17
18 And this is a table that came straight from the amendment that you
19 have in your briefing book. What this is saying is that from
20 landings, from commercial catch report forms, over a 10-year
21 period, the only federally managed species harvested with surface
22 gillnets from federal waters around Saint Croix was redbtail
23 parrotfish and it was confidential data. Which means, three or
24 less fishermen reported landing with this gear type. It was very
25 very little. The two non-managed species shown as harvested with
26 surface gillnets from federal waters around Saint Croix-- And this,
27 again, this is from the commercial catch report forms. --were
28 ballyhoo and needlefish.

29
30 Landings from "unknown" waters include flyingfish and bigeye scad.
31 "Unknown" waters means that it wasn't determined, it wasn't marked
32 at the time that the landings were entered if this fishing occur
33 in state or in federal waters, okay?

34
35 Now, in terms of how many people have fished with surface gillnet
36 in federal waters? Very, very little. We're talking about in a
37 period of ten years, less than five fishers, and there's years
38 that nobody has reported fishing with surface gillnets either in
39 state or federal waters. So, what I'm trying to say in here is
40 that the landings corroborate what you guys have been saying, that
41 it's something that it's not very used, okay?

42
43 Okay, let's go to the next one.

44
45 Let's go now to Saint Thomas and Saint John. Managed species
46 reported with surface gillnets in Saint Thomas/Saint John
47 commercial landings from 2012 through 2021 are all from state
48 waters and include red hind, coney, yellowtailed snapper, and blue

1 runner. All landings are very minor, sporadic through time, and
2 confidential, which means that less than three fishers reported.
3 So that's information that we consider confidential. Again, super,
4 super minimal.

5
6 Non-managed species reported with surface gillnets are all from
7 state waters and include herrings and ballyhoo. During the 10-year
8 period ending in 2021, the number of fishermen reporting landings
9 with gillnets was between zero and two. This tells us that, again,
10 that's very, very minimal.

11
12 Okay. So, let's just start this discussion. Let's go to the-- and
13 again, Puerto Rico, we'll deal with Puerto Rico after we address
14 U.S. Virgin Islands. Can you go to the next slide?

15
16 Okay, So, this is the current text that we have in the draft
17 amendment. There were a few changes, nothing too major, that we
18 did in the amendment. For example, we added surface gillnets in
19 separate and different instances. Nothing that really changed, but
20 this is the text that we have right now in the amendment. Okay?
21 And again, these are the questions that we want to answer in here.

22
23 Are these species harvested from federal waters? And we're talking
24 about this particular species. And you'll see that maybe it's not
25 that important that we specify the species because, again, we don't
26 manage the species, but that's the question. Is there any bycatch
27 from this mesh size? Will this alternative minimize bycatch? Is
28 there a need to continue to allow the use of surface gillnets for
29 baitfish in federal waters if their use is so minimal?

30
31 And now, what do we want to address? We want to respecify the mesh
32 size. These are our assignments so we can get out of here with
33 something more concrete that we can bring to the IPT. We want to
34 specify a length of the net. We want to specify the number of nets
35 allowed per boat. For example, the U.S. Virgin Islands have one
36 per boat. We want to clarify, what do we mean with baitfish? Okay?
37 And we want to include possession restrictions.

38
39 Okay. So, on the next slide we have some suggested text. But before
40 we go there, I would like to ask the Council if they want to
41 discuss some of these questions. I think we can go back to the
42 slide before. Like, how do we like-- Can a discussion be had so
43 that we can answer some of these questions.

44
45 Go ahead, Miguel.

46
47 **Questions/Comments**
48

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** María, how do you pref-- because there's a lot
2 of things in your presentation that we need Council action. Do you
3 want to start with this one and then guide the discussion, please?
4

5 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yeah, what I would like to do, what I would
6 suggest the Council to do is to go to where it says here, "To
7 address: re-specify mesh size, specify length of the net, specify
8 the number of nets," etcetera. And provide a rationale of doing
9 so. I don't think this is going to be a huge change to what we
10 already have. It's more just to make it more clear, unless the
11 Council feels that there's a different way of dealing with this.
12

13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, I did quite a bit of homework on this.
14

15 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Good.
16

17 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** And I want to start off-- Before I go to these
18 questions, I want to start off with what you had on the screen
19 earlier, but don't bring it up, about the surface gillnets for
20 redbait parrotfish. That's impossible. It's a reef fish. It's a
21 bottom fish. There's no catching of redbait on the surface, with
22 a surface gillnet.
23

24 In speaking with the fishermen that use the bait nets, specified
25 here, the 0.75 and 1,800-foot nets, are only used in territorial
26 waters. For catching ballyhoo, for catching jacks, which is the
27 bigeye scad, which is a different net, and I'm going to talk a
28 little bit about that method of fishing. Because when you fish for
29 bigeye scad, it must be done in waters no deeper than 80 or 90
30 feet. It takes three to four boats. One boat carries the net
31 because it's very large and about eight divers, because that's how
32 they work the net. They work it with divers and they actually, the
33 divers go down below and try and purse it to keep that ball of
34 fish trapped. And when they get it up to the boat, they use what
35 they call, it's a bully net, but it's a homemade bully net, where
36 they scoop that fish out and put it onto another boat, so that
37 boat brings in just the catch.
38

39 It's impossible for the divers to work in deep waters outside the
40 three miles because of the currents and the depth of the water and
41 the kind of tiger sharks that come around there when they start to
42 hear that fish fighting in that bully net. So, it's something that
43 really doesn't happen in territorial waters. I mean, sorry, it
44 doesn't happen in federal waters.
45

46 Now, when it comes to mesh size. The specific mesh size for the
47 ballyhoo net is 0.75 minimum mesh size. But there is a net that
48 the fishers, and I'm going to let Gerson speak to that, for

1 flyingfish. It's the same mesh size, but it's a very small net.
2 And it's a net that is not just deployed out in the ocean and hope
3 that it's going to catch flyingfish. The fishers have to attract
4 the flyingfish to the boat before they deploy the net. So, there
5 is actually zero bycatch of other species, particularly because of
6 the mesh size. And I think that's what I have for now.

7
8 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Carlos, thank you so much for bringing all
9 that information. It's precisely the information that we need. And
10 as you see, one of the questions that we have is-- it's right
11 there. It says, "If the use of surface gillnets is minimal in
12 federal waters, is there a need to continue to allow?" In my
13 understanding, based on what you said, there's some fishing for
14 flyingfish that occurs in federal waters that you guys would like
15 to continue to allow, even if it's minimal. That's kind of like
16 what you were implying?

17
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah. And the length of the net is very short.
19 It's not 1,800 feet.

20
21 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay. So, did anybody else have any other
22 questions or any other comments with respect to U.S. Virgin
23 Islands?

24
25 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No. What I was thinking is that Gerson has some
26 information that you wanted to talk about. The flyingfish, the
27 type of net that they use so we can introduce it to the record and
28 help María with the information that she needs.

29
30 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Right. So, Gerson, if you-- because you are
31 a fisher that uses this net, if you want to add additional
32 information. So now, after we collect information from both of the
33 islands, we go to the next slide and if you guys want to make some
34 changes to the language on that alternative based on what you guys
35 are saying here, then we have that background info. Go ahead.

36
37 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** The information you have about the 1,800-feet,
38 that was all information on ballyhoo nets. Carlos and I was talking
39 about the method. The fishery for flyingfish doesn't produce
40 bycatch for the reason that when you're targeting flyingfish,
41 that's the only thing you will see there. You can have pelagics
42 that attack them, but the schools of open water fish run
43 differently to the reef fish. The reef fish, you have everything
44 together out there. When you're targeting flying fish, the only
45 species that come there are them. The way we do it, and for the
46 reason that Carlos said, that the nets are much shorter, you can
47 use a net up to 200, maybe 300 feet if you push it. But the method
48 I learned from José Alberto Sánchez was to shunt the fish in, put

1 them in a spawning mood and with such a short net, it's just
2 retrieving, taking out the flyingfish and deploying again. And
3 that's a constant thing that you do until you get the specific
4 amount that you need for that.

5
6 Another thing. Don't believe that we go there every day and catch
7 hundreds of pounds of flyingfish because that species is a funny
8 species to catch in the way that you need the right current, you
9 need the right temperature of water, you need the fish to be in
10 that mood and specifically has to be calm waters. In Barbados,
11 they do, I've seen videos of them doing it in any weather, but
12 we've tried it and we have not been successful in catching the
13 numbers that we need. But when the weather is right, temperature,
14 flat weather, no birds around because they are very scared fish.
15 Anything that goes over them, a shadow, even yourself, will scare
16 that school away. But don't believe that we will catch thousands
17 and thousands [inaudible] fish. It doesn't happen that way. And
18 the most that we need is like 300 feet. You don't need more than
19 that. One net.

20
21 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you very much, Gerson. Any other
22 comments from the U.S. Virgin Islands?

23
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Julian?

25
26 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Well, in the Saint Thomas/Saint John district, we
27 don't fish for those species in federal waters. We are fishing for
28 all of them in local waters except for the flyingfish. We don't
29 have a flyingfish fishery in Saint Thomas/Saint John. It's mostly
30 from Saint Croix.

31
32 When the fishers from the Saint Thomas/Saint John district need,
33 they would buy them from Mr. Sánchez, for fishing. So, yes. So,
34 what I was going to make a comment to try to make it a little
35 easier for enforcement, was to combine the local regulations with
36 the federal regulations on this particular issue. Because some of
37 the questions that are asked are already answered in the Virgin
38 Islands law. And I think, in this case, it would fit where you can
39 have the regulations the same. The only thing that I'm hearing
40 different, out of what we have, is the 1,800 feet is not really
41 necessarily needed for the flyingfish.

42
43 Now, a question to the Saint Croix guys would be, up in Lang Bank,
44 because of the depth of the water, 30 feet and I don't know how
45 shallow it gets there and that Lang Bank fall in shallow water, do
46 any of the guys go there and fish in the ballyhoo with the 1,800
47 feet nets? Then you wouldn't want to take out the 1,800 feet
48 because it's in federal waters where the Lang Bank is. So, that

1 would be the only difference. So, that's my comment. Thank you.

2
3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Gerson?

4
5 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** There are two species of ballyhoo. They are the
6 coastal ballyhoo, which is the yellow beak, right? And then there's
7 the one with the white tip beak, which is a much smaller one. That
8 one you will see in open waters. But the one that we're most
9 successful in catching is the one to the shoreline, which we don't
10 find in the federal waters.

11
12 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you. Thank you for those comments. You
13 know, this is very helpful in, you know, thinking a little bit
14 about the things that the Council has put in their strategic plan
15 in terms of describing how the fisheries operate, the gear types
16 that are used, this information that has been put on the record is
17 very important for us to be able to accurately characterize how
18 the fisheries operate in the islands, which I think is one of the
19 most important aspects of managing at the island level.

20
21 Okay. Mr. Chair, you have a--

22
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Just one more comment on-- It kind of brought
24 back something, when I saw the list of poundage that you had up
25 there. It's, I wouldn't say impossible, but I don't think it has
26 ever occurred in Saint Croix that they harvested 6,000 pounds of
27 ballyhoo in the EEZ. That just doesn't happen, only in territorial.

28
29 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** And thank you for that clarification. Again,
30 this came from the commercial landings throughout time. So, I'm
31 hoping that-- I don't have a specific year because this has been
32 collected throughout the years, not just one specific instance.
33 So, I see that there were no recent landings recorded, so this may
34 be older information. However, you know, that sets the stage for
35 more consistent reporting and it will help us greatly to
36 characterize the fisheries that occur in federal waters versus the
37 ones that do not occur in there.

38
39 Okay, So, my suggestion right now would be to move to the next
40 slide which is some suggestions and examples. This one that we
41 have right here.

42
43 And again, this is just an example, something that we can base on
44 the conversation that we knew we were going to have today.
45 Alternative 1 does not really change. It's what we already have.
46 And again, what we're talking about here is not Puerto Rico. It is
47 just Saint Croix or Saint Thomas/Saint John. In Saint Croix or
48 Saint Thomas/Saint John, they can both choose something different

1 if they want. Of course, you know, the more similar they are in
2 their regulations to what they have in state waters, and more
3 similar among each other, I would say that the easier it will be
4 to enforce, but that's for you guys to decide.

5
6 Now, for Alternative 2. Prohibit the use of gillnets in federal
7 waters around-- Same thing. Alternative 2a for all fishing, it
8 doesn't change. What we're dealing right now here is Sub-
9 alternative 2b. So, this is some subjective text, but we still
10 have to change some things, okay? based on your testimony right
11 now. For fishing for all federally managed fish species, and limit
12 the use of gillnets in the EEZ around Saint Croix or Saint
13 Thomas/Saint John --because that will be going in their respective
14 section --to fish for non-federally managed fish species.

15
16 I think I made a mistake there. It should say to fish for non-
17 federally managed species with surface gillnet that meet the
18 following specifications and requirements: number one, mesh size
19 of the surface gillnet must not be smaller than 0.75 inches square
20 or 1.5-inch stretched. Number two, the surface gillnet must be
21 used 20 feet or more above the bottom. Number three, the surface
22 gillnet must be tended at all times. And in here, we'll probably
23 want to add a number four, which will be the length of the net.

24
25 Now, if you see here, there's no mention of species. And again,
26 this is because we are not managing this species. So, our
27 suggestion, our recommendation to the Council here, is just to
28 leave it general as non-FMP species, non-federally managed species
29 and that will take care of that flyingfish or whatever other
30 species that are not managed that you may or may not catch in
31 federal waters based on how the fishery is behaving and depending
32 on when you guys want to go out.

33
34 Okay. So, other change in here. Carlos, I think I talked to you a
35 little bit about this. The way that this is created right now, "no
36 smaller than 0.75 inches square or 1.5 inches stretch." It doesn't
37 really set a limit of the net, right? So, you have a couple of
38 options here. You can say, the net must be that one, right? Because
39 the net that is 0.75 inches, when you stretch it is 1.5. But if
40 you put that as a different size, one that it's 1 inch, when it
41 stretches, it's going to be bigger and that's not what you guys
42 want or is that what the U.S. Virgin Islands regulations have? Is
43 that what it was supposed to-- Is that what we're supposed to infer
44 from that? And if that's the case, then we have to have some
45 suggested language and have to fix that. Carlos.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, I agree with you in that 0.75 to 1.5
48 stretch. And that stretch, in case people don't know, that's when

1 the fish hit it, their head might stretch the net to that 1.5.
2 It's not that the net stretches on its own. So, it's a 0.75 and
3 when it hits-- Yeah. You can--

4
5 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** The net is a square, but when you put it together,
6 it measures 1.5 from end to end.

7
8 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay. So, my understanding is that that is
9 the net. It's no bigger, no smaller. That's the one. Okay. So,
10 that is clarified. Is that what the Council would like to leave in
11 this alternative then? Okay. So, is there any way that we can put
12 that in the text of the alternative so that it's more clear?

13
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

15
16 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Any suggestions on how to do that? Or we can
17 also do that in house too.

18
19 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, we should leave here with that language so
20 the staff can have better guidelines. So, María, si puedes ponerlo
21 ahi.

22
23 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yeah. I'll give it to Liajay. She's going to
24 put it up so we can make changes right there.

25
26 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. And in this case, does the Council-- This
27 is a U.S. Virgin Island regulation, does the Council want to have
28 that compatible regulation equal or similar? Do you want to change
29 any of the language that María is presenting here? That's the
30 question they have.

31
32 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Miguel, just to clarify, that is exactly the
33 text that they have in the regulations is just that it wasn't
34 clear. So, I think that now that it has been clarified, we write
35 it in our text-- and of course, you know, we'll do some tweaking
36 when we are, writing in the actual regulations. But the important
37 thing in here is what is the Council's intent? And it has been
38 expressed that the Council intent is to have that net to be of
39 that specific size.

40
41 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. But the other thing is, for the Council
42 discussion, you have to decide whether you want to have
43 compatibility or not. That's the first thing. If we all agree with
44 that, then as María is saying, we have to express in the language
45 that is for the federal government, exactly what you want. In this
46 case, you are saying that 0.75 inches square or 1.5 inches
47 stretched is the net that you want. And if you agree with that,
48 then that's the language that you need to offer to the staff to

1 follow. And for that, you need to have discussion among yourself
2 to develop the record.

3
4 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** I just wanted to-- I was looking at the V.I.
5 Regulations because that's what we were discussing before. I just
6 don't have the knowledge on nets as far as-- I know some people
7 make their net. Some of them are made commercially by companies.
8 What different sizes they make, for example, on the squares or how
9 far they stretch. So, I just don't have that knowledge myself.

10
11 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** That's precisely the point of why the Virgin
12 Islands has it. If the mesh is, when you look at it, square, that
13 would be 0.75. If you stretch it, 1.5. Some of these nets are not
14 square. The measures are different. So, when you stretch it, you
15 end up with something else. But here, with the language that you
16 have, the size of the mesh has to conform with those two which are
17 equivalent, actually. When you say, 0.75 is the same as 1.5
18 stretched. So, you have to make sure that that is what the Council
19 would like to see in the EEZ. And that will make it compatible
20 with the local government.

21
22 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** So, I know you were discussing now and saying
23 that perhaps we should keep it general and not make it so specific.

24
25 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** They are two different things. We're talking
26 about the species, that you want to make it general. So, the
27 opportunity for the fisher to fish for flyingfish and others is
28 there. That's what María have stated several times. But now with
29 the gear, is the question that we have. Do you want to have-- For
30 example, in the Virgin Islands booklet you have, "must not be
31 smaller than 0.75, 1.5--" but if you want to clarify that and make
32 it idiot proof, you drop "not be smaller than" and just say, "the
33 mesh size of the surface gillnet must have 0.75 square or 1.5
34 stretched." And what María is asking is, what is the language that
35 you would like to see in your regulation?

36
37 Remember, you may adopt compatible regulations at the end, but the
38 language might be different a little bit. Once you have to conform
39 with the regulations applicable to federal government the way that
40 we write the regulations and the other one with the Virgin Islands,
41 the way that they do it. The main point is that the goals and
42 objectives are the same. You want to protect the species, you want
43 to keep the gear they use. Those are the questions that you need
44 to answer. So, with this language, if you agree, then the
45 discussion will go around at that point.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Commissioner.
48

1 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** I mean, but what I'm hearing is that the
2 exception that we have, like looking at the existing local
3 regulation, the territorial regulation, the exception that we have
4 in there is for non-FMP species. Right? And we're talking about
5 the specificity for non-FMP species. So, the preferred alternative
6 should just say that no gillnet for FMP managed species. That gives
7 you compatibility with the local regulation because the local
8 regulation is what's dealing with the exception for this local
9 species. And so, the easiest way to do it is just to adopt the
10 language that simply states that they get no use of the gillnet on
11 non-FMP managed species.

12
13 I think it's pretty cut and dry that we're being compatible,
14 especially with the fact that the exception is something that is
15 not related to the federal waters.

16
17 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Yes, absolutely. This is María, NOAA
18 fisheries. So, what we're trying to do here is not necessarily
19 that we're trying to be compatible. We're trying to have something
20 that works for federal waters, but it happens to be compatible,
21 which is a plus, right? So, that's why the text doesn't have to be
22 the same.

23
24 Now, based on the testimony here and what we have discussed before.
25 That mesh size that it's included in here right now is what is
26 being used to catch this species. So, from my understanding is
27 that we don't need anything else other than that. What we're trying
28 to get here is a little bit more clarification in terms of how it
29 is expressed so that it's not confused. But I think it's clear
30 that what this means is that that 0.75-inch squares and the 1.5
31 stretch, is exactly the same thing, right? And it's, you know, one
32 or the other because as you said, it could be a square mesh that
33 will be 0.75 or it would be a stretch, because not all of them, as
34 you said, are square, that will be the minimum size that you could
35 use. So, I mean, we don't have to super figure out how to put it
36 in the in the text right now, but as long as the intent of the
37 Council is clear, that makes this exactly the same as you have in
38 your regulations, which will make it consistent.

39
40 So, I think. We can move forward to the next item that-- Can you
41 put it again? The one that you were fixing. If you guys are okay
42 with that, then we can move to the length and specify other things
43 that you guys already have included in the U.S.V.I. regulations,
44 it's already in the text, but we have to tweak it a little bit so
45 that it is a little bit more consistent and easier for us to put
46 in our regulations and for enforcement.

47
48 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Maria, let me clarify something. Those

1 regulations are compatible. Compatible doesn't mean identical and
2 that's what María is saying, you know. We achieved the same thing,
3 not identical, but we understand that what the Council would like
4 to see are regulations that are compatible with the local
5 government regulations that address the same issue. And for that,
6 we need to hear from you that that's what you want. You don't need
7 a motion at this time, but just instruct the staff that this is
8 the intent of the Council, to keep their language so María can go
9 ahead with the presentation.

10
11 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOLO:** I understand that we don't have to be
12 identical in the conversation. My point is that by the specificity
13 that we're going with here, if you go back to the list of María's
14 questions, from the first couple of slides, like defining what
15 baitfish is, doing all of those things. If you're going to include
16 that language in there, and it seems that you have to have more
17 clarifiers for that. And so, by not having the language, then the
18 specificity, like, not having the specificity in there, then you
19 don't have to also find what those clarifiers are, going back to
20 those points that were being made. And again, it's still
21 compatible.

22
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I have a question about that first sentence,
24 because I don't understand where it says, "For fishing for all
25 federally managed species, and limit the use of gillnets." Aren't
26 we saying that you can't fish for managed species with gillnets,
27 right?

28
29 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** No. So, this is another way of just phrasing
30 the same thing that you had before, that's a little bit more
31 specific. So, it's basically saying the use of gillnets, all
32 gillnets, no difference between surface or the other ones, is going
33 to be prohibited for fishing for anything that it's managed.

34
35 Remember, it's already prohibited for reef fish. It's already
36 prohibited for lobster. This will basically cover the pelagic
37 species. I mean, we can also say for pelagic species, but I think
38 this is like, what's the point? it closed any loopholes. Like,
39 remember we have spoken in the past that if something is not listed
40 as an authorized gear type, somebody can come and petition to the
41 Council the use of that gear type. So, these are kind of like
42 things that we do want to close in here. Okay?

43
44 And then we will limit the use of the gillnets in the EEZ to fish
45 only for those non-federally managed species with this specific
46 net. Which is the same thing that you guys have. The only
47 difference is that you guys have some species listed in there,
48 because these are species that you mostly catch in state waters,

1 and I don't think that makes a huge difference or not. Because
2 non-FMP species can be any of those, because we're not really
3 managing those. Okay?

4
5 So, the important thing here, is that you do not catch species
6 that are managed. So, no pelagics that are managed, no reef fish,
7 no lobster just return that, although it's already in there, but
8 then you can use only this specific kind of gillnet to fish-- if
9 you're going to use a gillnet, it has to be a surface gillnet with
10 those specific construction requirements.

11
12 I think Kate has a little bit more clarification.

13
14 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Chair, I agree with you. Sometimes it's
15 hard to read these sub-alternatives because you have to go back to
16 the beginning of alternative 2 where it says, "prohibit the use of
17 gillnets in federal waters around" whatever island group, and then
18 you go into "for fishing."

19
20 All right, so, it's sometimes when we focus on those sub-
21 alternatives, we forget that there's that beginning part of the
22 sentence that says, "gillnets is prohibited for" and--

23
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, for federal waters, we want to be able to
25 allow the fishers to get flyingfish. So, we can put a number four
26 in there for the use of--

27
28 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** So what we're suggesting right now is that we
29 don't have to get into any specific of this non-FMP species because
30 we don't manage it. If we would be managing flyingfish, then
31 absolutely, that would be something different, right? But you know,
32 our role in here is to deal with managed species. So, by adding in
33 their non-FMP species, I think we have that covered. So, my
34 suggestion will be now to go to the rest.

35
36 We can clarify, number one, the mesh size of the surface gillnets
37 must be that specific size. And then, the surface gillnet must be
38 used 20 feet or more above the bottom. I mean, we can also use
39 text that could be, don't anchor it to the bottom or something
40 like that but if you guys are okay with 20 feet, then we can just
41 leave it as that. Recognizing, obviously, this is federal waters,
42 but there are areas that are pretty shallow. Right? But what is
43 the most important thing? It's the same. It would be either
44 anchoring, as long as it's not anchored to the bottom, I think
45 it's pretty good. We can add that to the alternative 2, if you
46 want to be a little bit more specific.

47
48 Then number three, it "must be tended at all times." Super

1 important. Then we can add a number four Liajay, if you may. We
2 can add-- Well, the U.S. Virgin Islands have one net per fisher,
3 per boat. So, we can add that to the alternative. If you can add
4 that in there and then we'll tweak it a little bit.

5
6 I wouldn't worry too much about the specific wording of the
7 alternative at this point, because we do have other actions that
8 we want to discuss. As long as the Council's intent is clear of
9 what you want to do, we'll bring it back to the IPT and we can
10 clean it a little bit more. But it's very important for you to
11 tell us, we only want one allow per boat and then what is the
12 length, which is the next question we have.

13
14 You all said that this is a net that it's smaller based on my
15 understanding. You know, it's a net that perhaps go 50 feet, 100
16 feet. What is the maximum that is reasonable to use? I mean, of
17 course, we can say 700 feet just in case, but is that real? Is
18 that realistic? Because what we are hearing here is that you will
19 probably be fishing or want to pursue flyingfish, which we do not
20 manage, in federal waters, and that this net that you're allowing
21 in here would allow you to do that.

22
23 So, what is the length that we need to add to this regulation that
24 is going to be fine for you to use it for whatever you want, that
25 it's not 1,800 feet because that's not what it's used in federal
26 waters.

27
28 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** María, What will happen if you drop the maximum
29 length?

30
31 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** I'm sorry, what did you say?

32
33 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Could they drop the maximum length? Leave it
34 open? Is that advisable or not.

35
36 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** During the last meeting, you decided that you
37 didn't want to add a length of the net at that time, because that
38 will depend on the size of the boat, etcetera. But you have brought
39 new information to this meeting saying that you may want to put a
40 length. I think, in terms of enforcement and in terms, also, for
41 the fisher to be able to tend this net all the time, we think it's
42 important for them to have a length of the net. And for
43 enforcement, I would think they will want to know how much you
44 were allowed to fish with.

45
46 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, the question to the Council is very clear,
47 what is the length that would be most appropriate.
48

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I'm going to go but-- I thought you said two.
2
3 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Wait, wait, wait, wait. You have to get it in
4 the record?
5
6 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Gerson Martínez for the record. We used to do it
7 800 feet, I think 600 feet should be more than enough to do a
8 decent catch.
9
10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Let me ask something. Are you talking
11 about flyingfish or are you talking about-- Okay.
12
13 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Flyingfish.
14
15 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Guys, we need to finish the meeting today. So,
16 do you think that we can recommend the staff to write 600 feet
17 there? Okay. Done. Six hundred feet. Sold to Gerson Martínez for
18 six hundred feet!
19
20 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** I'm just struggling. I hear you. I'm just
21 struggling a little bit to understand how exactly we are-- So, if
22 this is something that we do not manage and one of the purposes is
23 that we're trying to have this in here to reduce the potential for
24 bycatch, etcetera and we're not just talking about fish, we're
25 also talking about sea turtles and things like that. Is that
26 something that-- and this is for the record. If we do 600 feet,
27 you told us earlier that there's no bycatch on this net. For the
28 record.
29
30 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** You are confusing a net that only the height is
31 not hundreds of feet. The height can be from two feet to six feet
32 high. I'm just covering the basis, for instance, for the future,
33 if anybody wants to use a 600 feet net, I think that's more than
34 enough, but for me, the experience that I have, I don't need that
35 length. I can do it 150. But for other guys that don't know how to
36 do it.
37
38 I was trained by Mr. Sanchez and a lot of guys know him. He's one
39 of the greatest fishermen in Saint Croix and he taught me
40 everything he knows. So, I know the techniques of how to bring
41 that fish and be successful in catching. As I said before, don't
42 believe that we're using a tuna wrangler net that has a mile deep
43 and one mile long. No. We are not using that. We have 20-to-25-
44 foot boats. We are not fishing in those big vessels. Thank you.
45
46 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you so much for that information. That's
47 very good for the record.
48

1 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** This is Kate Zamboni. Just to clarify,
2 because we've been talking about Saint Croix, Saint Thomas/Saint
3 John kind of together here, I just asked the Council to clarify if
4 the recommendation of 600 feet applies to both FMPs or only Saint
5 Croix?

6
7 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Yes, 600 feet would go for Saint Thomas/Saint John
8 also if they decide to have that fishery.

9
10 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay, noted. We are going to include that as
11 part of this alternative and then we will bring it back to the IPT
12 because, of course, it needs to be reanalyzed because there are
13 changes. Okay? So, one other thing that I wanted to add to this is
14 that we will suggest adding something regarding possession the
15 same way that the U.S. Virgin Islands has. For example, if you are
16 possessing of a gillnet and you have a species for which the
17 gillnet is prohibited, for example, a reef fish or a spiny lobster,
18 then that means that it will create a rebuttable presumption of a
19 violation. So, that's the same thing is in the regulations. Kind
20 of like the same thing that we have in the regulations for the
21 U.S. Virgin Islands, where it says, if you have a gillnet that is
22 not the gillnet that is specified in the regulations there's a
23 presumption of violation.

24
25 I'm going to leave Kate explain this one a little bit better and
26 I believe, Carlos, that Gerson also has a comment, but I'll leave
27 you guys.

28
29 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** You know what María just said? Our
30 regulations currently say, if you're in possession of a gillnet
31 and a species for which a gillnet is not allowed to be used, it
32 creates this rebuttable presumption. One of the benefits of
33 providing some of these specifications is that it creates this
34 opportunity where we could word that differently to say, "if you
35 have a gillnet that is not in compliance with these
36 specifications," so that the possession of a surface gillnet that
37 meets all these requirements would not create that rebuttable
38 presumption, but a different kind of gillnet would.

39
40 And I think that, I know Jean-Pierre just left, but he was asking
41 that question about, is it really necessary to have these
42 specifications? And that might be one of the benefits of including
43 it. Then you could say that the possession of a gillnet that meets
44 your requirements does not create this rebuttable presumption of
45 a violation, but a different gillnet would.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Gerson?
48

1 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** You have me scratching my head now. You guys are
2 accustomed to doing regulations on fisheries that do one specific
3 type of fishing. In the Virgin Islands we can have the gear for
4 every type of fishing that you can imagine. We go out for lobster,
5 and we see a school of dolphin, we go after them. If we see conch,
6 we go after them when it's in season. If we are catching lobster
7 and fish-- There is no way that a regulation for a specific species
8 that you practice in the States, it's going to work down here. You
9 have to understand that we do multispecies. If you look at our
10 CCRs, you can have from [inaudible] to conchs to lobster to fish
11 a couple mahi-mahi and tuna. Because we are so close to the drop
12 off that we can do everything in one day.

13
14 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you for that comment. I think in this
15 case, we're just talking about the gillnets. I mean, the gillnet
16 is something that is prohibited. Gillnets. We're not talking about
17 surface gillnet. Gillnets are prohibited in state waters. The U.S.
18 Virgin Island fishers do not have gillnets other than the surface
19 gillnets. So, the way that we will phrase this, it will be
20 compatible or consistent, not compatible, consistent, with the
21 present restrictions that you have in federal waters. I mean, that
22 doesn't mean that you cannot fish for other species. Right?

23
24 So, we'll have to be-- Kate, I'm looking at you right now. We'll
25 have to probably-- We know the Council's intent and I think this
26 will be something that we can work with our regulations branch and
27 see what will be the best way of phrasing this. I don't know, Kate,
28 if you agree with that.

29
30 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Yes, I agree.

31
32 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you. Okay. So, one more thing. Remember
33 that I asked you if in the text of the regulations it said "must
34 be used 20 feet or more above the bottom" or did you guys want to
35 change that for "unattached to the bottom" or just say "20 feet
36 from the bottom and unattached" or something like that. You guys
37 want to change it? What would you suggest you want to do?

38
39 We don't have to come up with a specific text as long as we have
40 the intention.

41
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I think we'll stick with language.

43
44 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** You want to stick with this language? Okay.
45 All right. So, I think at this point, what we can do is we can
46 make a motion for the U.S. Virgin Islands that says, because we
47 still have to do some tweaking, a motion that will basically say
48 that the Council would make changes to sub-alternative 2b as

1 discussed in the forum and I think that will cover it. Do you have
2 that text Liajay?

3
4 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Um, before that. ¿Cristina, tú tienes algún
5 comentario de Ricardo que puedas leer? Es que hay problemas con el
6 audio.

7
8 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** And there's also, remember that we're going
9 to do Puerto Rico real quick after this one.

10
11 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** We have several comments written by
12 Ricardo López in the chat. First one, "In territorial waters of
13 Puerto Rico, the use of nets in conjunction with diving equipment
14 (Scuba) is prohibited, except with written authorization from the
15 secretary for the capture of lionfish under the particular
16 provisions of the regulation."

17
18 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Cristina. Sorry. It's just if they have any
19 comment regarding U.S. Virgin Islands because then we are going to
20 talk about Puerto Rico.

21
22 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** No, no. I'm reading what he wrote in the
23 chat.

24
25 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. So, that's okay. Nothing for the U.S.
26 Virgin Islands at this time?

27
28 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** No. the things that he wrote are related
29 to Puerto Rico.

30
31 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. Thank you.

32
33 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Mr. Chair, I will be discussing Puerto Rico
34 soon and I have all of that. So, is it okay if we wait for that
35 one and then-- So, we have a question in here with regards to the
36 20 feet. There are some areas in federal waters where you may have
37 less than the 20 feet, right? Are you guys still okay with that?
38 Or is it better just to say, "unattached to the bottom"?

39
40 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, the only area in Saint Croix is Lang Bank,
41 so. Gerson?

42
43 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** The shallowest you will find, 8 miles away from
44 Saint Croix, in Lang Bank is about 48 feet deep.

45
46 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** I mean, much of the EEZ area is still
47 uncharted in terms of the habitats and the rugosity of the
48 seamounts. Even when they're about 200 feet in deep water or 300

1 feet or 400 feet, you can have coral structures coming up all of
2 a sudden. So, you know, we were talking about the 20 feet and
3 wondering, not knowing exactly what we have in the EEZ, and this
4 is all dealing with the EEZ, this is not the territorial waters,
5 is 20 feet enough to be off the bottom?

6
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Gerson?

8
9 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** The way this method is used for flying fish, is
10 not like in the shoreline. In the shoreline, you surround the
11 school, and you pull the two ends together and then you pull them.
12 Everything that gets in there gets dragged in. The way we do the
13 flyingfish is drifting. So, that is going to be a straight line
14 and the nets, as I said before, they're no deeper than eight feet.
15 We don't have those big deep nets like the tuna wranglers guys do.
16 We just have little nets.

17
18 If we are in Lang Bank and we are at 48 feet, we still have 40
19 feet of clearance. Thank you.

20
21 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay. So, this is the motion that we kind of
22 put together. So, if you want to use it or change it or whatever
23 at this point. And with the understanding that Saint Thomas agreed
24 to have the same thing.

25
26 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.

27
28 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay.

29
30 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, we need somebody to read the and motion to
31 make the motion.

32
33 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** *I move that the Council allows the staff to*
34 *make changes to Sub-alternative 2b of actions 2b and 3b for Saint*
35 *Croix and the Saint Thomas/Saint John, respectively, as discussed*
36 *by Council staff. I so move.*

37
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We need a second.

39
40 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.

41
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any discussion? So, all in favor say "aye."

43
44 **GROUP:** Aye.

45
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Ricardo?

47
48 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** I agree. Thank you.

1
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Any nays? Any abstentions? Hearing none,
3 *motion carries.*
4

5 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you so much, U.S. Virgin Islands. This
6 was a little painful, but everything is on the record, and this
7 helps a lot. Okay?
8

9 All right, So, I'm going to try to be very quick, but give the
10 same amount of love to Puerto Rico for this same action. Okay, So,
11 can we go back to the to the presentation?
12

13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I have to say it was not painful at all. I think
14 it was fun.
15

16 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** This is very interesting stuff, and it's
17 always a good opportunity to learn from our fishers and how they
18 are conducting their fisheries.
19

20 Okay, So, can you go one up, please? More. That. Ahí. Okay,
21 gracias.
22

23 Okay. So, in Puerto Rico, and I know that this is where Ricardo
24 was going with his comments in the chat. In Puerto Rico, the
25 fishery uses bottom and surface gillnet and trammel nets consisting
26 of a trammel with three net cloths, which we're not dealing with
27 this right now, but we did during the past meeting. The regulations
28 allow the use of gillnets and trammel nets, except in inner waters
29 and river mouth, and they prohibit the use of gillnets and trammel
30 nets in conjunction with diving equipment. Only for lionfish is
31 authorized.
32

33 Gillnets and trammel nets cannot have a mesh size greater than six
34 inches as measured from knot to knot of extension. This is
35 obviously a difference, but here we're talking about gillnets.
36 Gillnet, gillnets, not surface gillnets.
37

38 And then for trammel nets, the outer cloths may not have a mesh
39 size larger than six inches. Trammel nets used for bait fishing
40 may not be more than a 0.25-inch. I didn't see any additional
41 information regarding surface gillnets used for bait fish.
42

43 Okay, next slide.
44

45 The use of gillnets for the commercial harvests of federally
46 managed and non-federally managed pelagic, which is the same as
47 U.S. Virgin Islands, is considered to be minimal due to the depth
48 and distance from the coast of the location of the federal waters.

1 In the U.S. Virgin Islands, we have 3 nautical miles to 200. In
2 Puerto Rico, it's even farther away, 9 nautical miles. Although
3 gillnets and trammel nets are specifically prohibited for
4 harvesting reef fish and spiny lobster in federal waters, there
5 are some landings reported of reef fish species and spiny lobster
6 with these gears from federal waters. As you know, they are allowed
7 to be used in state waters, but there are some landings reported
8 in federal water with that net. The trammel nets and gillnets are
9 allowed, they're widely used in Puerto Rico state waters.

10
11 Let's go to the next slide, please. I'm just going to show landings
12 right now. And you have already seen this before. Can you go to
13 the next slide? Right here.

14
15 Okay, So, from 2014 to 2019, which is the most recent and complete
16 landings at the time this amendment was drafted, this is all from
17 the amendment, 127 fishermen reported landings using gillnets or
18 trammel nets in all waters. That means state and federal waters
19 and unknown waters. From 2014 to 2019, an average of 16 fishermen
20 reported using gillnets for managed and non-managed species in
21 federal waters around Puerto Rico, and an average of five fishermen
22 reported using trammel nets in federal waters.

23
24 Okay, so, as you can see over there this is the information. Most
25 of the landings are with gillnets. It doesn't specify if these are
26 surface gillnets or gillnets. I mean, they're allowed in state
27 waters. But what we see is that most of these landings comes from
28 state waters.

29
30 Let's go to the next one. Now let's see some of the species. I
31 don't think that that's the one. That one.

32
33 Okay. So, the top Council-managed finfish species reported with
34 gillnets from federal water from 2014 through 2019 include King
35 and cero mackerels, parrotfish (unspecified), which didn't say
36 which species it was, and lane snapper. Note that the total
37 landings reported from federal waters only represent a small
38 percentage of the total landings from state waters. And remember
39 here, we're not making a distinction of surface gillnets versus
40 gillnets, so let's assume that the king and zero mackerels and
41 those other species were harvested with regular gillnets, which
42 have a different mesh size.

43
44 Next one.

45
46 The top non-managed finfish species reported from 2014 to 2019
47 include ballyhoo, bar jack, mullet, herring, and mojarras. And of
48 course, this is saying federal waters, and it could be like the

1 same issue that we have discussed before that some of them is like
2 they were really harvested in federal waters because of the depth,
3 right? But this is what the landing is saying. I just wanted to
4 point out what are the species that are showing under landings.

5
6 Next slide.

7
8 Okay. So, let's get to work, Puerto Rico. Let's do the same thing
9 that we did before. This is the text that you had. Our suggestion
10 will be the same species. I always think that the most important
11 question in here is number three, gillnets use appears to be
12 minimal in federal waters and gillnets are allowed in state waters.
13 Is there a need to continue to allow the use of surface gillnets
14 for this species, this non-managed species, in federal waters? And
15 if the regulation is implemented, given that there are different
16 mesh sizes for gillnet in state waters, how difficult would this
17 be to enforce? So, I think these are the two biggest issues that
18 we have encountered with Puerto Rico.

19
20 So, I would say that-- Let's go to the next slide and we can go to
21 the text which is-- this is exactly the same thing that we did for
22 the U.S. Virgin Islands.

23
24 The text that you have on sub-alternative 2b is the one that
25 instead of doing all of those species, we can just say non-
26 federally managed fish and then have those specifications. So,
27 this is the time where we would like to hear what Puerto Rico has
28 to say in terms of the size of the mesh. Are they okay using this
29 size? Are they still wanting to pursue this alternative of allowing
30 the use of surface gillnets in federal waters, given all the
31 information that I just provided. Provide a length, provide a
32 depth.

33
34 Now remember, this is what you had from before. You chose to
35 basically do the same thing that the U.S. Virgin Islands does. And
36 if this works, then perfectly fine. But if it doesn't, we need a
37 rationale for making changes. Okay, thank you.

38
39 I'm not done, but at least now I think this is the time for
40 discussion.

41
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Nelson?

43
44 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nelson Crespo, for the
45 record. I think we should go for the same thing as the Virgin
46 Islands did. We should leave it open for the species not under
47 management and use the same size, the 0.75 and 1.5 stretch mesh.
48 Because right now I don't know nobody, but I know of people

1 interested in developing the flyingfish fishery and they are
2 talking very seriously about that and we cannot close that door.

3
4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I'd like to address Ricardo's comments.

5
6 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** I think they're wanting to hear from Ricardo.
7 I don't know if you guys heard us. I don't know, Ricardo, if you
8 want to read it or you want to comment, or you want us to read it
9 in here.

10
11 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Okay. Ricardo López wrote in the chat,
12 "Fact: By regulation 7949 article 14.9, in the territorial waters
13 of Puerto Rico, bait fishing trammel nets may not have more than
14 a quarter of an inch opening from knot to knot.

15
16 And the other comment says, "Fact: By regulation, in the
17 territorial waters of Puerto Rico, only the length for the trawl
18 nets it is stipulated that it may not exceed 175 fathoms,
19 equivalent to 320 meters or 1,050 feet long."

20
21 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** I think-- Yeah, go ahead, sorry, Carlos.

22
23 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, I'm asking for a permit
24 to talk.

25
26 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Oh, yes. Go ahead. Sorry. Go ahead.

27
28 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Okay. Thank you. Ricardo López for the
29 record. What I just shared was only facts. They were only facts
30 for the colleagues of the U.S.V.I. so they can know what we have
31 in our regulation. That was the only purpose. Thank you.

32
33 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Ricardo. I have Vanessa.

34
35 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez for
36 the record. Just to comment, as Nelson said before, we have already
37 had this discussion, and we think we should move on with the sub-
38 alternative that we have already discussed in past meetings.
39 Gillnets is not my expertise area, but from what I have talked
40 with the fishermen, usually they are in the state's water, and
41 maybe only one or two and they use it for the ballyhoo. Thanks.

42
43 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. But, Mr. Chairman, we need from the
44 Council, and this is something María mentioned before. We have in
45 the EEZ, are you happy with the language? And Nelson said that
46 they would like to see the same language that they have in the
47 Virgin Islands for Puerto Rico. So that's the question. If you
48 really want to have that, then the staff can go ahead and address

1 it for Puerto Rico.

2
3 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you, Miguel, for that. Okay, So, I think
4 based on what we have heard maybe a motion that has the same text
5 that we have for the U.S. Virgin Islands, we can put it in there,
6 as discussed in the-- So, I think, Liajay, you can just take the
7 same motion and just change that it's Action 1(b) for Puerto Rico
8 as discussed by the Council, and for the record with the same
9 specifications that were set for the U.S. Virgin Islands. I think
10 that will take care of it.

11
12 Not that one. That shouldn't be there. It should be just the first
13 part. "Motion to allow staff to make changes to Sub-alternative
14 2b." In this case, "Motion to allow staff to make changes to Sub-
15 alternative 2b of Action 1(b), as discussed by the Council." And
16 that will take care of this based on the record that you guys have
17 provided.

18
19 I do have one more question but go ahead with the motion. And I
20 think that will finish.

21
22 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Cristina, can you make it bigger so that Carlos
23 can read it for the record.

24
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, So, we need someone to move on this.

26
27 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿María, Está bien el 'language' o le falta un 3b
28 o algo así? ¿Eso está bien para Puerto Rico así? Okay.

29
30 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** *So, move for motion to allow staff to make*
31 *changes to Sub-alternative 2b of Action 1(b) for Puerto Rico as*
32 *discussed by the Council.*

33
34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We need a second.

35
36 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.

37
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any further discussion? Hearing none, we'll
39 take it to a vote. All in favor say-- Oh, we have a--

40
41 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Ricardo López.

42
43 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes, I would like to give an opportunity to
44 Daniel to express about this issue, please.

45
46 **DANIEL MATOS CARABALLO:** Just a little comment. I think in Puerto
47 Rico, the use of gillnets and trammel nets on federal waters, you
48 know, is almost zero. It's very, very, very low. That's all my

1 comment. Thank you.
2
3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, back to the vote. All in favor say "aye."
4
5 **GROUP:** Aye.
6
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Thank you, Ricardo. Any nays? Any
8 abstentions? Hearing none, *motion carries*.
9
10 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Thank you very much. I think we can be done
11 with this for now. So, now we have instructions for staff to make
12 changes to the amendment. We will be discussing and bringing back
13 the changes and analysis, as needed, for the upcoming meeting and
14 hopefully we'll be able to have final action on this one. But thank
15 you very much for a great discussion.
16
17 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you María. So, next on the agenda is the
18 science and Scientific and Statistical Committee, Vance Vicente.
19 One second.
20
21 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Excuse me, Mr. Chair, because we're a little
22 behind unless there is a change in the agenda, we still have two
23 amendments to discuss. It's going to be a fun afternoon. Before
24 more fun with the SSC report. So, we have a Review of Draft
25 Amendment 3 to the Island-Based FMPs. It's just one more, sorry,
26 one more amendment. And this is by Sarah Stephenson, Dolphin and
27 Wahoo.
28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Before Vance. Alright, I just skipped over that.
30 All right. So, we're going to go to Review of Draft Amendment 3 to
31 the Island-Based FMPs: Management Measures for Dolphin and Wahoo.
32 Sarah Stephenson.
33
34 **Review Draft Amendment 3 to the Island-Based FMPs: Management**
35 **Measures for Dolphin and Wahoo—Sarah Stephenson, NOAA Fisheries**
36
37 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Thank you. Can you still hear me okay?
38
39 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yes.
40
41 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay, I'll try to be brief and quick.
42
43 Next slide, please.
44
45 At the April meeting the Council requested that we add the size
46 limits and recreational bag limits for dolphin and wahoo for the
47 Puerto Rico FMP to the amendment that was previously drafted, which
48 just had management measures for Saint Croix and Saint Thomas and

1 Saint John. I see that you're fixing it. I'm going to just keep
2 chatting cause it's just background information. So, we did add
3 those in at the April meeting, the Council did select a 24-inch
4 fork length size limit for dolphin as the preferred alternative,
5 and that was just for Saint Croix and Saint Thomas and Saint John.

6
7 You did also select a 40-inch fork length size limit for wahoo as
8 the preferred alternative for Saint Croix and Saint Thomas and
9 Saint John. And then, you selected a recreational bag limit for
10 dolphin of 10 dolphin per person per day, not to exceed 32 dolphin
11 per person, or per vessel per day, whichever is less. And that was
12 the preferred alternative for both Saint Croix and Saint Thomas
13 and Saint John. That alternative would be consistent with the
14 U.S.V.I. regulations. I'm on slide two, whenever you get there.

15
16 Then lastly, the Council did modify alternative three of the wahoo
17 recreational bag limit that you changed the numbers to two wahoo
18 per person per day not to exceed 10. You did not, at that time,
19 select a preferred alternative for the wahoo bag limit so that's
20 on our to do list for today.

21
22 Next slide, please.

23
24 The purpose and need statement was revised somewhat to include the
25 Puerto Rico FMP. So, you'll see there that the purpose statement
26 is now amending all three fishery management plans. And then, the
27 need statement was also slightly modified. And so, the need for
28 this amendment is to develop conservation and management measures
29 for dolphin and wahoo to ensure that undersized individuals have
30 adequate time to mature and reproduce and to take a precautionary
31 approach to management to protect against overfishing for
32 resources with limited management structure.

33
34 And basically, what that means is, that for the recreational
35 sector, we weren't able to establish ACLs for the U.S.V.I., because
36 we didn't have recreational data, and we were able to establish
37 them for Puerto Rico but now we don't have the actual recreational
38 landings to mount to measure towards those ACL. So, there's kind
39 of a gap there. So, that's what that second part of that statement
40 means.

41
42 Next slide, please.

43
44 So, I'm going to take this in chunks by chunks. So, we'll start
45 with dolphin in Puerto Rico. And these are the same alternatives
46 that you saw for the U.S.V.I. Islands because it's based on
47 biology. So, your no action is don't establish a size limit. Your
48 alternative 2 is establish a 20-inch fork length size limit. And

1 this is for all fishing in federal waters and for dolphin. And
2 then, alternative 3 is establish a 24-inch fork length size limit,
3 for both sectors in federal waters.

4
5 And the rationale here is in this orange color. It's the same
6 rationale that we used for the U.S.V.I., but I just wanted to put
7 it here to review to make sure that the rationale for Puerto Rico
8 would be the same rationale for what you selected as the preferred
9 in Saint Croix and Saint Thomas/Saint John. So, these are your
10 three alternatives.

11
12 Next slide, please.

13
14 Our analysis, our data analysts in house, as part of the
15 development of this amendment when we added Puerto Rico to it,
16 they went and looked at landings information for both sectors,
17 since we did have both sector data involved. And so, here is a
18 distribution of the size limits from the commercial sector, and
19 the bar graph on the kind of left part of it, with the equivalent
20 and change in landings for the alternatives proposed in this
21 amendment.

22
23 So, that means if you selected Alternative 2, the 20-inch fork
24 length, you could see there on the bar graph, it was maybe about
25 3 percent of the lengths that were measured. This data is from the
26 trip intercept program. About 3 percent of those lengths were 20
27 inches or smaller. So, that equates to less than 1 percent in
28 landings. So, the little chart on the right, the table, is telling
29 you what the change in landings would be based on those size
30 limits. And then the graph on the left, is showing you what the
31 distribution of those lengths caught. And this was over for the
32 last five years for Puerto Rico, 2017 to 2021.

33
34 So, that's just going to-- you're going to see the same kind of
35 structure for the other islands. And all of this information was
36 included in the amendment, which is in the briefing book. So, if
37 you wanted to look into it. And the appendix has the full
38 explanation of how these analyses were conducted and the data used,
39 in case you want to get into that a little bit deeper.

40
41 So, next slide, please.

42
43 Here's a similar layout, but for the recreational information. So,
44 this data came from the MRIP, basically. The precursor to MRIP.
45 Those links you can see, you know, it's kind of spread from 12 up
46 to 70, but the majority are right around 26 inches. So, they did
47 a similar kind of estimation of, if you select the 20-inch fork
48 length, about how much of that recreational harvest would be

1 impacted? It would be a 1.3 reduction. Or if you pick the larger
2 size limit, that will equate to almost a 15 percent reduction in
3 the harvest for the recreational sector.

4
5 Now again this data, kind of the last full year of landings
6 information that we have for the recreational sector, was in 2016.
7 So, we don't have anything more recent than that, but based on
8 that time series here, this is what your changes would be.

9
10 Next slide.

11
12 And I built in little slides to stop to see if anybody had any
13 questions. As I said, I'm going to chunk it so we can either
14 continue moving or you could stop and discuss dolphin size limits
15 for Puerto Rico right now. If you would like to select a preferred
16 alternative, I can remind you again what the ones selected for the
17 U.S.V.I. were, or we could continue on and you could do it all at
18 the end, but I thought since there's so much information to kind
19 of interpret, it might be easier to kind of chunk it. So, it's up
20 to the Council.

21 22 **Discussion - P.R. Dolphin Size Limit**

23
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, I like the chunking. So, we'll do the--
25 Well, from Puerto Rico, I guess you can do Saint Croix, Saint
26 Thomas/Saint John together but Puerto Rico, we can discuss that
27 one. Yeah.

28
29 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Just to remind you-- yes, thank you. You already
30 did select the preferred alternatives for Saint Croix and Saint
31 Thomas/Saint John. You are welcome to change that preferred if you
32 would like to, but for the dolphin size limit, you selected the
33 larger size to make sure that 100 percent of the females that were
34 spawning capable did actually have time to spawn. So, that was
35 your reasoning, your rationale for picking that larger size limit
36 for Saint Croix and Saint Thomas/Saint John.

37
38 So, you can discuss if you'd like to do something similar for
39 Puerto Rico or something different, or even if there's a different
40 number that you would like us to consider. So, that's the
41 discussion that you can have now for Puerto Rico.

42
43 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, Vanessa.

44
45 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we already have
46 this discussion also in the past meetings and especially for the
47 commercial and recreational sector in Puerto Rico, as we know, we
48 don't have enough recent data that is available for the science,

1 but we, that work every day in the area, we know that we have to
2 take care of this specifically with the mahi. I think that the 24,
3 which is as Virgin Island, the size that we should have. Thanks.

4
5 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Crespo.

6
7 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nelson Crespo for the record.
8 I agree with Vanessa. We should go with the same size of Virgin
9 Island, especially because a 24-inch mahi has no commercial value
10 in the market. So, that causes a negative impact in the market
11 because restaurant don't want to use that fish and when the
12 fisherman brings it, what are they going to do? Sometimes they use
13 it for their houses or for bait also. We should give a break to
14 those fish. 24 inches is okay.

15
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, Sarah. You can go ahead.

17
18 **Continue Presentation- P.R. Dolphin Rec. Bag Limit**

19
20 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay, Thank you for that. Next slide, please.

21
22 So, now we're moving on to the dolphin recreational bag limit.
23 These numbers are actually going to be slightly different than
24 what we saw for the U.S.V.I., and that's because we wanted
25 Alternative 2 to be compatible with the Puerto Rico regulations as
26 opposed to compatible with the U.S.V.I regulations.

27
28 So, you'll see that the Alternative 1 is the no action, that we
29 would not establish a recreational bag limit for dolphin in federal
30 waters. Alternative 2, would establish a recreational bag limit of
31 10 dolphin per person per day; not to exceed 30 dolphin per vessel
32 per day, whichever is less. And that's the one that would be
33 compatible with the current Puerto Rico regulations.

34
35 And then, Alternative 3 is a little bit more conservative. It would
36 establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters of five
37 dolphin per person per day, or 15 per vessel per day, whichever is
38 less. And again, the rationale here is in the orange color because
39 I want to make sure that it captures your intent. So, establishing
40 these recreational bag limits would be the precautionary approach
41 to management to protect against overfishing of dolphins since
42 there's no recreational data available at this time. And of course,
43 since we don't have the data to measure those ACLs that were
44 established.

45
46 So, the next slide has some of the analysis.

47
48 So, again, this is data from the Marine Recreational Fisheries

1 Statistics Survey from 2000 to 2017. It shows you the number of
2 dolphins harvested per recreational trip in the left-hand graph
3 and then what that would equal if you selected the two action
4 alternatives, what change in harvest that would reflect.

5
6 So, if you picked the 10 per person/30 per vessel alternative,
7 that would be a reduction of about 3 percent for the recreational
8 fishers. And then, if you pick the more conservative one of 5 per
9 person/15 per vessel, it would be about 15 percent less dolphin
10 that they would be catching. So, that's kind of the analysis.

11
12 And again, that's all explained further in the amendment, if you'd
13 like to dig into that a little bit deeper. And so, with that now,
14 if you'd like, you can go ahead and discuss what might be your
15 preferred intent for dolphin recreational bag limits.

16
17 So, next slide is just asking for the discussion.

18 19 **Discussion - P.R. Dolphin Rec. Bag Limit**

20
21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, Puerto Rico. Vanessa?

22
23 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez for the
24 record. In this case, for the discussion, specifically knowing
25 that the recreational data is not available and the only data that
26 we have is the one that came from the tournament, and of course,
27 what we see every day in the area, in the fishing area, I think,
28 or I will suggest that Alternative 3 should be the best in this
29 case. Because 15 dolphin per vessel per day for a recreational is
30 enough fish to have in their freezer or to give it to friends and
31 neighbors.

32
33 What we have seen during the past years is that the legal catch of
34 the recreational is making a direct competition with the commercial
35 sector. We've also seen that the recreational prefer the smaller
36 Mahi because it's better to handle for them and it's a little
37 fillet. This is causing that the dolphin can get to the point that
38 the sustainability will be overfished. So, I will suggest
39 Alternative 3.

40
41 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** I Have a curious question to the enforcement
42 here. Would that be enforceable? How can you tell whether the fish
43 was caught in the EEZ versus in the area of jurisdiction of Puerto
44 Rico and whether they violate Alternative 3 or Alternative 2, if
45 we have two different quotas.

46
47 **MIGUEL BORGES:** Well, we prefer the regulations to be compatible.
48 Always. It will be more enforceable. To your question, if it's

1 enforceable or not, it would definitely be a lot more difficult if
2 we would go with Alternative 3.

3
4 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mr. Chairman, my point is that I personally don't
5 care one way or the other. But when we were discussing this, I was
6 in the Natural Resources Department when we were discussing this.

7
8 I would like to hear also from Roberto Sabater. He's not a Council
9 member, but he's a member of the public. So, do you have any
10 experience with the dolphin/wahoo and what are your thoughts on
11 the group of fishers, recreational fisher regarding the present
12 quota that we have and the possibility of reducing that quota from
13 5 to 15 in the EEZ?

14
15 **ROBERTO SABATER:** Right now, I believe with the present quota of
16 up to 30 per boat, there is no problem. The problem will be if we
17 combine Alternative number three, with the 24-inch fork length,
18 then you create a problem to the recreational. Because normally
19 the recreational will go for the small fish, which is not for
20 commercial. So, you should allow him to have the 10, but if you
21 bring him to the 24-inch with the alternative of only five
22 dolphins, Alternative 3 with only five dolphins, you're
23 restraining him because he won't be able to catch them. You know,
24 if you combine both of them, it will hurt the recreational. Thank
25 you.

26
27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Crespo.

28
29 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with Vanessa that
30 Alternative 3 should be the one selected as a preferred
31 alternative.

32
33 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess my question is for
34 Ricardo and if there's any thought about changing the state
35 regulations or making them compatible with what this Council does
36 after we went forward with this and implemented this.

37
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Ricardo.

39
40 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. Permit to talk, please.

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Go ahead, Ricardo. ¿Nos escuchas, Ricardo?

43
44 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes. Yeah, I can hear you.

45
46 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. Go ahead.

47
48 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** The alternative that was discussed with the

1 Sub-Secretary, with the knowledge of the Secretary and the Auxiliar
2 Secretary of DNR, is for Alternative number three. In 2020
3 personnel from DNR, including personal experts in recreational
4 fisheries, were reviewing the Regulation 7949 and the
5 recommendation was very, very similar to alternative number three.
6 So, I agree with Vanessa and Nelson that alternative number three
7 will be the choice that I would like to approve.

8
9 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** The question from Ricardo is, how willing is the
10 local government to follow suit and have compatible regulation
11 with the federal if we adopt number three? Do you think that that's
12 something doable?

13
14 Yeah, go ahead Ricardo.

15
16 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes, I understand that and the plan for the
17 Bureau was to revise the regulation as soon as possible. I believe
18 that if alternative number three is selected, it will be easier
19 once we review the regulation for a new one.

20
21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel.

22
23 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. Just to explain to Roberto Sabater. What
24 we're doing here is preparing a document that will go to public
25 hearings. We will have a chance to hear from all sectors. So, what
26 we're doing, at this time today, is picking the preferred
27 alternative so when we go to public hearings, we show the slate of
28 alternative, the ones that were not adopted and the preferred one
29 of the Council. When we come back from public hearings, that might
30 change or not.

31
32 There are two issues here. One, number three is more in favor of
33 the conservation of the resort by 11% and the other one is
34 compatibility because I personally believe if you don't have a
35 compatible regulation with this one. Right now, we don't have that
36 much of enforcement within the area of jurisdiction of Puerto Rico,
37 let alone if you don't have compatibility with them.

38
39 So, the Council can then have a rationale, as we were discussing
40 today on the record, that number three is more in tune with the
41 responsibilities of the Council. But then, you also mentioned that
42 number three in combination with the minimum size of 24, creates
43 some problems. So, all that had to be included in the record and
44 we may include it also in the discussion. The written discussion.

45
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Roberto.

47
48 **ROBERTO SABATER:** There is another part. You know, if you have a

1 55-foot boat and you're going to go out there to fish and you can
2 only catch 15 dolphins instead of 30 for your friends and
3 everything, you have to look at the social economic part. A lot of
4 people are going to lose their jobs because people are not going
5 to go out fishing anymore as much as they would do at the same
6 time. So, you have to think of that part too.

7
8 I mean, if you have a little boat, it doesn't matter if you got 15
9 or 30 because usually the guy with the little boat will sell it.
10 Let's admit it, most of the sportsmen will sell fish too, which is
11 a problem we have. But a person with a big boat who invites some
12 friends and everything to catch fish, he doesn't want to find a
13 place and only be able to catch 15. Especially if those 15 go below
14 24 inches, what is he going to do? I mean, you're going to shoot
15 down the tourist and the recreational fisherman that go for
16 dolphin. That's my opinion.

17
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Julian?

19
20 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I have to support my counterpart here with
21 alternative three. The reason why, this is recreational. You're
22 going off a recreational trip. If recreational is considered
23 charter, the charter vessel owner has already been paid before he
24 gets out on that boat and his catch is illegal to sell. So, what
25 they're harvesting, and they're allowed to keep it for personal
26 consumption.

27
28 We must take into consideration the bigger picture, which is our
29 commercial fishermen. We're trying to protect this species so
30 everyone can enjoy it and we don't overrun the ACLs. So, a smaller
31 bag limit and not to exceed 15 fish per vessel per day, I think
32 it's a good justification in order to keep a healthy fishery for
33 everyone to be able to use it. That's my opinion. Thank you.

34
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any further discussion? Hearing none, we'll
36 move. I guess we have to select something, right?

37
38 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, Sarah needs your preferred alternative.

39
40 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** So, yeah. So, we're done with Puerto Rico
41 Dolphins. So, if you could for both the size limit and this
42 recreational bag limit, if you could just, real quick, do a motion
43 to say which alternative you select as preferred.

44
45 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Graciela.

46
47 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, you could select the preferred
48 alternative at this Council meeting. You could also leave it for

1 the public and hear from them what they would like the Council to
2 do. So, either or, I mean--

3
4 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, Graciela, excuse me. That's not how it works.
5 You select preferred alternative, you go to the public, and if
6 they shoot you, fine, you select another preferred alternative.
7 But you cannot go to the public with a blank statement unless it's
8 a scoping meeting.

9
10 So here, we need to have a preferred alternative so they can draft
11 the document. And what I'm hearing now is you have a preferred
12 alternative for the number three, regarding the size and-- I mean,
13 regarding the bag limit, and whatever the number 24 inches that
14 you have. That doesn't mean that you will end up with those
15 regulations-- I mean, with regulations with those management
16 measures. It all depends on the process at the end.

17
18 The other thing is, we talk a lot about recreational fishery
19 without the data, but we have interviewed a lot of people about
20 recreational fishery. And in the case of the dolphin, this is more
21 of an allocation issue than a conservation issue. Whatever you do
22 here and the U.S. Virgin Islands, is not going to affect the
23 dolphin unless the other Councils, the other institutions, the
24 other countries, do a similar thing to protect that. We're talking
25 about [inaudible], because the one that comes from the North, esos
26 son otros veinte pesos.

27
28 So, Sarah needs to hear from you, what is the preferred alternative
29 so she can write it and she can continue with the development of
30 the document.

31
32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** You have something in the chat? I can't read
33 that.

34
35 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** We have two comments from Yamitza
36 Rodríguez.

37
38 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Cristina.

39
40 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Digame.

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** The chat is not considered part of the record
43 unless it is the audio. So, either she speaks, or you read it for
44 the record. If she's there, she can--

45
46 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** She's there. Yamitza, do you hear us and
47 do you have audio to speak?
48

1 **YAMITZA RODRÍGUEZ:** Sure.
2
3 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Okay, thank you.
4
5 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mr. Chairman, can you give her time so she can
6 talk?
7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sure.
9
10 **YAMITZA RODRÍGUEZ:** I just wanted to add that even though there
11 are no current federal quota for recreationally caught
12 dolphinfish, at least in the tournaments that we monitor, most
13 anglers tend to comply with the 30-fish quota. Also, we would like
14 to add that we are seeing many undersized dolphinfishes in these
15 events. Even though, in Puerto Rico, there are some fishing clubs
16 that have established their own rules requiring minimum weight for
17 landed fish, this has not stopped anglers from bringing fish that
18 weigh less than the regulations that the tournament established.
19
20 We try to educate them because we're seeing fish that are less
21 than a pound in the tournament and there was even a category a few
22 years ago for the smallest fish. That was eliminated, but fishermen
23 keep on bringing more than the allowable quota and it's very
24 difficult for us, in these events and out of tournaments, to
25 monitor this activity. I just wanted to add that.
26
27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. So, we need a motion.
28
29 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes, please. A motion for the size limit, if
30 you would, and then a motion for the recreational bag limit. And
31 I believe from the discussion both of the ones that you identified
32 were Alternative 3. So, the 24-inch size limit was Alternative 3
33 and the 5 and 15. Thank you.
34
35 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** *So, moved for the Puerto Rico Dolphin size limit,*
36 *Action 1a. Motion to select Alternative 3. Establish a 24-inch*
37 *fork length minimum size limit for the commercial or recreational*
38 *harvest of dolphin in federal waters around Puerto Rico.*
39
40 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.
41
42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any further discussion on size limit? Yeah.
43
44 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, it's just a minor thing that Diana just
45 reminded me. It's dolphinfish, we are not working with the mammals.
46 So, thank you, Diana. Es una sola palabra. Junto.
47
48 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, the first motion is Dolphinfish Size

1 Limit- Action 1a, Alternative 3. Establish at 24-inch fork length
2 minimum size limit for the or recreational-- Should it be "and
3 recreational"? --harvest of dolphinfish in federal waters around
4 Puerto Rico. Motion by Vanessa, second by Kreglo.

5
6 Any further discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say "aye."

7
8 **GROUP:** Aye.

9
10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any nays?

11
12 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** I agree.

13
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Ricardo agrees. Okay. Thank you, Ricardo. Any
15 nays, any abstentions? Hearing none, *motion carries.*

16
17 The next dolphinfish recreational bag limit.

18
19 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. *Vanessa Ramírez for the*
20 *record to present the dolphin recreational bag limit - Action 1b,*
21 *as alternative 3. Establish a recreational bag limit in federal*
22 *waters around Puerto Rico for 5 dolphinfish per person per day,*
23 *not to exceed 15 dolphinfish per vessel per day, whichever is less.*

24
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** A second?

26
27 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.

28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any further discussion on bag limits, for
30 dolphinfish? All righty. So, the motion is, Alternative 3:
31 Establish a recreational bag limit in federal waters around Puerto
32 Rico of 5 dolphinfish per person per day, not to exceed 15
33 dolphinfish per vessel per day, whichever is less. Motion by
34 Vanessa, seconded by Kreglo.

35
36 All in favor say "aye."

37
38 **GROUP:** Aye.

39
40 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any nays? Ricardo. Okay, thank you, Ricardo.
41 any nays? Any abstentions? Hearing none, *motion carries.*

42
43 So, Sarah.

44
45 **Continue Presentation - P.R. Wahoo Size Limit**

46
47 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes. Thank you. So, next will be the same kind
48 of structure, but for wahoo. So, once the presentation gets back

1 up, you'll see the wahoo size limits that are proposed for Puerto
2 Rico. These are the same size limits that were used for the Saint
3 Croix and Saint Thomas and Saint John. Again, it's because they're
4 based on the biology of the fish.

5
6 And so, you'll see that the no action is, do not establish a size
7 limit for wahoo. Alternative 2 is to establish a 32-inch fork
8 length minimum and that's for both commercial and recreational
9 fishing in federal waters. And then, Alternative 3 is to establish
10 the 40-inch fork length minimum size limit for all fishing in
11 federal waters. And again, that rationale for this action would be
12 to ensure that undersized individuals have time to mature and
13 reproduce. So, those are your alternatives.

14
15 The next slide kind of shows that breakdown of the analysis.

16
17 So, there weren't as many wahoo lengths, but you can still see
18 that the majority of the fish caught by the commercial sector,
19 were under 32 inches. But how that translates to the commercial
20 poundage is over in that table on the right. So, if you selected
21 the 32-inch fork length, that would be about 12 percent reduction
22 in landings. And then, if you selected the 40-inch fork length,
23 that would be almost a 40 percent reduction in landings. So, this
24 one is a little bit more of an impact based on the size limits
25 that were selected.

26
27 And then just real quick, next slide shows the same information
28 but for the recreational sector. So, we'll look at that and then
29 we can have discussion on the wahoo lengths.

30
31 So, you can see the distribution of sizes that were collected, and
32 this again is from the recreational fisheries statistics survey.
33 And then, and how that would have an impact on the amount of
34 recreational harvest. So, almost 33 percent if you select the
35 smaller size limit, but then almost 76 percent impact to the
36 recreational anglers, if you pick the 40-inch. So, this one is a
37 little bit more of an impact.

38
39 Just for reference, I believe for the U.S.V.I., the two islands,
40 the 40-inch was selected. But, as I mentioned before, in light of
41 this new information, the landings information, you may want to,
42 or you can, if you'd like, revisit that preferred alternative.

43
44 So, now the next slide is just the prompt for discussion for wahoo.
45 The wahoo size limit.

46
47 **Discussion - P.R. Wahoo Size limit**
48

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, can you bring back that screen for the
2 size limit on Wahoo? So, for Puerto Rico, Vanessa.

3
4 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** As we already discussed for the Virgin Islands,
5 I suggest Alternative 3 to be the one also for Puerto Rico.

6
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Nelson.

8
9 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Same as Vanessa, I suggest
10 Alternative 3. Small fish may have no commercial value for us. And
11 if you give the opportunity for that fish to grow, at the end of
12 the road, everyone's going to have more benefits. So, Alternative
13 3 should be the best.

14
15 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Roberto Sabater, do you have a comment on the
16 wahoo size?

17
18 **ROBERTO SABATER:** Yes. I have a comment. Maybe the small fish
19 doesn't have any commercial value, but it has a lot of recreational
20 value. So, I don't think that we should go to forty. Forty is a
21 big fish, and mostly you catch a small fish, which is what
22 recreational people want. You know, light tackle, you catch them
23 in 20-pound test line, or maybe thirty at the most, and you have
24 a lot of fun. But that way, you go to forty, and then you will be
25 catching a lot less, and you won't be searching them over at the
26 Bajo de Patillas, or the Grappler Bank, or any place like that,
27 because it won't be any fun anymore. You know, 40-inch is a big
28 fish for us. It's not what we searched for.

29
30 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, I guess we need to come up with a
31 motion preferred alternative.

32
33 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Excuse me. The whole idea for the development on
34 the record is that if you have 32 and 40, and the biological
35 concern is not the main thing and you can adopt 30, 38, or whatever,
36 40 and with the analysis that was presented, you are doubling the
37 percentage of the fish that you'll be saving, for lack of a better
38 word, with the 40.

39
40 But remember, you also have to take into consideration the
41 socioeconomics. The problem that we have here is that we don't
42 have the darn data from Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.
43 Actually, the Virgin Islands is way ahead with recreational
44 fisheries than Puerto Rico. The socioeconomical data that we need
45 for recreational is lacking. That will come up in the public
46 hearings and so forth. But at this time, with the element of
47 judgment that you have at this time, we need to hear from the
48 Council, which issue you preferred alternative.

1
2 And remember, I'll repeat it again. The preferred alternative
3 doesn't mean it will be at the end of the process the one that is
4 going to be chosen at the end but we need to provide the staff
5 with some indication as to where you want to go with this. That's
6 all.

7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Jack.

9
10 **JACK MCGOVERN:** I remember at the last Council meeting, there was
11 a lot of discussion about release mortality and whether to go with
12 a 40-inch fish or a smaller fish. Maybe, I'm wondering if Sarah
13 knows if there's any information on the release mortality of the
14 fish. It would help inform us.

15
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Vanessa.

17
18 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to make a comment.
19 Of course, I'm in the commercial sector where we have a nice marina
20 in my area and from what I have seen the difference about the
21 dolphin between the wahoo sector, in recreational, that the
22 recreational prefer the bigger wahoo. Especially from the data
23 that we have from tournaments and the charters. The way that they
24 manage also that fish is different.

25
26 I don't know if Yamitza who is in the chat, maybe she could give
27 more information about the wahoo that they have seen during the
28 past year. I think that the wahoo, at least from my experience in
29 what I see in the sector, for recreational, that size is most of
30 what I see, in both, commercial and recreational in the west side.

31
32 **YAMITZA RODRÍGUEZ:** Just to answer Vanessa's question. At least in
33 the past few years, that comes up to my memories, we have seen an
34 increase in interest in different areas in wahoo fishing,
35 recreationally, and creating new events for targeting the species.
36 And to our surprise, because from our previous data, we saw smaller
37 size wahoo in the West Coast, but in the past few, I could say
38 three years, we have seen bigger landed fish. And there are, I
39 think, at least three new species from areas that are targeting
40 wahoo in the East Coast, recreationally and creating events for
41 this. And they're landing bigger size fish than what we have seen
42 previously.

43
44 Even though the wahoo is not as important for recreational fishing
45 anglers as dolphinfish, it's because of the difference in capturing
46 them, it's more difficult, etcetera, there are still anglers that
47 prefer to go out fishing for wahoo. We have seen bigger fish in
48 the past three years in tournaments.

1
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sure. I'll make a comment here because I know
3 that when it comes to the Virgin Islands and wahoo, I want to
4 revisit that size limit of 40 inches. I did some homework on this
5 talking to recreational fishers.

6
7 Their concern is that if a fish has already matured enough to lay
8 eggs at least once, which happens, according to literature, 50
9 percent of a 32-inch wahoo has matured, they say that when they're
10 out fishing-- I have to read what this guy told me. He says, "when
11 we use a wahoo bomb, which is a ballyhoo and a skirt, sometimes a
12 small wahoo, 32-inch wahoo, will swallow the whole thing. Then
13 they have to cut the wire and release this fish and it probably
14 causes more of a mortality issue than they would a live release,
15 a live discard.

16
17 So, that's one of their biggest concerns on going to a 40-inch.
18 They said it's too big. I know that Nicole is out in a meeting
19 right now, but I think that I did hear her say at one time that
20 the, I'm not sure she was talking about the wahoo size, but she
21 said it was too big also, but I got to verify that with her first.
22 I'm not really sure if that's what she was referring to. But I
23 think they had concerns with the 40-inch and I want to revisit
24 that and get some science from either SSC or someone that knows
25 more about the maturity of a wahoo and the size of maturity.

26
27 Vance?

28
29 **VANCE VICENTE:** Well, examining the Caribbean Fishery Life History
30 Compilation--

31
32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Mic is not on.

33
34 **VANCE VICENTE:** Oh, I'm sorry. At least in the Caribbean Fishery
35 Life History Compilation, which was created by Adams and Adyan
36 Ríos, there's no information on the wahoo. We do have a lot of
37 information on other pelagics, but-- Nope. So, if I'm wrong, I
38 mean, if the Center has information that I don't have available,
39 but yeah, there's no biological information.

40
41 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Roberto?

42
43 **ROBERTO SABATER:** I hear the word here that all the data is based
44 on tournaments. Tournaments for wahoo are not too many of them,
45 but a lot of people go out every day, on certain days, and during
46 certain seasons to catch wahoo. 40-inch is a big fish. We consider
47 that a big fish. For a normal recreational guy to go out there and
48 to not be able to collect something small is-- you're destroying

1 the sportsman. You have to be able to let-- as a matter of fact,
2 I think 32 is big too. That's a big fish. And 40, I wish I could
3 catch 40-inch ones all the time I go out there.

4
5 I'm happy without with a 30-inch tarpon. But a 40-inch wahoo is an
6 experience. A 30-inch wahoo is an experience. But you're talking
7 only about tournaments, tournaments, tournaments. A lot of people
8 fish here every day, not in tournament. Tournament, few, few people
9 fish tournaments now, because it's getting to be too expensive.

10
11 And so, they go out there every day and a 40-inch is big, a 32-
12 inch is big too. So, I think you should give a chance to the guy
13 to find a smaller number or something like that. I know we need to
14 protect our species, but at the same time that guy that goes out
15 every day or every two days or every Saturday when work allows
16 him, he should be able to catch something. If he had to throw away
17 a 40-inch fish, I would cry. Thank you.

18
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Vanessa.

20
21 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez for the
22 record. Roberto, as you said, we don't have enough data about the
23 wahoo and counting also what Carlos says, I think that maybe we
24 should be able to take alternative number two between the time
25 that we have more information, but I want to know if this can cause
26 any situation for the enforcement that they already are for the
27 Virgin Island for 40.

28
29 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Cristina, puedes poner las alternativas de wahoo,
30 por favor.

31
32 So, for the record, Alternative number 2 establishes a 32-inch
33 fork length. Is that what you're referring to, Vanessa?

34
35 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes, to have a happy medium between recreational
36 and commercial sector. If 32 is going to have a percentage of
37 maturity in the wahoo, and we are able to get that one in the
38 meantime while we have more information from the recreational
39 sector or the scientists about the maturity and the length.

40
41 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** And will be for prefer alternative. To make it
42 clear.

43
44 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes.

45
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Graciela and then the chat.

47
48 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Ricardo López requested turn to speak.

1
2 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, que Ricardo va primero. Dile a Ricardo que
3 hable.

4
5 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Thanks for the opportunity again. I would
6 like alternative number three. It's completely compatible with
7 U.S.V.I. and it's what we talked in 2020 when we were revising the
8 regulations. So, that's what I prefer and that is what the Sub-
9 Secretary agreed with me. Thanks.

10
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Graciela.

12
13 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, you do have a study by the DNER in
14 which it was reported that 25 percent of the females are mature
15 when they reach 32 inches in length. So, 40 inches would most
16 likely approximate the 100 percent maturity schedule. It's on page
17 15.

18
19 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. Graciela, I have a report here from the
20 Gulf and Caribbean Research and they have assessed a maturity of
21 50% of the maturity of the females at 40 inches. Actually, they
22 offer this in millimeters, 1,015 which is roughly 40 inches. And
23 then combined with what Graciela is mentioning, you have 24 at 32.
24 So, we have information. We don't have specifics about the landings
25 by recreational fishery, but biological information is there, with
26 what Graciela mentioned and what we have here on the record.

27
28 And then also Sarah's analysis, you have the table, you have the
29 percentages, you're reducing with the different sizes that you
30 have. So, you have to-- and again, this is-- Anyway, the Council
31 has to decide what to do with the motion, or not the motion, but
32 what Vanessa mentioned, that happy medium to get better information
33 would be alternative two. Ricardo preferred Alternative 3. So, you
34 have to decide which one you believe. And we're talking about
35 Puerto Rico only, at this time.

36
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I have Vanessa.

38
39 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Oh, yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez
40 for the record. It's just basic, in the information that we have
41 now and considering that the recreational sector in Puerto Rico
42 doesn't have enough data to be aware of what they are really
43 catching, only data that we have is for tournaments and what we
44 see in the field. So that's why I suggest alternative two until we
45 have better data available or new information.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Kreglo, and then Julian.
48

1 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** The first thing is, Miguel taught me when I got
2 on the Council, was that we're supposed to make decisions to
3 protect the resource, the species, and, of course, we want to be
4 able to have maximum sustained yield at some point. And so, number
5 one what I learned was to be able to allow these species to at
6 least have one opportunity to reproduce.
7
8 Now, Carlos and I had a discussion about a week or so ago, and I
9 looked up a 32-inch wahoo. And if you can look up on the internet,
10 that's. That's about a six and a half to maybe a seven-pound fish.
11
12 Now, I've been catching wahoo for a couple of decades or so. I've
13 caught a lot of wahoos. I can tell you most of the wahoo I've
14 personally caught have been between 20 and 65 pounds. I've never
15 caught a monster 90 pounds or so, but I don't think I've ever
16 caught a seven-pound wahoo. I mean, I've just never caught one
17 that tiny. Maybe a 12-pound wahoo, but I can't ever remember. So,
18 you know, a 32-inch wahoo is a small wahoo. A 40-inch wahoo and
19 give it one chance to reproduce and get more of those wahoos out
20 there, that's my concern.
21
22 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** We have Marcos Hanke in the chat, and he
23 wrote, "It is easy for compliance to allow wahoo smaller than 40-
24 inches total length. Use the rationale of the biology to determine
25 the month size and the importance of this species for recreational
26
27 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Did you guys understand what he said?
28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** No.
30
31 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Marcos are you there?
32
33 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes, I'm here. Thank you for the opportunity. Hello,
34 everyone. Can you hear me?
35
36 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Citizen Marcos, can you explain what you put in
37 the chat, please? [laughter]
38
39 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yes. Can you hear me? Yes. Thank you, everyone.
40 Hello to everybody in the room. I think we need to use the biology
41 not to go over and trying to think that everybody is looking for
42 40- and 50-inch wahoo, that will be guided by the gear you use.
43 The majority of the wahoo caught are on the smaller size than 40
44 inches. We're going to be releasing a lot of fish with a low
45 survival rate and that will hurt the recreational fishing a lot.
46
47 On the other hand of the story, if six-and-a-half-pound wahoo is
48 a very small wahoo, with the gears that we use, they don't target

1 those small fish. But if the biology allowed them to be caught at
2 32 inches, I don't think we need to go beyond that, considering
3 the high mortality after release of the wahoo.

4
5 I totally agree with alternative number two for other reasons too
6 as stated by Carlos Farchette and others. Thank you.

7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Marcos. Julian?

9
10 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Just a suggestion and I think it goes across the
11 board for U.S.V.I. and for Puerto Rico. Even though that in the
12 U.S.V.I. we already chose the 40-inch size limit. Listening to all
13 the discussion and everything that's going on, this is a suggestion
14 I want to throw there for everybody to think about and see if it
15 makes sense. By looking at the landings of both recreational and
16 commercial here for Puerto Rico and the size limits and everything,
17 it's showing that 32-inch or just a little bit above 32-inch is
18 the main catch of the wahoo. If we decide to go to the 40-inch,
19 which we didn't have this information to look at it the last time,
20 we can see a high mortality or not. We don't know about that
21 mortality number.

22
23 So, I would make the suggestion that I think that the way we go is
24 with the 32-inch but manage it through the bag limits. So, instead
25 of having a high bag limit, have a smaller bag limit until both
26 Puerto Rico and the U.S.V.I. can collect at least three years of
27 solid data from these species, and then you can revisit it and see
28 if the rules that you have put in place are they working or are
29 they not working?

30
31 I think it would get away from a lot of everybody saying, "Well,
32 this, that--" 32, and control it through the bag limits. That's
33 just a suggestion from me as a fisherman looking at it. Thank you.

34
35 **JACK MCGOVERN:** I guess another suggestion. You're not necessarily
36 locked into having a 32-inch size limit and a 40-inch size limit.
37 You could have another alternative that's somewhere between that.
38 and that might satisfy the rec sector and the commercial sector
39 more. Kate just showed me in the amendment that a lot of the fish
40 that are released, wahoo that are released, in Puerto Rico are
41 around 36 inches, it says in there. So, maybe somewhere in between
42 could be another alternative to consider.

43
44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay Crespo.

45
46 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nelson Crespo for the record.
47 I hear what Julian says and I think we should go that way, with a
48 bag limit. We can work with that. We can go with the 32.

1
2 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, Mr. Chairman, we have a couple of
3 alternatives. The one presented to you, 32, plus the bag limit.
4 Both Nelson and Julian are talking about it. Jack believes that
5 probably we can go in between. Maybe 36, 34. So, Sarah will need
6 to have a preferred alternative from you at this time.

7
8 Remember, I keep saying the same thing. The preferred alternative
9 doesn't mean that that will be the one that you'll have in the
10 regulation, but it'll give you an idea how it goes. The other thing
11 I was going to mention is that we have three island-based FMPs.
12 For those species that are place based, that's a new phrase. They
13 mostly occur in Saint Croix, like the parrotfish. The other in
14 Puerto Rico, like the others. Maybe we can have separate
15 regulation, but in this case, the wahoo goes all around. So, maybe
16 you would like to have the same regulation for the federal water
17 surrounding the three areas. It will be up to you.

18
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Gerson?

20
21 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Just speaking back on Mr. Julian Magras' comment.
22 I, first and foremost, agree with what Mr. Julian said on the 32-
23 inch and the bag limits reduced. That's all I have to say.

24
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Um. So, we're going to-- there's a lot of
26 discussion here. Katherine?

27
28 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Just so you know what your choices are. If
29 the Council is not ready to select a preferred at this time, that
30 is a choice that can be made. If you want to pursue and select
31 alternatives, those are not locked into stone. You can change those
32 later based on additional information or public comments that you
33 entertain later on.

34
35 I just want to make sure you're aware of that. That if the Council
36 is not ready to select preferred for the wahoo size limit, you are
37 not required to do that right now. You can come back to it at
38 another time. But if you do want to make a selection now, that can
39 also be changed later.

40
41 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, the thing is how fast do you want to go,
42 Mr. Chairman. If you want to delay this a little bit further,
43 probably then you will come with the same issues. So, what is the
44 pleasure of the Council?

45
46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Vanessa.

47
48 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez for the

1 record. *I would like to move with Alternative 2, if it's okay with*
2 *the rest.* Because of the discussion that we already had and the
3 expertise of the recreational that also contributed on the chat
4 and Roberto here, I think that alternative number two will be the
5 preferred for now until we have more available data for the
6 recreational sector.

7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Somebody want to second that?

9
10 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Second.

11
12 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Some kind of discussion.

13
14 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** For the record to make it clear, Mr. Chairman,
15 the motion would be to adopt Alternative 2 as a preferred
16 alternative regarding the size limit of the wahoo.

17
18 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** For Puerto Rico.

19
20 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Exactly. For Puerto Rico. We have it on the
21 screen. Make sure that-- Vanessa, is that language agreeable with
22 your intent?

23
24 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Okay. *Motion for Puerto Rico for the Wahoo Size*
25 *Limits, Action 2a. Move for Alternative 2: Establish a 32-inch*
26 *fork length minimum size limit for commercial and recreational*
27 *harvest of wahoo in federal waters around Puerto Rico.* Yes.

28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any further discussion? Jack and then Vance.

30
31 **JACK MCGOVERN:** I just want to reiterate what Kate said. We can
32 select a preferred here but then even when we come down to the
33 time to take final action on the amendment, the Council could
34 change the preferred because all the analysis would be in the in
35 the amendment at that point.

36
37 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Do you want to instruct the staff to look at 30,
38 34, 32?

39
40 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sure.

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Sure, because you're not going to it.

43
44 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** You have a motion pending. You should
45 resolve what's going to happen in that motion before you talk about
46 other options.

47
48 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, all in favor and the whole thing.

1
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, Vance on discussion.
3

4 **VANCE VICENTE:** I'm just going to make a comment. I think that
5 until we have enough data on the length at maturity, the size at
6 maturity, K, the rate at which the growth curve of the wahoo
7 approaches L-infinity. If we don't have that data for the
8 Caribbean, I know we have it for the Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere,
9 but I believe that we should have that information before making
10 any final decision. That's just my comment.
11

12 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** What happens if we never have that information?
13 Never.
14

15 **VANCE VICENTE:** I don't know.
16

17 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Vance.
18

19 Okay, So, the motion is "Alternative 2: Establish a 32-inch fork
20 length minimum size limit for commercial and recreational harvest
21 of wahoo in federal waters around Puerto Rico. Seconded by
22 Commissioner Oriol.
23

24 All in favor say "aye."
25

26 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Aye.
27

28 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Aye.
29

30 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** any nays? Oh, Ricardo?
31

32 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes, thanks for the opportunity. Ricardo
33 López for the record. I oppose.
34

35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Any nays? Okay, nays, Ricard. Okay,
36 any abstention?
37

38 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Abstain. Okay. So, we have one abstain, one no,
39 and that leaves four yeas. *Motion carries, four to two.*
40

41 Okay. Alrighty, we have to take a quick break. So, about ten
42 minutes? Ten minutes is good. Take a little break.
43

44 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)
45

46 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. We're going to get started again. So,
47 while I'm here talking, let me request from all the Council. Folks,
48 because we won't be able to finish the agenda for today, we will

1 start tomorrow at 8:30 in the morning. Thank you very much.

2
3 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, what else do we need to do, Sarah? We need
4 to get to the next one?

5
6 **Continue Presentation - P.R. Wahoo Rec. Bag Limit**

7
8 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yeah. So, we just finished wahoo size limits,
9 So, there will be wahoo bag limits for Puerto Rico and then for
10 Saint Thomas/Saint John and Saint Croix. And then all the prefers
11 would be identified. So, yeah. So, here's the recreational bag
12 limits for Puerto Rico.

13
14 So, Alternative 1 is to do nothing. Alternative 2 is to establish
15 a five wahoo per person or ten wahoo per vessel per day. And that
16 would be compatible with the current Puerto Rico regulations. Or
17 Alternative 3, which is a little bit more conservative. Establishes
18 a two wahoo per person, six wahoo per vessel per day, whichever is
19 less, in federal waters around Puerto Rico.

20
21 And there again you can see the rationale. for why we're doing
22 this is because there's no recreational data available at this
23 time.

24
25 And then the next slide has the analysis that was done for this
26 bag limit action. If you would, next slide. You can see that the
27 majority of the recreational anglers from 2000 to 2017 caught one
28 wahoo a day. And on the right-hand side you can see what those bag
29 limit alternatives would relate to in the amount of harvest that
30 would be reduced for the recreational sector.

31
32 So, with that, the next slide is just to prompt for discussion for
33 the recreational bag limit for wahoo.

34
35 **Discussion - P.R. Wahoo Rec. Bag Limit**

36
37 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Can we go to the alternative? There, Mr.
38 Chairman, similar to the discussion of dolphinfish, here you have
39 the same issues, regulations, enforcement, etcetera, etcetera. So,
40 we have to break at five o'clock sharp because we have public
41 hearings in the afternoon and then tomorrow, we will continue with
42 the agenda. So, at this time, Mr. Chairman, I would like to hear
43 from you regarding your preferred alternative for the bag limits.

44
45 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Vanessa.

46
47 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez for the
48 record. Well, counting on this, *I suggest Alternative 2 because we*

1 know the lack of enforcement that we have in the landings; it is
2 the best way to maintain a compatibility with Puerto Rico
3 regulation in the case of the wahoo. Also, because of the size, to
4 maintain also with the recreational and commercial. I think that
5 five wahoo per person per day, not exceeding the ten wahoo per
6 vessel. Yes.

7
8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, the motion is for the Council to adopt
9 Alternative 2 regarding the Puerto Rico wahoo recreational bag
10 limit on action 2b. We need a second.

11
12 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We need to put it up on the screen.

13
14 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Well, yeah. But while they put it on the screen,
15 do we have a second?

16
17 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** I second.

18
19 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mr. Chairman, can you read it for the record,
20 please?

21
22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah. *For Wahoo Recreational Bag Limit, Action*
23 *2b. Alternative 2: Establish a recreational bag limit in federal*
24 *waters around Puerto Rico of five wahoo per person per day, not to*
25 *exceed 10 wahoo per vessel per day, whichever is less. Motion by*
26 *Vanessa, seconded by Oriol.*

27
28 Any further discussion? Hearing none, we're going to go for a vote.
29 All in favor say "aye."

30
31 **GROUP:** Aye.

32
33 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** I agree.

34
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Ricardo. Any nays? Any abstentions?
36 Hearing none, *motion carries.*

37
38 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. Next, Sarah.

39
40 **Continue Presentation - STX & STT/STJ**

41
42 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Okay. When we get back to the presentation, the
43 next slide is just showing you for Saint Croix, which is Action 3a
44 and Saint Thomas Saint John, Action 5a, the preferred alternative
45 that you selected for the size limit for dolphin, which was 24-
46 inches minimum size limit in federal waters. So, that's just a
47 reminder, you don't have to do anything. There are some graphs to
48 show you that same kind of information that was done. It was part

1 of the amendment that was prepared.
2
3 So, sorry, it's not this slide, it's next, I think two forward.
4 Oh, keep going. So yeah.
5
6 So, here's the alternatives for the size limit. The next two slides
7 show you what that analysis prepared. The impacts of those
8 alternatives. So, next slide.
9
10 For the commercial data that we had, you could see a 4 percent or
11 a 5 percent reduction in landings, depending on which size you
12 picked, and this is for Saint Croix. Next slide.
13
14 There is no recreational data so this is the commercial data for
15 Saint Thomas/Saint John, and you can see that the two sizes picked
16 would have a less than 1 percent reduction in landings based on
17 those two size limits. The next slide.
18
19 Recreational bag limits. You already selected a preferred
20 alternative for both Saint Croix and Saint Thomas/Saint John of 10
21 dolphin per person per day, 32 per vessel per day, whichever is
22 less. And that was to be compatible with the U.S.V.I. regulations.
23
24 Next slide is just prompting for discussion and that's just if you
25 wanted to revisit any of those selections, if not, we can keep
26 moving.
27
28 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Sorry, what's the last part? If we keep them,
29 that's it, we continue?
30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, I think we're good with that. But we want
32 to revisit the wahoo.
33
34 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yeah. So, wahoo is up next. So, next slide.
35
36 Here are the size limits that were proposed for wahoo for Saint
37 Croix and Saint Thomas/Saint John. You did already select a
38 preferred size of 40 inches in federal waters around both islands.
39
40 And then the next slide, I believe, has some analysis for you to
41 look at. Although, it's just for Saint Croix because there were
42 only 21 lengths available for Saint Croix and there are only 17
43 lengths available for Saint Thomas. The Saint Thomas is in the
44 little description on the right side. So, all 17 Wahoo samples
45 were above 40 inches in fork length and the sizes range from 42 to
46 56 with an average of 54.
47
48 So, the two graphs, the graphs and the table, show you the Saint

1 Croix information broken out. If you do the 32-inch, it would be
2 about a 2 percent reduction in landings. And then, if you did the
3 40-inch, that equates to about a 45%.

4
5 So, the next slide is just prompting for discussion again. So,
6 sorry, it should have been discussion. Do you want to discuss or
7 revisit size limits?

8
9 **Discussion - STX & STT/STJ Wahoo Size Limits**

10
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Right. So, based on our previous discussion
12 with Puerto Rico, and I think that the V.I. and Puerto Rico all
13 agreed to change the preferred to the 32. I need someone to make
14 that motion if they prefer.

15
16 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Cristina, can you put the alternative for the
17 wahoo?

18
19 Yeah, here the question is whether you like to change your
20 preferred to any of the other two. Meaning, Alternative 2 or not.
21 Do you want to keep it at 40?

22
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Well, I think that we did agree. I mean, both
24 V.I. and Puerto Rico did agree with the change to Alternative 2.
25 So, all we need is a motion for that. And then discussion. Jack?

26
27 **JACK MCGOVERN:** So, moved.

28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Can you pull up on the screen? We need a second.

30
31 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, the motion is to switch the preferred
32 alternative from number three to number two.

33
34 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** So, I'll second it to have the discussion.

35
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** *For Size Limits for Wahoo, Saint Croix, Saint*
37 *Thomas/Saint John would be Alternative 2. Establish 32-inch fork*
38 *length minimum size limit for the commercial and recreational*
39 *harvest of wahoo in the federal waters around Saint Croix, Saint*
40 *Thomas/Saint John.* So, you can change the "or" to "and." Moved by
41 Jack McGovern, seconded by J. P. Oriol.

42
43 Open for discussion. Okay. Commissioner?

44
45 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Yeah. So, it's my understanding that we
46 voted on something at the last meeting with the numbers, supported
47 by whatever information was presented. And then, my understanding
48 of what we're doing is creating what it is that will go out to

1 public notice for public comment.

2
3 My thing is, I haven't really seen anything that supports why we're
4 reversing the decision, at least today, from whatever it is was
5 discussed in the meeting in April. That took place in April/May.
6 So, what is prompting the change in the number is my question.

7
8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. The question is-- Anyway, we are changing
9 it because we spent about an hour discussing this with Puerto Rico.
10 The same holds true for the Virgin Islands. You know, recreational
11 sector is saying that 40 is too big, 32 is agreeable.

12
13 32 ensure that at least 25 percent to 30 percent of the females
14 are spawned. 40 ensure, well, not ensure, but it is estimated in
15 the North Gulf paper that 40 will be 50 percent of the females
16 will have spawned at least once.

17
18 So, you can keep the preferred alternative you have here if you
19 consider nothing has changed for the U.S. Virgin Islands to do it,
20 or you can switch and go back to what Puerto Rico decided.

21
22 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Right. So, you know, further in that line,
23 right? So, again, not having been here at the last meeting, but
24 something was presented at the last meeting that would-- because
25 the way I understood it took place is that the original motion was
26 for 32 and it went up to 40.

27
28 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Correct.

29
30 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** And so, there was some information that was
31 presented at the last meeting that supported the number going up
32 to the 40-inch fork length.

33
34 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Do you want me to speak bluntly? The reason we
35 changed it is because now we have recreational fishers who know
36 what they're doing. The last time we didn't have those two.

37
38 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Say that again for me.

39
40 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** We have information on the socio-economy that we
41 didn't have very clear before. Until Roberto and Marcos spoke, you
42 guys were pushing for 40. So, the socio-economy also plays a role
43 here. For example, in this case Julian offered 32 plus the bag
44 limit, a combination of those two, until we have further
45 information. So, those are the only element of judgment that we
46 have on the record.

47
48 So again, for the U.S. Virgin Islands, if you consider that you

1 should stick to the 40, as your preferred alternatives, so be it.
2 If you want to change it because of what happened in the discussion
3 today, you might do so. So, either way, you have both, you have
4 the biological concerns addressed, 25, 50 percent. You also have
5 an analysis by Sarah, what percentage is reduced by the different
6 sizes.

7
8 And then, I guess it was Vanessa saying, "I vote for this one
9 because in three years I want to have more information." So, if we
10 can change it, we'll change it, but at least you will go to the
11 public with a preferred alternative, collect more information,
12 etcetera, etcetera. Does that address your concern?

13
14 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** Yes. Thank you.

15
16 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay.

17
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Vanessa.

19
20 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez for the
21 record. Also, just to recall what Carlos brought to the table about
22 him talking with some fishermen between the time from April to now
23 and the high mortality of this ones once they get the bait inside.
24 So, if we now have this information, and know that with the 32 it
25 could be a good number until we have more data for the recreational
26 that's why Puerto Rico moved to the 32, and that's why I will
27 support also the 32 for Virgin Islands.

28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any more discussion? Okay, Miguel.

30
31 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, for the record and for the future, what
32 the commissioner asked is the kind of discussion that we need for
33 the record, why we are changing from one to the other. Especially
34 for the new Council member, don't feel-- I mean, anybody can say
35 whatever they need to say so we can develop the record. The more
36 arguments we have in the record, pro and con, the better for the
37 development of any management plan. So, I guess that we are doing
38 good, Mr. Chairman.

39
40 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, we'll take it to a vote. All in favor
41 say "aye."

42
43 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Aye.

44
45 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any nays?

46
47 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** I abstain.

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Oh, okay.

2
3 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** No.

4
5 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, we have one "abstain," one "no," four
6 "yeas." *Motion carries.*

7
8 **Continue Presentation - STX, STT/STJ Wahoo Rec. Bag Limit**
9

10
11 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** This is Sarah again. Okay, So, that just leaves
12 one more action and that's the Recreational Bag Limits for Wahoo
13 in Saint Croix and Saint Thomas and Saint John. You looked at this
14 last time, but you didn't make a decision. You did ask us to change
15 the numbers in Alternative 3.

16
17 So, the Alternative 1 is the no action. We would not establish a
18 bag limit for wahoo in federal waters around either island.
19 Alternative 2 would establish four per person or 20 per vessel per
20 day, whichever is less. And that would be compatible with the
21 U.S.V.I. regulations. And then, Alternative 3 was changed to two
22 wahoo per person or 10 wahoo per vessel per day, whichever is less.
23 I don't believe there was any analysis for this one to show. So.
24 we can just go right to discussion if you have any. And the reason
25 why there's no analysis is because we didn't have any recreational
26 data for the U.S.V.I.

27
28 **Discussion - STX, STT/STJ Wahoo Rec. Bag Limit**
29

30 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, the question is similar to before. You want
31 to do the compatible one with the regulations for the U.S. Virgin
32 Islands? or number three? what is the pleasure of the Council?

33
34 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** In the discussion last time, I think Julian
35 brought up the point about the bag limits and all that, but the
36 other thing we were looking at in the discussion was that we said
37 it was to be comparable with U.S.V.I. regulations, but those
38 regulations had not gone into place yet. Not until August of next
39 year. That was a whole discussion there.

40
41 So, we were afraid to make our own regulations because they haven't
42 gone into effect yet and that would give the V.I. a chance to go
43 in with the federal regulations. We were looking really at
44 Alternative 3, from what I recall from the last meeting. That's my
45 comment.

46
47 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Well, Mr. Kreglo just said so. Since, like I said
48 earlier, going with a smaller size of the fish, we should go with

1 a smaller size and control it with the bag limits until we have
2 gathered enough information through the new recreational program
3 that's supposed to be coming up.

4
5 So, I would suggest that we go with Alternative 3 to protect this
6 migratory species, the wahoo, protected until we have enough
7 information, and we could revisit it after that information is
8 collected. So, I would like to see Alternative 3 for the Saint
9 Thomas/Saint John District. It's up to you for Saint Croix.

10
11 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mr. Chairman, for the record then, is it
12 compatible to be with the U.S. Virgin Islands for the second one?
13 You still don't have that in the books, is it been planned? Is
14 just addressing James' question.

15
16 **JEAN-PIERRE L. ORIOL:** No, the regulations themselves haven't gone
17 into effect, but they have in fact been passed. So, it's kind of
18 like that grace period to get people in line with the regulations
19 that were passed. So, the thing is, is that the difference between
20 the local and the federal one is we don't deal with dolphinfish
21 and wahoo separately, but here we are. There's a total number per
22 vessel that is inside the regulation.

23
24 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, what does the Council want to do?

25
26 **ROBERTO SABATER:** It's just-- I'm showing my ignorance now. How do
27 you get from 4 wahoo per person to 20. Do you normally fish 5
28 people in a boat? Because we only fish 3, maximum 4. And then you
29 go from 2 wahoos to 10. So, that means you're fishing 5 people,
30 and you normally have three people. So really, what you're talking
31 is maximum of six and a maximum of 12, not 20. I mean, I don't
32 know how those numbers came about, but in reality, you never fish
33 more than four people in a boat in recreational, you know, five
34 is--

35
36 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Unless it's a charter boat.

37
38 **ROBERTO SABATER:** Unless it's a charter boat, which I don't know.
39 A charter normally, well, they do three, four and five, but then
40 you have to pay extra.

41
42 But recreational, we only fish three, maybe four. So, I don't see
43 how you get to the 20 if you're only fishing four people. You get
44 only to 16, maximum. So, I don't follow the reasoning in those
45 numbers.

46
47 **MARCOS HANKE:** Yeah. Thank you very much. I want to highlight, due
48 to historical discussion, the importance of compatibility between

1 the areas. We don't have enforcement and to keep discussing the
2 finer details about the numbers is not as important as to be
3 compatible to state laws that are already in place. That's the
4 only way we can really make a change on the protection of any
5 species, most of the time.

6
7 And addressing the question that Roberto Sabater just mentioned,
8 which I understand the four wahoo per person is considering, as
9 far as I remember, the days that you're fishing in the wintertime
10 where you have smaller wahoos to have enough wahoos to take home,
11 but not to exceed 20 to prevent the illegal flow of those fish to
12 the market. And that's the basic rationale behind that. I
13 understand that it doesn't add to it the way he expressed, but
14 that's the rationale.

15
16 I want to highlight the members to focus on the compatibility that
17 all of you guys discuss and endorse for other species and defended
18 so strongly before. I'm not hearing that discussion right now.
19 Thank you.

20
21 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** So, Marcos brought up the issue about compatibility
22 again. I see the compatibility issue, but we don't catch wahoo in
23 territorial waters. If we do catch a wahoo in territorial waters,
24 it's an incidental catch. Wahoos hang out off the shelf. All of
25 our shelf is in federal waters in the Saint Thomas/Saint John
26 district.

27
28 So, the compatibility there, I don't see it being a problem with
29 us trying to reduce the amount of wahoo by going with alternative
30 number three. I think it's a happy medium. We already said that we
31 want to see the smaller size but to protect the species by going
32 with the smaller size, we also need to protect the fish by a bag
33 limit that is justifiable for these recreational fishers. How much
34 fish do you actually need to take home? Okay?

35
36 We the commercial guys, we have to spend our money to get out there
37 to go catch a fish to then sell it. When these recreational guy
38 going to catch these large quantities of fish, then they're go and
39 illegally sell the fish back in to our market, to our customers.
40 So that's another issue. By controlling it with a bag limit, we
41 stand a chance, and the fish itself stands a chance to be there
42 for future generations. That's just my comment.

43
44 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, we need a motion to go somewhere with this.
45 I know we catch whaoos in territorial water, but that's because
46 our water is very deep, very close. So, yeah.

47
48 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** I'd like to make a motion to accept Alternative

1 3. You want me to read the whole thing or just say Alternative 3?
2 Okay. *Alternative 3: Established recreational bag limit in federal*
3 *waters around Saint Croix, Saint Thomas/Saint John of 2 wahoo per*
4 *person per day, not to exceed 10 wahoo per vessel per day,*
5 *whichever is less.*

6
7 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Second.

8
9 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any further discussion? Julian?

10
11 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Just one more statement like it comes to my mind.
12 You know, we went to island-based fishery management for a reason
13 because each one of the fisheries are different. At the last
14 Council meeting in Ponce, we had the same issue when dealing with
15 some issues with Puerto Rico, where we came up with a decision, I
16 say this because I'm part of this committee, where we said "when
17 it comes to voting on these different alternatives or rules that
18 we put in place, that we would take each one of the island-based
19 fishery management platforms and we would vote on them separately."

20
21 Carlos just made a good point. Saint Croix, deep water is right
22 there. You could throw a rock from the Carambola into the deep
23 water. And that's a very good point. So, the wahoos can be caught
24 there. But in the Saint Thomas/Saint John shelf, they can't. And
25 that's where we all fall different. Puerto Rico have a nine-mile
26 zone limit. We have a three-mile zone limit. So, in Puerto Rico,
27 when they go nine miles, sure they can catch wahoo still inside
28 the territorial waters and federal waters.

29
30 So, that was one of the big reason for us separating out the
31 different island based plans. So, I'm just throwing that out there.
32 I know we're trying to make it easier by compiling the plans when
33 we do it like this. But when we run into problems like we have
34 right now and I saw it earlier today also, that we need to separate
35 it out and vote separately. That's my comment. Thank you.

36
37 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes. Thank you, Julian, for reminding me of this
38 example. So, I want to ask if we can divide this as it is for some
39 Saint Croix and then the other motion for Saint Thomas and Saint
40 John, just for the record, to have them separately on the FMP and
41 that this action continues also for the next motions that have to
42 be done tomorrow.

43
44 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** If you're going to take number three, let's say
45 for Saint Thomas/Saint John and number two for Saint Croix, fine,
46 you can divide it up. But if you're going to take the same for the
47 two, there's no reason for dividing it. You as a Council have to
48 decide what it is that you would like to do?

1
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Well, my concern with that is that we have
3 fishermen on Saint Croix, and I know of at least four that do go
4 to the North drop off of Saint Thomas and fish there. So, that
5 would be an enforcement nightmare, coming back to Saint Croix and
6 landing more than the 2 and 10. That's just one of my concerns.
7 What's going to happen when a guy boarded out there and he says,
8 "well I caught this" where you can take 20 or "I caught this" where
9 you can only take 10. That's just my concern.

10
11 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** You have a motion; you have to vote on it. Reject
12 it or accept it?

13
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, there's a motion on the floor. We're going
15 to, we already seconded it. No more discussion? We're going to
16 vote. All in favor say "aye."

17
18 **GROUP:** Aye.

19
20 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Ricardo?

21
22 **RICARDO LÓPEZ-ORTIZ:** Yes, I abstain.

23
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any nays? And any abstentions? One abstentions?
25 I thought you said no. Okay. *Motion carries.*

26
27 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** I believe that with that, Sarah, did we finish
28 your section.

29
30 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes, I am. My next slide was just to kind of
31 show you the timeline of what's coming up, but you probably already
32 know that we're going to take this back the IPT, we'll work on it.
33 We'll try to maybe get some public input and then we'll bring it
34 back for you to see again in December.

35
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Jack?

37
38 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Jack McGovern for the record.
39 I was just going to mention that we need to gather information,
40 like Vanessa said, information on release mortality, size
41 maturity. Vance says we have information that we can glean. We
42 need to make sure that we have that all in the amendments so each
43 of the alternatives have good analysis. Also wondering if the
44 Council wanted to add a third alternative for the size on the 36
45 inches, that could be directions to the IPTA. I don't think it
46 necessarily has to be a motion, but after we do all that analysis,
47 it might show that that's a good alternative.

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, yo creo que terminamos. Deja que Kevin
2 McCarthy diga los next steps.

3
4 Finish this; go to McCarthy presentation. He's been waiting for
5 the whole afternoon there.

6
7 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Kevin.

8
9 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** If you've got a hard stop at five, I can't be
10 done in 20 minutes.

11
12 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, we can-- Let me talk to the people here.
13 Maybe 15 minutes more.

14
15 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Okay.

16
17 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Then the important thing is--

18
19 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** I'm going to have to wake up the group back there.

20
21 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah. But the important thing is, Mr. Chairman,
22 we finish with this and then at the December meeting Council will
23 review the draft amendment, etcetera, etcetera. They will have
24 more information for you to consider at the meeting.

25
26 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, Sarah?

27
28 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, she's done.

29
30 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Uh, yes.

31
32 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Sarah finished already.

33
34 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Yes, I'm finished. Thank you very much for the
35 great discussion, everybody. Thanks.

36
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Sarah.

38
39 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** While Kevin is awaking the people there, this
40 is an excellent opportunity to have the branch of the Southeast
41 Fisheries Science Center come here and have this presentation. and
42 I asked Kevin to introduce each one of them, so you will have an
43 opportunity to connect the face with the name. And the people who
44 are working for the Caribbean Council at the Southeast Fisheries
45 Science Center. So, please go ahead.

46
47 **Southeast Fishery Science Center Updates—Kevin McCarthy, NOAA**
48 **Fisheries**

1
2 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thanks. I don't know. Cristina or Liajay going to
3 present, I think. Perfect.

4
5 Okay, we won't need any votes, but one decision that I'll ask for
6 and as much discussion as you want. But I'll remind you that happy
7 hour starts... 20 minutes ago, probably. Okay. So, thanks everybody.
8 We'll try and keep things light and happy for the last half an
9 hour or so.

10
11 So, this is our usual update from the Science Center. Primarily,
12 this is the Caribbean Fisheries Branch and we're part of the
13 Sustainable Fisheries Division. Many of you know Shannon Calay;
14 that's my boss. She's the Division Director. Above her, in the
15 hierarchy is John Walter, and he's been at a couple of these. And
16 of course, Clay Porch is the Center Director. So, I'm like way
17 down the layer cake in importance. So, the branch is coming up
18 which is great.

19
20 I'm really excited to have everybody here, you can see the names
21 there. We've sort of split them out. Some of them are, it's all
22 one team in my way of thinking, and you know some of the folks.
23 Some are CIMAS. So, that's the Cooperative Institute for Marina
24 Atmospheric Science at the University of Miami. So, we would call
25 them affiliates or associates. Then the other folks across the
26 bottom are NOAA and we are trying to backfill for Nancy. As you
27 may recall, she retired at the end of 2022. So, we're trying to
28 backfill for her.

29
30 Next slide.

31
32 This is the team. So, if everybody can just sort of introduce
33 yourselves. There's a little blurb next to each one and sort of
34 the kinds of things they work on, but believe me, they do a lot
35 more than this. They only had one line. I made them just put it in
36 a bullet point. So, most of them do a heck of a lot more than th-
37 - All of them do a heck of a lot more than that. And you can see
38 I'm the least important name up there.

39
40 **DAVID BEHRINGER:** Hi everyone, I'm David Behringer, a research
41 associate at CIMAS. Primarily, at the moment, I'm working on
42 fishery dependent survey design and data analysis. At the moment,
43 primarily been focused on U.S. Virgin Islands but working with
44 some Puerto Rico data as well.

45
46 **RACHEL ECKLEY:** Hi everyone, I'm Rachel Eckley. I'm also with the
47 Cooperative Institute at the University of Miami. I am sort of
48 facilitating and organizing the strategic planning project, which

1 many of you have been part of. I've also compiled the research
2 inventory of federally funded projects in the Caribbean region. I
3 act as a CIMAS liaison between the Science Center and the
4 Cooperative Institute employees. And I help Kevin with planning
5 the Caribbean Seminar Series. So, as a side note, if any of you
6 are interested in presenting at the Caribbean Seminar Series, reach
7 out to Kevin or myself and we'll get you on the schedule.

8
9 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** In fact, I'll go one step further. We'll be
10 actively recruiting you. So, you'll know when to run and hide if
11 you see me walking up to you with a clipboard or something to have
12 you sign up.

13
14 **KATHERINE GODWIN:** Hi guys, I'm Katherine Godwin. I'm a research
15 associate at CIMAS. I do data analysis on a couple different
16 projects. Right now, focusing on TIP data.

17
18 **STEPHANIE MARTÍNEZ RIVERA:** Hola, I'm Stephanie Martínez Rivera.
19 I work with all of the data in the Caribbean. So, I do data analysis
20 and provision. A little bit of data management. Developing and
21 research of programs in our code and also in charge of data
22 requests and I have a life history project.

23
24 **REFIK ORHUN:** Hi, my name is Refik Orhun. I've worked for 12 years
25 as data analyst for the statistics division, now with the Caribbean
26 division. Before that I've run for about 13 years two different
27 marine fish hatcheries. I do, besides data analysis, life history,
28 fisheries ecology, fisheries oceanography, and again, my passion,
29 marine aquaculture.

30
31 **ADYAN RÍOS:** Hi everyone, my name is Adyan Ríos. I work on the
32 stock assessments as well as research related to our models. I
33 also participate on the Outreach and Education Panel for the
34 Council and participate in the MREP education program. I also do
35 workflow automation in order to take some of the modeling processes
36 and make them as easy to reuse and share as possible.

37
38 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thanks, everybody. So, I'm Kevin McCarthy. I'm
39 the Branch Chief of the Caribbean Fisheries Branch. I don't do
40 science anymore very much. I used to do that but now I worry about
41 keeping everybody funded and logistics stuff and all that other
42 non-science, less than fun stuff.

43
44 We're going to keep going. Next slide. And I think Rachel's got a
45 couple of slides she's going to talk you through.

46
47 **RACHEL ECKLEY:** All right, this is Rachel again, for the record.
48 So, I want to give you guys a little brief overview of some of the

1 outcomes of the strategic planning workshop that occurred at the
2 end of May, here in San Juan. Over at the Verdanza Hotel right
3 next door. A lot of people in this room have participated, as well
4 as people in the virtual room, so I wanted to say quickly thank
5 you to everyone who's participated and thank you to everyone who
6 lent support to all of the participants while they were away.

7
8 So, the workshop included 35 people that got together in a room to
9 talk about ways that we can improve regional data limitations to
10 inform stock assessment in EBFM of Puerto Rico, Saint Thomas, Saint
11 John, and Saint Croix. You'll see on the bottom all of the logos
12 of the participating agencies and organizations and while one of
13 our goals was to ensure that we had someone from every organization
14 there, our other main goal was to make sure that we had diversity
15 of expertise and given some of the discussions during the workshop,
16 I think we really achieved that.

17
18 We got into some really great discussions, some at length. We
19 stayed on topic the whole time, which was awesome. And it was a
20 very successful workshop.

21
22 Check my notes, make sure I don't forget anything. Okay, we can go
23 to the next slide. I have my notes on a napkin here.

24
25 Okay. So, the next two slides are going to be talking about the
26 pre work, which was the values, the mission, and the vision
27 statement, which really just guide us moving forward. So, our
28 values that we came to are these five here on the screen. And this,
29 like I said, guides us moving forward. It sort of explains all of
30 our efforts moving forward regarding the projects that we work on.

31
32 So, our values were integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and
33 communication of data. Innovation through adaptive management and
34 continuous improvement. Respect and trust in data and
35 partnerships. Collaboration and cooperation in the collection and
36 dissemination of data. And diversity and inclusivity of data
37 sources, data input, communities, and stakeholder ideas.

38
39 The next slide, please.

40
41 So, the mission statement was, why are we here? Why are we doing
42 this? And what we came up with was: to develop and continuously
43 improve collaborative data collection programs to support stock
44 assessment and implementation of EBFM, integrating the region's
45 inherent cultural and ecological diversity for the benefit of the
46 U.S. Caribbean. Now the vision statement was our desired future
47 state of where we wanted to be once all the strategic planning
48 work was completed and what we came up with was: to have effective,

1 efficient, and innovative continuous data collection processes and
2 partnerships to inform on progress towards fisheries and ecosystem
3 management objectives in the U.S. Caribbean.

4
5 Next slide, please.

6
7 And my last slide here is the breakthrough objectives and the
8 ongoing projects in working groups. So, the breakthrough
9 objectives are the four with the filled in bullets. And then the
10 indented bullets are the individual projects that we're working
11 on. So, we came up with four of the breakthrough objectives, big
12 picture ideas that we want to do accomplish within the next five
13 years and that is: to expand the toolbox to inform fisheries
14 management. Reduce gaps in data sets to inform management. Improve
15 communication of knowledge to better engage stakeholders and
16 fishery management processes. And establish funding governance
17 structures that are equitable for fishers, contractors, agencies,
18 and islands and allow for the collection of necessary data to
19 inform fisheries management.

20
21 Now, each of the breakthrough objectives has one project that we're
22 working on now that we'll hopefully complete in the next year. And
23 then, the reduced gaps in data set used to inform management, that
24 one has five individual projects centered around some of the main
25 data types, which are fishery independent, fishery dependent, life
26 history, socioeconomic, and habitat and environmental data. Now
27 we've already started working on these. Six of the eight there
28 have had their first meetings. The other two are scheduled for
29 this Friday, actually. We already starting to make improvements,
30 well, not necessarily improve anything at the moment, but we are
31 working on accomplishing these projects. Like I said, they'll be
32 completed in about a year, and then we'll start phase two of it.
33 Each group will have a different project and ultimately, we'll
34 reach our five year objectives.

35
36 I'm currently working on a more formal report of this workshop,
37 but the Council, on their website in the briefing book, has the
38 English version of the fact sheet that has all of the main points
39 from it, and then the Spanish version will be uploaded very soon.
40 I'm going to get that to the Council as soon as I receive it. And
41 that is all I had to talk about for the strategic planning
42 workshop.

43
44 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thanks, Rachel. So, I would just remind the group
45 here that these are not necessarily Science Center objectives.
46 These were objectives that were brought and were agreed upon and
47 developed by that entire group. So, those 10 or so different
48 agencies, the 35 people in the room that were participating. So

1 we're going to work to achieve this in partnership across all of
2 that group.

3
4 So, this is a plug for your 20 million bucks. You might want to
5 keep some of these in mind. I know you've got your own strategic
6 plan and all of that, but this was certainly a group effort in
7 every sense of the word.

8
9 So, I think the next one is Stephanie.

10
11 **STEPHANIE MARTÍNEZ RIVERA:** I'm just going to give you a quick
12 update of one of the life history projects that we have in the
13 branch. So, we have a CRP life history project ongoing in Puerto
14 Rico. We have funding until December 2024 and we are hoping to
15 expand to U.S.V.I. We're doing this with collaboration with HJR
16 Reefscaping. We have two observers. We are also collaborating with
17 Noemí Peña in DNER laboratory where one of the observers does the
18 dissections. And we're also collaborating with another NOAA
19 affiliate, Kate Overly, that she also has another life history
20 survey. It is a fishery dependent sampling of the West Coast of
21 Puerto Rico. And we are trying to fill in the gaps in the sample
22 size for federally managed reef fish. Thank you.

23
24 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** So, one thing that I would add, just because we've
25 got some initials up there. CRP is Cooperative Research Program.
26 So, this directly involves commercial fishers being involved in
27 this project. And we do that through HJR. They've got the insurance
28 and the observers that they can put on the commercial vessels. So,
29 it's very, very much a collaborative project between NOAA, local
30 contractors and local fishers.

31
32 And I think maybe the next one is me. So, port sampling projects,
33 as many of you're aware, these are collaborative with the local
34 agencies. So, with DFW in the U.S. Virgin Islands, we've got a
35 survey for commercial and rec in the recreational sector. So, if
36 people went out fishing, we want to sample them. And we've
37 completed what we're calling an effort survey. So, basically, this
38 is a look at patterns of where boats are coming in, what times of
39 day, what days of the week, and in what locations so that we can
40 then develop a survey design based on that information. So, that
41 initial step has been completed, and some pilot projects will be
42 starting up very soon.

43
44 We've still got ongoing commercial port sampling in Puerto Rico.
45 As we've discussed in many meetings in the past this went on for
46 about 17 months uninterrupted after the hurricanes. But we noticed
47 from that initial survey that there were aspects of the fishery
48 that didn't get sampled very well, just either-- So, in Vieques we

1 didn't have a lot of sampling out there, so we've got samplers out
2 there now. The deep-water snapper sector was not sampled terribly
3 well, through no fault of the survey, these are the things you
4 learn as you develop surveys, what you're doing well, and the parts
5 that you're missing. The same with Yellowtail, just due to the
6 nature of that fishery. So, we're got some additional money out
7 there, and they're directing sampling at those sectors.

8
9 We're also in a supporting role working with DRNA in the
10 recreational survey. That's Grisel's work. We've helped with
11 supplying tablets, computers, and software for the samplers, some
12 training of those samplers and we're getting them some sampling
13 stations so that they can hopefully keep the sampling going really
14 quickly.

15
16 Next slide.

17
18 We've also got a couple of fishery independent and fishery
19 dependent sampling projects. So, these are out on the water. So
20 again, these are cooperative programs with Puerto Rico commercial
21 fishers. The first is a fishery independent lobster trap survey.
22 So, by that I mean, we're developing a survey where it's not
23 necessarily where the fishers would go, but where the sampling
24 design would take it. Because fishers are very good at knowing
25 where to go to fish, because you want to keep a good catch rate,
26 right? But we also need to know where fishing isn't so good. So,
27 that, hence the fishery independent side of that.

28
29 What we were trying to do is to sample lobsters that after another
30 molt or two, they will be big enough to be caught by the fishery.
31 So, we're calling that a recruit index that we're trying to build.
32 It's not the larvae coming in. It's the just of sublegal-size
33 lobsters. So, in doing that, we can get things like catch rates
34 and size composition of the catch and we need both of those
35 components. So, it achieves a lot in a single project. It also
36 tells us what the gear selectivity is. We can talk about that some
37 other time, but that's a really important component in the stock
38 assessment modeling.

39
40 We've also got a fishery dependent survey, which is very similar
41 to the fishery independent, but we have the fishers go wherever
42 they want to go. So, we're not telling them where to go and set
43 traps. They're doing their fishing as they normally would, but
44 we've got, through a contractor, a video set up so that when the
45 trap comes on board, they can stick the lobsters underneath this
46 video rig and we can get size information from that, as well as
47 catch rates. And it will inform the same sorts of things like the
48 trap selectivity. It can serve as a recruit index. It could do a

1 lot of the same stuff, but it's a slightly different approach
2 because it's wherever the fishers want to go fish.

3
4 We're also seeking additional funding, as always, and when we get
5 that, we want to expand these surveys into the Virgin Islands. We
6 started in Puerto Rico because we had, this began several years
7 ago, we were set out to do it, basically. There were local
8 contractors that could get observers out on the water for us. And
9 I think now we've got a better shot at doing that in the Virgin
10 Islands. So, once we get some more money, we'll move the projects
11 over there as well.

12
13 Next slide. Which, I'm not sure who was going to do the TIP work.

14
15 **ADYAN RÍOS:** This one is me.

16
17 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Okay, thanks.

18
19 **ADYAN RÍOS:** Yep. So, we have a project funded through the
20 Fisheries Information Systems, FIS, at NOAA to work on TIP
21 extraction and automation. TIP is the Trip Interview Program. And
22 this is the data collected by our port samplers. So, like, Wilson,
23 Liandry, Daniel. We have over 40 years of length comp information
24 in this data set and it's a critical resource for all of our stock
25 assessments. So, some of the elements of the project are noted
26 here. Katherine, myself, and Molly Stevens are contacts for this
27 project and we're trying to make these TIP data more readily
28 available for upcoming assessments and needs for our fisheries
29 management and our stock assessment process.

30
31 The first one noted here is just standardizing our QA and QC. So,
32 our quality assurance and quality control. Sometimes we do this on
33 a species-by-species basis and so we want to take that to be more
34 assigned to the entire database and make working with this a little
35 easier. We're also doing a historical review to make sure that
36 these many years of data are ready for the analyses that we want
37 to do with them. And so, that's a little summary about the TIP
38 automation project.

39
40 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** So, I would add that this is one of the less
41 glamorous jobs, but it's incredibly important, because these are
42 these data drive so much of the stock assessment answer. And to
43 not have them correct, or as correct as can be, presents real
44 problems for the analysis. So, this doesn't get a lot of press.
45 It's not as cool as going out on boats, but it's really critical.

46
47 So, I think the next one is me, again. So, one of the other people
48 that I was hoping to bring down, but she had a conflict in her

1 schedule, is Kim Johnson. She is not in our branch, but she works
2 with us a lot. She's in the Fisheries Statistics Division, so she
3 deals a lot with data, including the electronic reporting, or the
4 ShellCatch data as it's sometimes called in Puerto Rico. So, this
5 is electronic reporting by commercial fishers.

6
7 Right now, we're trying to overcome some data supply issues. So,
8 the data are stored in the vendor's Shellcatches cloud-based
9 database. Unfortunately, we don't necessarily, at the Science
10 Center, we don't have direct access to that, so it's very hard to
11 merge that with the existing CCL data, so everything that was
12 reported on the paper forms. So, it sounds like it would be simple
13 to fix, turns out it's not. There's a lot of accessibility and
14 data compatibility issues that need to be resolved, and Daniel
15 Matos can tell you all about this, because he's been key in getting
16 this resolved, along with the ShellCatch folks and people at, where
17 we're eventually going to put it, which is in ACCSP. So, this is
18 a group that stores all kinds of data, all kinds of fisheries data
19 for NOAA.

20
21 So, as I mentioned, DRNA, ShellCatch, ACCSP, and Science Center
22 staff have been working to resolve this data transfer. They've
23 made great progress. Still got a couple of technical obstacles to
24 overcome, but they're getting really close. And so, once the data
25 can be moved directly from the ShellCatch cloud-based database to
26 ACCSP, then we can get it at the Science Center, merge it simply
27 with the CCL data. And then we've got the complete landings and
28 effort database for Puerto Rico. So, they're making great progress,
29 but there's still a bit of work to be done.

30
31 Next slide.

32
33 **ADYAN RÍOS:** So, three years ago, we embarked on creating a
34 compilation of management regulations into a data set. And through
35 that process we created a system to house that data set called the
36 Online Data Set Manager. And so, the management history was one of
37 the pilot projects within that system. But now that we have that
38 system, we're also able to build other data sets that are useful
39 for our needs.

40
41 A second one to note is the Morphometrics Project. So, this project
42 is taking the morphometrics conversions that are reported across
43 all of the SEDAR reports and consolidating into one accessible
44 location that's searchable. And we also have the Caribbean Research
45 Inventory in this online database manager that Rachel referred to
46 earlier.

47
48 There's a lot that's already been done, but there's a lot of work

1 that's ongoing. So, for the Management History Project, there's
2 still some processing of developing the views that will be
3 available and that's taking place before it will be presented to
4 each of the Councils. The Morphometrics Project is also looking to
5 expand that project to not only house that information, but also
6 provide advice on like how to compare those analyses and identify
7 the best equation depending on the needs of that equation. And the
8 Caribbean research inventory is in the stage of testing and
9 preparing for public access.

10
11 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thanks. Next slide, which I think is me again.
12 There we go. Perfect.

13
14 So, we talked some about SEDAR 91 earlier, but there's a lot of
15 stock assessments that are either ongoing or soon to happen. So,
16 again, let's go through the SEDAR process. The Southeast Data
17 Assessment and Review, which you saw earlier today, can be very
18 lengthy. We're working to tighten up that schedule a little bit,
19 because I think we can do it, here in the Caribbean.

20
21 So, SEDAR 80 is still ongoing, and this is where I need some help
22 from you all. We're hoping to get it wrapped up at the December
23 2023 SSC meeting, but in order to do that, we need to arrange for
24 another SSC meeting between now and then. Because we've reached a
25 point where we want to get a little input from the SSC, receive a
26 little guidance. So, if we can have an SSC meeting, it can be
27 virtual if need be. We probably may need, well, we can talk about
28 how long that needs to be, but certainly, no more than a day, maybe
29 less, but we need some input on a couple of decisions. So, if we
30 can get that in, well, we need at least a month because you have
31 to notice it in the Federal Register. But in another six weeks or
32 so, that would be terrific.

33
34 We've already moved forward with the, the Puerto Rico assessment,
35 which is complete. So, that was great to see. We've got SEDAR 84
36 coming up. There's a bit of a delay in that, because SEDAR had
37 trouble booking hotels that would fall within per diem in October.
38 So, it looks like that in person data workshop's going to happen
39 the end of January of next year. We've got then SEDAR 91, which is
40 spiny lobster. We talked about that earlier today.

41
42 And then, in 2025 you all ended up recommending hogfish and red
43 hind. That came out of our data triage work, what data are
44 available for stock assessments. So, all of these we have-- well,
45 we've done spiny lobster. We feel pretty good about at least having
46 a good shot at getting a good assessment out of all the other
47 species as well as spiny lobster. So, hogfish and red hind, which
48 will probably begin sometime next fall, maybe into the winter. It

1 depends on how SEDAR 84 goes, if we have to shuffle schedules
2 around because of the late start there.

3
4 Next slide.

5
6 So, we're not the only folks that are working in the Caribbean who
7 are with the Science Center. So, you'll recognize some of these
8 names, but there are-- Adyan works a lot with outreach both in
9 MREP and with the Council's outreach efforts. We've got NOAA
10 fishery staff who are on the SSC and have been great additions to
11 that committee. We've got folks working on E.E.J. There are new
12 surveys that are coming out with conch. Jennifer Doerr is heading
13 that up. She's at our Galveston lab.

14
15 The NCRMP survey, which is the diver survey, has been ongoing for
16 years and years and years, and that includes some people from the
17 University of Miami, Jerry Ault as well as Science Center staff
18 and CIMAS. Jeremiah Blondeau is CIMAS, Jay Grove is NOAA, but she's
19 in a different group that has Caribbean in the name. She's in the
20 Atlantic and Caribbean reef fish group. There's a deep-water
21 snapper survey which is going on in Puerto Rico. That's another
22 survey we would like to move over into the Virgin Islands as well.
23 She uses cameras and hook and line to do their survey. It's also
24 a cooperative project, so those gears are deployed off of
25 commercial vessels. Kate Overly is in another group that has
26 Caribbean in the name and that's the Gulf and Caribbean Reef Fish
27 Branch of the Science Center.

28
29 There are folks involved in SEAMAP-C. There's life history work.
30 Data management. I talked about Kim a little earlier and database
31 development. Yanet is great. It's great to have her. She's really,
32 really good at what she does. So, it's great to have her involved
33 more in the Caribbean. And these are, except for Jerry, these are
34 all folks who are directly associated with the Science Center. So,
35 there are certainly other people who are doing life history work
36 in the Caribbean. I don't mean to claim that we're the only ones
37 doing it. These are just folks who are directly associated with
38 the Science Center.

39
40 Next slide.

41
42 **ADYAN RÍOS:** We just also wanted to congratulate recent awardees
43 of the Saltonstall-Kennedy. So, the S-K grant. That's a yearly
44 competition to promote development and marketing of U.S.
45 fisheries. And in the Caribbean, the three projects have received
46 close to \$900,000. It's great to see projects being awarded this
47 in our region, because that means that more projects are applying
48 for this in the region. If you have ideas for things like

1 development and marketing of U.S. fisheries, next year's S-K is
2 another opportunity for more applications to obtain opportunities
3 for more research in our region.

4
5 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** So, I think Graciela mentioned this a little
6 earlier. We've got a Marine Spatial Planning Workshop that's coming
7 up and it involves a lot of different folks. This is happening at
8 the end of the month. There'll be two meetings. One, in Saint Croix
9 and the other one back here in San Juan. You can see the workshop
10 goals there. This isn't my project. So, I can't claim to speak for
11 it, but we have the Science Center wanted to make sure that
12 everybody was aware of it because it is a big effort. It's not
13 just occurring in the Caribbean, it's throughout the country.
14 Again, we've heard a couple of comments about it earlier in the
15 day.

16
17 Next slide.

18
19 So, there you can see sort of the core data questions. The
20 different ocean sectors that are involved, is pretty all inclusive.
21 And then the outputs. So, comprehensive lists of available data.
22 Leads to acquire additional data. Lists of identified and
23 prioritized data gaps. So, they're asking a lot of the questions
24 that we're already asking, which is nice. And since our workshop
25 a couple of months ago for the strategic planning, when I've had
26 conversations with people who are talking about work in the
27 Caribbean, they're not coming up with any ideas that that group
28 didn't already discuss, which is very nice. Very nice to know that
29 we did a very comprehensive job in that meeting.

30
31 I think that's it. Next slide.

32
33 So, any questions? There's the team again with their contact
34 information. I would ask that if you want to ask them to do any
35 work, please, please add me to that request so that I know what
36 everybody's being asked to do because I am responsible for sort of
37 setting the priorities in their workdays.

38
39 But we certainly want to be responsive to data requests, from this
40 group and everybody else who works with us as partners in the
41 region. So, any questions? That's the team and that's some of what
42 we're doing in a very brief, I think, half hour. I think we've
43 made it in half an hour, maybe 35 minutes.

44 45 **Questions/Comments**

46
47 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Kevin. Thank you. Not a question but thank you.
48 Seeing these young fellows, including the other one, young fellows

1 coming here, it's the first time that we have this opportunity to
2 have this talent in the Center working for the area. And the myriad
3 of studies that we just saw, that people are working on, is an
4 achievement in itself. When I started, it was very, very hard to
5 get one iota of information.

6
7 The other thing is, you mentioned jokingly, but I took it
8 seriously, because I already have your name in our list, Graciela
9 and I. Whenever we put together this list of possible studies under
10 the 20 million famous money, the number one priority is to look at
11 the tools that we have, the gaps that we have. You identify two of
12 them. We need to move to the Virgin Islands to replicate what we
13 are doing here. So, that will be one priority. Move some of the
14 things that we have here that conform with the goals and objectives
15 of the monies, the IRA, and then--

16
17 But enough said. We are going to thank you again, and everybody
18 there you introduced, each one of them. But the one in the last is
19 our family now Adyan Ríos has been working with us for some time
20 now, and I'm glad to see all this young talent working with us
21 here.

22
23 So, we are going to knock on your door, probably between here and
24 December 31st this year, because Graciela and I have to work
25 together. So here, I believe that the Council advanced that list
26 of things that we can do. Number one, are things that are already
27 blessed by NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, we
28 have to reinvent the wheel, and that's one of the things that we
29 need. And all of the information that you are gathering are germane
30 to the ecosystem, management plans. So, I believe that we have a
31 good chance of having some of these activities continue moving for
32 the next three years at least. So, thank you again, and thank all
33 of you. [applause]

34
35 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thanks Miguel, and thanks everybody. No, I look
36 forward to working with you. Thank you.

37
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, thank you all very much for hanging in with
39 us here. I want to thank the translator William Cordero for the
40 overtime work he's putting in. And we'll recess until tomorrow at
41 8:30 so we can catch up on the agenda. We'll start off with the
42 SSC report and then Sennai with the EBFM Technical Advisory.

43
44 Thank you. I don't drink, but you all are welcome to hit the happy
45 hour.

46
47 (Whereupon the meeting recessed on August 15, 2023.)
48

1 - - -
2
3 AUGUST 16, 2023
4
5 WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION
6
7 - - -
8
9

10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Good morning, everyone. We're going to start
11 about one minute.
12

13 Okay. Good morning, everyone. Continuation of the 182nd Caribbean
14 Council meeting held in San Juan, Puerto Rico at the Embassy Suite
15 on August 16, 2023. I'm going to start with a roll call. I'll start
16 with Graciela.
17

18 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Graciela García-Moliner, Council Staff.
19 Buenos Dias.
20

21 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** María López, NOAA Fisheries.
22

23 **ROBERTO SABATER:** Roberto Sabater.
24

25 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Kate Zamboni, NOAA's Office of General
26 Counsel.
27

28 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Jack McGovern, NOAA Fisheries.
29

30 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Carlos Farchette, Chair.
31

32 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Vanessa Ramírez, Vice Chair.
33

34 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** James Kreglo, Council Member. Saint Thomas, V.I.
35

36 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Kevin McCarthy, Southeast Fisheries Science
37 Center.
38

39 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Buenos días. Liajay Rivera García, Council
40 Staff.
41

42 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Buenos días. Cristina Olán, Council Staff.
43

44 **SENNAI HABTES:** Sennai Habtes, V.I. DPNR, Division of Fish and
45 Wildlife.
46

47 **NELSON CRESPO:** Good morning, everyone. Nelson Crepo, DAP Chair,
48 Puerto Rico.

1
2 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Good morning, everyone. Julian Magras, DAP Chair,
3 Saint Thomas/Saint John.
4

5 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Good morning, all. Gerson Martínez, DAP Chair,
6 Saint Croix.
7

8 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Good morning. Nicole Angeli, U.S.V.I. Division
9 of Fish and Wildlife.
10

11 **HOWARD FORBES:** Good morning. Howard Forbes, DPNR Enforcement,
12 Saint Croix.
13

14 **VANCE VICENTE:** Good morning. Vance Vicente, SSC.
15

16 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Buenos días. Alida Ortiz, Outreach and
17 Education Advisory Panel.
18

19 **MANNY ANTONARAS:** Good morning. Manny Antonez, NOAA's Office of
20 Law Enforcement.
21

22 **DIANA T. MARTINO:** Good morning. Diana Martino, Council staff.
23

24 **RACHEL ECKLEY:** Rachel Eckley, Southeast Fisheries Science Center.
25

26 **REFIK ORHUN:** Refik Orhun, Southeast Fisheries Science Center.
27

28 **DAVID BEHRINGER:** David Behringer, Southeast Fisheries Science
29 Center.
30

31 **KATHERINE GODWIN:** Katherine Godwin, Southeast Fisheries Science
32 Center.
33

34 **NICOLE GREAUX:** Good morning. Nicole Greaux, Saint Thomas Fisheries
35 Liaison.
36

37 **LIANDRY A. DE LA CRUZ:** Good morning. Liandry De La Cruz, Port
38 Sampler, Fisheries Liaison, DPNR Division of Fish and Wildlife.
39

40 **ANN B. WILLIAMSON:** Hi, Ann Williamson, NOAA Fisheries Atlantic
41 Highly Migratory Species, Management Division.
42

43 **CARRIE SOLTANOFF:** Carrie Soltanoff, HMS Management Division.
44

45 **RUTH GOMEZ:** Good morning. Ruth Gomez, Saint Thomas Fishermen's
46 Association.
47

48 **WILSON SANTIAGO:** Wilson Santiago, Puerto Rico Fisheries Liaison.

1
2 **JANNETTE RAMOS-GARCÍA:** Jannette Ramos-García, Puerto Rico Sea
3 Grant Program.
4

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

8 **DIANA T. MARTINO:** Thank you.
9

10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, thank you.
11

12 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Carlos, I'm going to read the names of
13 the people that are in Zoom.
14

15 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Cristina.
16

17 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Okay. Sarah Stephenson, Miguel Rolón,
18 Rachel O'Malley, Jack McGovern, Cindy Grace, Laura Cimo, Virginia
19 Shervette, Martha Prada, D.W.A.M.E., Kate Zamboni, Guy DuBeck,
20 FSCR CORP.
21

22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Cristina. So, before I begin with
23 the agenda, I want to thank everyone for yesterday's excellent
24 participation and discussion with Net gear Amendments and the
25 dolphinfish/wahoo discussions. I think that went well. It took a
26 lot of time, but it was necessary. And I particularly want to thank
27 María and Sarah for all the hard work they did in putting these
28 documents together for us. So, thank you very much.
29

30 All righty in continuation of what we missed out yesterday on the
31 agenda, it'll be the Science and Statistical Committee with Vance
32 Vicente.
33

34 **SSC Report-Vance Vicente, Chair** 35

36 **VANCE VICENTE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will present a summary
37 of a five-day meeting that we had. The Scientific and Statistical
38 Committee together with the Ecosystem-Based Fishery Team. Do you
39 have the first slide? Second slide.
40

41 The meeting, as I said, it was a joint meeting between the SSC and
42 the EBFM TAP members. The EBFM TAP members are Alida Ortiz, Juan
43 Cruz-Motta, Kevin McCarthy, Orian Tzadik, Sennai Habtes, Stacey
44 Williams, Tarsila Seara, And Dr. Edwin Cruz-Rivera. The SSC members
45 during the May 1st to May 5th meeting was Jorge García, Richard
46 Appeldoorn, Juan Cruz-Motta, Todd Gedamke, Erik Williams, Michelle
47 Schärer, Vance Vicente, Walter Keithly, Tarsila Seara, and Jason
48 Cope.

1
2 These two teams got together, and we asked our questions. Where
3 are we going? We agreed that is a very complex topic that we were
4 going to be discussing. But complexity should not scare us. We
5 have already overcome some complexities. For example, we were able
6 to develop the Island-Based Fishery Management Plans and there's
7 a final rule for this, which was effective on October 13th of 2022.
8 That was complicated, but now it gets more complicated because now
9 we're trying to get ready for ecosystem-based fisheries management
10 for those three Island-Based Fishery Plans.

11
12 The first two days the EBFM TAP members worked together in the
13 same room with the SSC. Kindly, Sennai Habtes was the chairman
14 during those two days because the main topic was ecosystem-based
15 fishery management. So, there were two presentations, one by Sennai
16 Habtes, New Fisheries Ecosystem Plan Draft Outline, and a second,
17 Orian Tzadik reporting on the Technical Writing Consultants for
18 FEP Development Outline.

19
20 During that first day, the SSC was told that the mission of the
21 EBFM TAP is to promote ecosystem-based approaches to ensure a
22 healthy, resilient, and productive marine ecosystem and the
23 fisheries resources dependent on such ecosystem within the context
24 of the particularities of the fisheries resources. That's the
25 mission, and it's very compatible with the definition of the
26 National Ocean Council from the White House. Which defines
27 ecosystem-based management as an integrated approach to resource
28 management that considers the entire ecosystem, including humans
29 and the elements that are integral to ecosystem functions. EBM is
30 informed by science to conserve and protect our cultural and
31 natural heritage by sustaining diverse, productive, resilient
32 ecosystems and the services they provide, thereby promoting the
33 long-term health, security, and well-being of our Nation. Let's
34 digest that.

35
36 Several topics were brought up and discussed informally, such as
37 the Lenfest Loop Ecosystem Optimum Yield, Optimum Social Goal, new
38 memberships, the status of conceptual models, a finalized approved
39 outline, strategic and operational objectives and many other
40 topics.

41
42 The second day was a very full day, very complicated day. We had
43 nine presentations. And again, this second day was taken care of
44 by both teams in the same room. Sarah Gaichas presented on Using
45 Ecosystem Information in the Stock Assessment and Advice Process.
46 Juan Cruz-Motta, or J.J., Progress Towards Informing an Ecosystem
47 Based Approach for Fisheries Management in the Caribbean. Adyan
48 Ríos spoke on the Ecosystem Status Report: Ecosystem Indicators.

1 Tauna Rankin gave a presentation on a Risk Assessment Update. María
2 López-Mercer gave us an update on the Island-Based Fishery
3 Management Plan. Juan Cruz-Motta presented to us the SEAMAP
4 Caribbean Gold Copy Update. Martha Prada presented to us the
5 Caribbean Fishery Management Council Geographic Information System
6 Platform. Tarsila Seara spoke to us on Community Social
7 Vulnerability Indicators. And Kevin McCarthy presented to us the
8 Southeast Fisheries Science Center Data Triage Work.

9
10 Several topics were discussed. Define uncertainty, Species and
11 Sector Level Risk Elements, Ecosystem Overfishing Indicators,
12 Natural Mortality, Ecological Risk Assessment, Performance
13 Metrics, and Reference Points. And many other topics, including
14 one was that was added to the agenda, which consisted of
15 determining whether the rainbow runner is a benthic reef fish or
16 is a pelagic fish.

17
18 During May 3 and 5, the team separated. We were in separate rooms
19 to essentially develop what are our research priorities and I
20 believe that the EBFM TAP decided also to form subcommittees to
21 discuss the different aspects of the ecosystem-based management
22 plan. So, one, there was an overview of SSC research priorities.
23 Continuation on SEDAR 80 U.S.V.I. Queen Triggerfish by Adyan Ríos.
24 And then we discussed with Kevin the Spiny Lobster Terms of
25 References, which we adopted, which we accepted. And again, between
26 May 3 and 5, the EBFM TAP were in a separate room discussing their
27 own internal matters, forming committees, and developing their
28 research priorities.

29
30 Finally, on May 5th, 2023, the SSC finalized the Scientific and
31 Statistic Committee Research Priorities with ranking. So, the
32 research priorities were evaluated by the committee as a one, lower
33 priority, two, middle priority, and three, a high priority project.

34
35 So, I'm going to, next slide.

36
37 The research priorities are the following. One, we decided that
38 it's critical to improve our landings data based on Puerto Rico
39 port landings study, for Puerto Rico to develop statistics-based
40 methods to improve port sampling, improve expansion factor
41 estimation and application, improve collection of length
42 composition data. Do the above, the same, for U.S.V.I. upon
43 completion of the U.S.V.I. port sampling study. Improve landing
44 data collection via digital tools. And evaluate digital formats
45 for reporting and validating versus paper reporting.

46
47 Second, we also consider a high priority, the collection of
48 biological data for life history population parameters. Again, we

1 ranked this as a high priority. One, to improve biological data
2 collection via digital tools, timely prioritization of collection
3 by species using for example, the IBFMPs, Island Based Fishery
4 Management Plan and SEDAR publications. Review and formalize stock
5 prioritization process.

6
7 Third, we gave a very high priority to improve and do research on
8 effort estimation. Again, we ranked this as a high priority.
9 Develop alternate methods for estimating efforts.

10
11 Next, we also highly prioritize the preparation for (h)(2)
12 flexibilities, okay? For example, simulations to test alternate
13 ACLs for (h)(2) flexibilities; how to incorporate uncertainty into
14 defining ABCs from OFLs; and collect life history information.

15
16 We also consider as a high priority to continue and develop some
17 monitoring and surveys. For example, monitoring program of the
18 fish populations in closed fishing areas; cooperative fisheries-
19 based surveys; train and delegate to fishers' fisheries monitoring
20 activities. And this, I believe, is very critical.

21
22 Next there was a three plus high on socio economic data for
23 management. Periodic systematic collection of data to provide a
24 baseline and comparative basis for social impact assessment;
25 research to assess and integrate local ecological knowledge into
26 decision making; determine the economic values of fisheries that
27 can be used in assessing benefits and cost of alternative
28 management measures.

29
30 Next. We also ranked-- I don't know what number we finally agreed
31 on, but ecosystem-based fisheries management mapping. Develop
32 habitat maps from existing NOS multibeam/lidar data. EBFM
33 assessing regulatory impacts. Evaluate the effectiveness and
34 impacts of closed areas; to evaluate the closed season relative to
35 the spawning season; review status of spawning aggregations within
36 those closed fishing areas.

37
38 Then regarding the status of species. One, status of the species
39 subject to seasonally closed areas to protect spawning
40 aggregations. That got a three. Status of species subject to
41 seasonal closures in the EEZ only and in the EEZ and territorial
42 waters. For example, the queen conch, deepwater snapper, mutton
43 snapper, lane snapper, grouper unit 4, yellowfin grouper, tiger
44 grouper, etcetera.

45
46 Also, we recommend determining what the status of species are
47 within the no take areas, such as the Hind Bank, no take areas in
48 the EEZ, and within the state waters, such as the monuments in the

1 U.S.V.I., Saint Thomas, and Saint Croix, EEMP in Saint Croix. And
2 in Puerto Rico, the Northeast Corridor, Tres Palm Reserve, Luis
3 Peña Reserve, Condado Lagoon Reserve, Isla Verde Marine Reserve,
4 and others where fishing is prohibited year-round.

5
6 Next status of the fish population is subject to year-round harvest
7 prohibition, for example, the nassau grouper in the U.S. Caribbean.
8 That was given a one, but I believe it should be hired. Status of
9 the parrotfish species for which harvest is prohibited in the EEZ
10 only (i.e., midnight parrotfish, blue parrotfish, rainbow
11 parrotfish.)

12
13 And next, the status of the queen conch, *Lobatus gigas*, population,
14 a prohibited species in the EEZ of the subzones of Saint
15 Thomas/Saint John, and Puerto Rico. We also recommend research on
16 siffts, consequences of shifts, in fishing practices. Shifts in
17 fishing practices owing to implementation of regulations, for
18 example, gear changes from nets and traps.

19
20 Gear changes resulting in changes to the species caught, the
21 relative numbers of these species, size selectivity of the species
22 being targeted, and our ability to manage. Also shifts in fishing
23 grounds. Status of species. We also recommend conducting research
24 on the status of the yellowtail snapper, *Ocyurus chrysurus*,
25 population. For example, the EEZ size limit is, 12 inches total
26 length. Puerto Rico has a size limit of 10.5 inches fork length.
27 There is no size limit in the U.S.V.I. Also, we recommend research
28 to determine the status of queen conch populations in Saint Croix
29 given the current management regime which allows harvest of queen
30 conch in the Saint Croix EEZ, Lang Bank. Status of the spiny
31 lobsters and queen conch populations, both have catch restriction,
32 but there is no information on the compliance of the recreational
33 sector.

34
35 That's the list of research priorities by the, by the SSC. And
36 then the next slide, that's the end of the presentation. So, any
37 questions, any comments?

38
39 More details about the meeting are included in the presentations
40 given, which all of you have available. So, if you need any
41 specific information on any of the topics that I presented, you
42 can pick up the proper presentation that was given on that topic.
43 So, that's it.

44 45 **Questions/Comments**

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Vance. Graciela?
48

1 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, Mr. Chair, the SSC will be preparing
2 a final research priority document to be distributed to everyone.
3 The idea of this document is to have it in the forefront so that
4 whenever there is an RFP that comes out, etcetera, we already have
5 a plan of where to move.

6
7 In addition to that, it should be consonant with the strategic
8 plan of the CFMC, and we have provided that information also or
9 will be providing that information to the Southeast Fisheries
10 Science Center and the regional office for any monies that come up
11 to fulfill any of these RFPs. In addition to that, it's a public
12 document that can be provided to any scientist or any group of
13 collaborative people who might be interested in doing Cooperative
14 Research Program, Coral Program. I mean, there are quite a bit of
15 funding opportunities.

16
17 The limiting factor that we've come across is the availability of
18 people, local groups, to do a lot of the work. So, you know, one
19 of the main issues that we need to think about is capacity building
20 for the region. So, having said that, that's not one of the issues
21 that we discuss, but it's really in everyone's mind. So, how the
22 Council can move forward in terms of capacity building for the
23 region, it's a question that we have, and we need to address at
24 some point. Thank you.

25
26 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Graciela. Any more questions for
27 Vance? Jack?

28
29 **VANCE VICENTE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

30
31 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Jack McGovern for the
32 record. Vance, I was wondering if the SSC discussed rainbow runner
33 and had recommendations for the Council on rainbow runner?

34
35 **VANCE VICENTE:** Yes, I believe that was in the second slide as
36 other topics. Yes, we discussed that. Nelson Crespo brought it up
37 to the SSC for discussion and I recall that there was a Southeast
38 Fisheries Science Center scientist there who agreed that the
39 species is pelagic and not reef. And then I think that we went on
40 a vote on that, and I think that we did vote and we were in favor
41 to accept the change from benthic reef fish to pelagic. Thank you,
42 Julian.

43
44 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, I think there was
45 discussion at the previous meeting about developing an amendment
46 to make rainbow runner a pelagic species and I don't know if the
47 Council wants to make that motion now and give direction to staff
48 or just give direction to staff without a motion to begin an

1 amendment for Rainbow Runner.
2
3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, I think that's a good idea. Anyone of the
4 members want to make that motion?
5
6 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** I'll make the motion.
7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, you want some language on the board?
9
10 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** That would help. Mhm.
11
12 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay.
13
14 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Or I can say that, essentially, we're just saying
15 that we recommend that Rainbow Runner become a pelagic species for
16 the Council and for our research.
17
18 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** James, could you repeat it again and out
19 loud so I can type it in properly? Thank you.
20
21 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Oh, I don't think I can, but I'll try. I move
22 that Rainbow Runner is designated as a pelagic species. Oh, I'm
23 sorry.
24
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Hang on a second, Kreglo. You want to have Jack
26 get that language because I think we've got to direct staff to do
27 that.
28
29 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Yeah. Why don't we do that? Okay.
30
31 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it should be that
32 the Council directs staff to begin an amendment to change rainbow
33 runner from a reef fish species to a pelagic species.
34
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Yeah, María.
36
37 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Just real quick, can I suggest to reclassify
38 instead of change?
39
40 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Jack's agreeing with that. I would like to add
41 the U.S.V.I. to that because we have rainbow runners. So, maybe
42 all three FMPs.
43
44 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Okay, this addresses the issue of each
45 island having a separate list of species that are under management.
46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, so we have the language of Kreglo. You
48 want to go ahead and read that motion?

1
2 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** *Direct the staff to begin an amendment to*
3 *reclassify Rainbow Runner from a reef fish species to a pelagic*
4 *species under the Puerto Rico FMP.*
5

6 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We need a second.
7

8 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Second.
9

10 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, let me read the motion here. Direct staff
11 to begin an amendment to reclassify rainbow runner from a reef
12 fish species to a pelagic species under the Puerto Rico FMP. Motion
13 by Kreglo, seconded by Vanessa. Open for the discussion.
14

15 **ROBERTO SABATER:** I have a question. When you move it to be a
16 pelagic, that means that we fall into the permit that you have to
17 get from NOAA because then it will become a pelagic, right? Right
18 now it's not a pelagic, so it doesn't fall under the permit that
19 you have to buy each year. So, if a person fishes one from shore,
20 because you can't get them from shore, he will be violating that
21 law, right? If he doesn't have a permit for the boat.
22

23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** No, Graciela's and María are about to fix that.
24

25 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Okay. So, the rainbow runner is a species
26 that is managed by the Council. It's classified as a reef fish. It
27 was determined that it should have been classified as a pelagic
28 species because the way that the species behaves it's not really
29 like a reef fish. So, this type of pelagic species is not managed
30 by highly migratory species. It's not a highly migratory species.
31 It's managed by us, so there's not really a permit to fish for
32 them.
33

34 The only difference that will happen here is that, right now, for
35 the recreational harvest of reef fish species that are managed by
36 the Council, there is a recreational bag limit. So, if the rainbow
37 runner is moved from the category of the reef fish to the pelagic
38 species that are managed by the Council, that recreational bag
39 limit will not apply to that pelagic, which was the point that was
40 brought by the District Advisory Panels in Puerto Rico when they
41 realized that the rainbow runner was classified after that.
42

43 So now, once this species is moved from the reef fish to a pelagic
44 species group, right? There's going to be other things that apply
45 and eventually other regulations. But right now, we have an annual
46 catch limit that limits the amount of the fish that you can catch
47 in federal waters, but there's not really other regulations such
48 as the bag limits, etcetera, that would apply to that fish.

1
2 That doesn't mean that nothing will be recommended in the future,
3 but right now that will be the only thing. Okay?

4
5 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** María, does it make any difference to add coastal
6 pelagic to the species or just leave it as is?

7
8 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** So, we don't really use the coastal term for
9 our pelagics. But the difference will be like, for example, if
10 there's species that you could classify, and maybe the people from
11 HMS can correct me, that they classified them more as pelagic
12 species, is different than what we have. HMS have their own highly
13 migratory species such as the billfishes, etcetera. They have their
14 own separate regulations and they're not under the purview of the
15 Council.

16
17 So, when we started managing species that we consider pelagics,
18 it's basically what we call the coastal pelagics because of the
19 distance from the coast. But, in our case, we just decided to leave
20 the coastal out. It wouldn't be a big deal, but I understand it
21 will be confusing. We should start thinking about, when we say
22 pelagics, we're talking about these species that are more
23 associated to what we call the coast, right?

24
25 So, in Puerto Rico, we have, I believe it's nine species that we
26 manage, pelagic species. And I will be happy to provide you with
27 the list, so you can familiarize with it. I know it's a lot of
28 information. And then in the Virgin Islands, they only manage, for
29 this pelagic species, the dolphin and the wahoo but we do have
30 other species other than the dolphin and the wahoo included in
31 this as well.

32
33 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any further discussion? All right, we'll take
34 it to a vote. I'm hearing none. Everybody in favor say "aye."

35
36 **GROUP:** Aye.

37
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any nays?

39
40 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Carlos, let me check if Ricardo López is
41 on Zoom. No, he is not.

42
43 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** For the record, Daniel Matos is the second
44 delegate for Puerto Rico and Ricardo is sick. So, he's going to
45 sit at the table representing Puerto Rico.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, all in favor. Okay, *no nays, no abstentions,*
48 *motion carries.*

1
2 Before I go to the next agenda item, I want to go back to the roll
3 call and mark Commissioner Oriol and Miguel Rolón as present. Just
4 to make sure they're on the record.
5

6 So, the next topic on the agenda is Ecosystem-Based Fisheries
7 Management Technical Advisory Panel Report by Sennai Habtes.
8

9 **Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management Technical Advisory Panel**
10 **Report—Sennai Habtes, Chair**
11
12

13 **SENNAI HABTES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning to all. I
14 want to take a moment to thank everyone, and the Council in
15 particular, for continuing their support of ecosystems-based
16 fisheries management in the U.S. Caribbean. I appreciate the chance
17 to provide an update on some of the processes and things that are
18 ongoing with the Technical Advisory Panel that was convened by the
19 Council.
20

21 Next slide, Cristina.
22

23 So just as a reminder the purpose of the EBFM TAP is to provide
24 the Council ongoing scientific advice on ecosystem-based fisheries
25 management for fishery management decisions, including
26 recommendations for habitat status, social and economic impacts of
27 management measures and ecosystem-based impacts or stressors on
28 the sustainability of fishing practices. Now I know that's
29 complicated and long charter, but what that actually comes out to
30 mean is that the purpose for this Technical Advisory Panel is to
31 develop a fisheries ecosystem plan or an FEP. This is a framework
32 by which the Council can maintain marine ecosystems and the
33 fisheries resources dependent upon those ecosystems.
34

35 In addition, as part of the processes for the EBFM TAP, we are
36 developing a community of practice. That means a group of
37 practitioners in the U.S. Caribbean that continue to provide the
38 Council with the infrastructure capacity and needs to implement
39 EBFM within the U.S. Caribbean. So, that is just a little review
40 of what we are trying to do and now I'll move on to some of the
41 updates and explain where we are. I won't bore you with a lot of
42 the details that I usually give in these updates on the history
43 and background of the EBFM TAP, but I will just move on to updates
44 and let you know where we are in the process.
45

46 So, as Vance mentioned, we had a joint SSC and EBFM TAP meeting
47 from May 1st to the 5th of this year. Some of the notable
48 presentations included some of the social vulnerability and

1 perceptions that has been part of the Lenfest project, which are
2 a partner on the EBFM TAP and two of the PIs, Tarsila Seara and
3 J.J. Cruz-Motta sit as members of the EBFM TAP. And so, they
4 provided us with some of the results on stakeholder perceptions of
5 environmental and climate change in the U.S. Caribbean and
6 community and social vulnerability indicators in the U.S.
7 Caribbean. In addition, Sarah Gaichas from the NOAA Northeast
8 Fisheries Science Council came in and provided us a little overview
9 of some of the ways EBFM is used in the stock assessment and advice
10 process in the Northeast. That was useful to both the EBFM TAP
11 members as well as the SSC members to see how we can develop a
12 roadmap for EBFM use in the Caribbean as we are kind of just at
13 the beginning of the process for developing it.

14
15 The rest of the meeting was used to develop a path forward for all
16 of the working groups, which are kind of listed up at the top right
17 and I will go into some more detail on those a little further. So,
18 don't try and strain your eyes reading those. But we have a
19 conceptual model melding group and ecosystems indicator group, a
20 risk assessment group, a data repository working group, and a
21 drafting FEP working group. And so, since that meeting, we've had
22 two meetings of the conceptual model indicators and risk assessment
23 groups to continue the work towards drafting the FEP. In addition,
24 a technical writer was contracted to do some of the draft formation
25 of the FEP that we can provide to the Council. And in addition,
26 Tauna Rankin, with the help of the Council staff and EBFM members,
27 was able to get internal NOAA Fisheries funding to continue the
28 work on developing a risk assessment for the U.S. Caribbean to
29 evaluate the drivers from both the Lenfest work as well as the
30 ecosystem status report developed from NOAA to evaluate
31 quantitative indicators from those for use in risk assessment for
32 the U.S. Caribbean.

33
34 Next slide.

35
36 So, in addition, we submitted research priorities based on the
37 EBFM needs and priorities to the SSC for evaluation into their
38 research needs and priorities for the Council. The ones that were
39 submitted included: developing species and habitat climate
40 vulnerability indices for the U.S. Caribbean: EBFM reference-- I'm
41 not going to read them fully. I'll just kind of highlight them and
42 you guys can read them off the screen, and if people have further
43 questions on the sub points or those, just please come find me
44 during a break. So, development of EBFM reference points;
45 increased-- sorry, there's feedback. I'm going to just wait until
46 that's gone.

47
48 Good? Alright. Increased research on bycatch and discards for the

1 U.S. Caribbean; reference points and measures for ecosystem
2 restoration and capacity for mariculture; ecological
3 sustainability and management of herbivores on ecosystems and
4 identifying important indicators used in that; quantifying the
5 positive and negative effects of sargassum; developing research
6 guides for strategies in adaptive fisheries management;
7 socioeconomic factors to design surveys for data collection on
8 social impact assessments. And as Graciela mentioned after Vance's
9 presentation, both the SSC agreed that these should be set as
10 specific actionable priorities that can be integrated into RFPs
11 directed for the use of the research in the U.S. Caribbean. And
12 the Council should identify a clear structure or process to help
13 influence and provide the present and clear needs for research
14 funding within the Caribbean on a regular basis to both partners
15 in the region, federal funders, and NGOs and others that do work
16 based on ecosystems-based fisheries management and all fisheries
17 management within the U.S. Caribbean.

18
19 Next slide.

20
21 So, as I mentioned, we're using Technical Writers. We were able to
22 get some funding left over from annual funding for the PEW
23 Charitable Trust, which was used to hire a Technical Writer,
24 Katharine Tzadik. She is developing the intro, the interface
25 between fisheries and ecosystems management, the environmental
26 setting, and conceptual models' management framework for the FEP.
27 Those sections have all been drafted by the Technical Writer and
28 are currently in review by members of the EBFM TAP for further
29 review of all membership within the TAP.

30
31 And then in addition to that, we will have a final product to be
32 used at the discretion of the EBFM TAP to kind of coalesce the
33 rest of the working group information into a final FEP. And we are
34 working with the funding from Sustainable Fisheries that was
35 developed by Tauna to get another contractor to help with the
36 writing process particularly to do the risk assessment that can be
37 used within the EBFM TAP.

38
39 Next slide.

40
41 And so, as I mentioned, we have five working groups. The conceptual
42 model melding, that's led by Tarsila Seara at the University of
43 New Haven. It also includes JJ, Cruz, Orian Tzadik, Sarah
44 Stephenson, Tauna Rankin, myself, Liajay Rivera and Stacey
45 Williams. That group is to do the indicator and gaps, create a
46 model framework and appendix of conceptual models, and comparative
47 model analysis. And develop indicator rankings from the conceptual
48 model. The work from that has been done throughout the Lenfest

1 project that J.J. and Tarsila are the PIs on. All of that
2 information from all conceptual models has been completed and
3 summarized and is now being used in putting into the draft FEP.
4 That working group has met twice since the meeting and has
5 identified the framework that they want to put in.

6
7 The only aspect of the conceptual models that has not been
8 completed was the final list of indicators as that is waiting on
9 determining what's available from the ecosystem status report. And
10 that will be done in the next working group below which is the
11 ecosystem indicators working group. Those members include Orian
12 Tzadik, J. J.-- I'm not going to continue with the names. They're
13 on the slide. You guys can see them. You guys know who they are.
14 That group has not yet met. We have individual partners meeting to
15 develop kind of a framework that can go into the draft FEP and
16 identifying the information from the ecosystem status report that
17 is available for us to use as that has not been completed as yet.

18
19 The Risk Assessment Working Group that is led by Tauna Rankin has
20 met twice and they are currently coming up with the specific risk
21 assessment model that they wish to provide for the FEP draft. And
22 they are currently going through about seven different models that
23 we've identified as maybe feasible for the U.S. Caribbean and
24 trying to figure out which is the best one to use.

25
26 The data repository group, which I lead has not met as yet because
27 we are trying to identify what the needs are once the FEP is
28 drafted. What will come out of that, is a prescription or
29 recommendation to the Council for the type of infrastructure that
30 is necessary to sustain continued EBFM work. And the drafting of
31 the FEP will be done by the technical writers, myself, my Co-Chair
32 Orian Tzadik, and Council staff, including Liajay and Graciela.

33
34 Next slide.

35
36 Alright. So, what we have done. These are the tasks that have been
37 completed by the Conceptual Models Group. They've done all
38 conceptual models for the different stakeholder groups. We've
39 tested those models and combined them into a melded model to
40 identify the indicators, the gaps in terms of data that's
41 available, and the model framework that seems to fit best amongst
42 all of the conceptual models. This has identified a lot of gaps
43 related to socioeconomic information within the U.S. Caribbean
44 that can be used within ecosystems-based fisheries management. In
45 addition, with a comparative analysis within and among model types,
46 they've come up with a list of indicators and they're currently
47 going through the process to rank them and identify which of those
48 indicators are best recommended for EBFM use within the U.S.

1 Caribbean.

2
3 Next slide.

4
5 As I mentioned, the Ecosystems Indicator Group has not met. We
6 have individual people that have worked on all of these indicators
7 based on the Lenfest group and the ESR report that NOAA was doing,
8 talking and identifying which data and indicators are available
9 for use in the draft FEP. We have summarized the process that was
10 used both in the Ecosystem Status Report and the Lenfest project
11 in the draft FEP and are using that as the framework to continue
12 writing it up. And hopefully we'll have the list of all indicators
13 that we identified for use in ecosystems research going forward by
14 the end of the year.

15
16 Next slide.

17
18 As I mentioned, Tauna has received internal funding to continue
19 developing the risk assessment. And this was the change in the
20 task and goal based on that additional funding. And basically,
21 we're trying to develop the framework or process, the best risk
22 assessment that can be used in conjunction with ecosystems-based
23 research by the Council to define measurable and quantifiable
24 indicators, identify thresholds, and assess or evaluate the
25 strategic objectives needed within the management process for EBFM
26 to do the best precautionary approach for using that in the U.S.
27 Caribbean.

28
29 Next slide.

30
31 Finally, probably the biggest need that we have is the
32 infrastructure. Developing an FEP without having the process, the
33 structure, the computing capacity, the personnel, to do
34 ecosystems-based fisheries management effectively in the U.S.
35 Caribbean is meaningless. It will simply be, and I have mentioned
36 this point many times and I will continue to mention it every time
37 I am reporting to you. Without having these things in place and a
38 process to do it, having the report is just another group of
39 paperwork that will sit on a shelf. If we do not do the work, find
40 the money, and build up the capacity to make it useful for
41 management, it is meaningless.

42
43 So, the data repository and infrastructure needs will be included
44 in the FEP. It will be a prescription or recommendation to the
45 Council for how we can develop the policies and infrastructure
46 necessary for the U.S. Caribbean. As I've mentioned before, we are
47 developing a community of practice. There are some people in the
48 U.S. Caribbean and outside of the U.S. Caribbean that work in it

1 that would like to see these things happen.

2
3 As most of you know, we all have other jobs, and we all volunteer
4 in these positions, and it is not feasible to do all of this
5 entirely. We have to come up with a process by which we want these
6 to be implemented, find the funding, and do it. And that has to be
7 done at the Council level. So that is just a reminder that when
8 these things are written into the FEP, it is a plan for you to
9 implement.

10
11 Next slide.

12
13 All right. So, as I've mentioned, we've created a community of
14 practice. I've mentioned the Lenfest proposal that J.J. and Tarsila
15 are the PIs on. Bill Arnold, Mandy Karnauskas had developed another
16 proposal in the beginning to do the Ecosystem Status Report and
17 NOAA. And now we have another. Tauna is the PI on the NOAA Fisheries
18 internal funding that she received to develop a risk assessment
19 and continue the work on risk assessment in the U.S. Caribbean.
20 So, these are complementary projects that help us build all of the
21 stuff that's necessary for the EBFM.

22
23 Okay, next slide.

24
25 So, last but not least, where are we? We have completed a revised
26 draft for the EBFM goals and objectives. We're in the process of,
27 we have drafted the FEP charter and the goals, those you've seen.
28 We've completed all the conceptual models, melded them to develop
29 a larger report that has all the information from Lenfest. We're
30 in the process of using those models to identify the indicators
31 that can be used in island specific versions for the EBFM. And we
32 are trying to draft all of those products into a draft FEP by the
33 end of the year.

34
35 Next slide.

36
37 In addition to those things, we will develop strategic objectives
38 and prioritize these objectives in an outline that will be
39 presented to the Council; have operational objectives that can be
40 used in the FEP; develop performance measures as well as a feedback
41 mechanism; and complete and submit an FEP that will go through the
42 SSC, drafted and developed for the Council to vote on and ratify
43 by March or April of 2023.

44
45 So that's where we are. Those are the updates on the FEP, and I'll
46 be happy to take any questions if you have them.

47
48 **Questions/Comments**

1
2 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Sennai. Do we have-- Vance?

3
4 **VANCE VICENTE:** Sennai, thank you and thanks for helping us during
5 the May 1st to May 5th SSC Joint meeting with the TAP members. You
6 were very productive. You orchestrated those two days that you
7 were Chairman excellently. In fact, you made me look like a
8 beginner.

9
10 Anyhow, I brought this up before. I think that it will be useful,
11 or it might be useful to look back into different ecosystem based
12 studies that have been performed in Puerto Rico and maybe in the
13 Virgin Islands. For example, past ecosystem-based studies have
14 been, first by Odum, H.T. Odum in the rainforest. And from the
15 rainforest down into the coast, Jobos Bay had an ecosystem-based
16 study. What was the other one? Guayanilla Bay and several others.
17 I had a list of them and I lost it. I can find it, but there's
18 several other ecosystem-based studies done in the past.

19
20 And in the present, there are two major ecosystem-based programs
21 that are active. Even though their goal is fisheries oriented,
22 they do integrate the public, the fishermen, the fishing villages,
23 students, universities, scientists. One of them is the U.S.
24 Environmental, U.S. EPA Estuary Program of San Juan, San Juan Bay
25 Estuary Program. That's been going on since 1998, I believe. I was
26 a member of the management committee then. And it has been growing,
27 and we even have a-- when I say we, I'm one of the editors of their
28 journal. We published the results of the master thesis, PhD
29 dissertations. And they integrate the public, they integrate all
30 the stakeholders, and including they even have done some fisheries-
31 oriented studies, such as the trip intervention, TIP kind of data,
32 particularly in the Laguna San Jose.

33
34 And this program is extremely interesting because the San Juan Bay
35 Estuary Program includes three major lagoons, San Juan Bay, San
36 Jose Lagoon, Laguna Piñones, Laguna Torresillas, which are all
37 essential fish habitats for many of the commercial fishes. Not
38 only that, but they have also done a watershed study. They monitor
39 water quality. They've been doing this for years now and they're
40 publishing every month. They give you an update of what they've
41 been doing. So, looking into that to see what they have come up
42 with for the last 15 years or so to see how that could be useful
43 in helping us develop the EBFM approach.

44
45 The other program-- and this is funded by the U.S. EPA. The other
46 program is the Jobos Bay Estuarine Research Program, which is
47 funded by NOAA. That's been going on also for about 20 years now.
48 And they also integrate the community, the fishers, students,

1 scientists. And they have also come up with significant amount of
2 information on water quality and distribution of sea grasses, coral
3 reefs and you mentioned it.

4
5 So, it might be good to see if you can contact the scientists
6 there-- I can give you the name and the address and the phone
7 number and so can García --to see if they can provide you with an
8 analysis and a conclusion of what their efforts have contributed
9 significantly to society, to everything. So, that's my advice.
10 Thank you.

11
12 **SENNAI HABTES:** Thanks, Vance. Yeah, I would say go ahead and pass
13 along the contacts and any of the documents for manuscripts, for
14 theses, or dissertations that you have. I'm sure some of that we've
15 already incorporated into the state of the ecosystem section in
16 the draft FEP, but it can't hurt to look at it again.

17
18 I would also say, you know, these are important programs that have
19 done ecosystems-based management. What we are trying to develop,
20 though, is like, looking at the U.S. Caribbean as a whole and how
21 we can use existing tools to implement those into the fisheries
22 management framework that we currently use. And so, yes, there are
23 some aspects from those programs that can be incorporated, but we
24 were looking at this holistically, across all of the regions, to
25 make sure that we can do that.

26
27 And so, you know, that is one of the issues that we are running
28 into, is that there is a lack of that kind of data collected
29 systematically across the U.S. Caribbean that makes it difficult
30 to find ways to implement that into fisheries management. There's
31 some, and those are the indicators that we've summarized and
32 recommend for use. And there is not a need to move directly into
33 EBFM at the fullest level that you can do. There are different
34 ranges that we can do. And so, for us, I think it is to identify
35 what is feasible and possible, now, to integrate into the existing
36 fisheries framework that we have currently being used in the
37 Caribbean.

38
39 **VANCE VICENTE:** Thank you.

40
41 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Vance. Thank you, Sennai. So, we're
42 going to make a little change to the agenda here with Nelson's
43 indulgence. We're going to move you back a little bit because we
44 have to get something done here first. Thank you, Nelson.

45
46 So, next on the agenda is Highly Migratory Species Atlantic Actions
47 Update--Ann Williamson, NOAA Fisheries.

1 **Highly Migratory Species Atlantic Actions Update—Ann Williamson,**
2 **NOAA Fisheries**
3
4

5 **CARRIE SOLTANOFF:** Good morning. I'm Carrie Soltanoff. I know it
6 said Ann Williamson on the agenda. Ann is here with me. I'm going
7 to be giving the presentation. We're here from the Atlantic Highly
8 Migratory Species Management Division to give an update on a few
9 of our current actions.

10
11 So, we have one proposed action, which is Amendment 15 to our FMP
12 on Spatial Management and Electronic Monitoring. And then we have
13 two actions that are in the scoping phase, Amendment 16 to the FMP
14 on Shark Quotas and Management, which is a scoping document. And
15 then, electronic reporting, which is an advanced notice of proposed
16 rulemaking or ANPR.

17
18 So first to go over the proposed action on spatial management. So,
19 Amendment 15, the proposed rule was published in May and the
20 comment period is open through mid-September. There is a web
21 address here to get to that homepage which has our draft
22 environmental impact statement, the proposed rule, a story map,
23 and a lot of other helpful information.

24
25 There are two broad components to this action. The first is spatial
26 management which is considering modifications, data collection,
27 and assessment for four spatial management areas that are shown in
28 this figure on the right. The Mid Atlantic Shark bottom longline
29 closed area in red and then three pelagic longline closed area,
30 Charleston Bump in green, East Florida Coast in gray, and DeSoto
31 Canyon in blue. Another component is pelagic longline electronic
32 monitoring or EM cost allocation, which is considering shifting
33 pelagic longline EM sampling costs from the agency to the industry.

34
35 So, looking at the spatial management component. We have four
36 preferred alternative packages, one for each of the areas that I
37 mentioned. These include modification of the area based on bycatch
38 risk. So, that is looking at modification to the spatial extent of
39 the areas and or the timing of when those areas are in place.
40 Looking at bycatch risk appropriate data collection programs and
41 looking at future evaluation timing of the areas. So, these four
42 maps show the four areas. The black lines show the current extent
43 of the areas. The red areas are our preferred alternatives for
44 restricted areas where bottom longlining for the mid-Atlantic and
45 pelagic longline for the other three areas would be restricted,
46 either all year or during certain parts of the year.

47
48 And in these red areas for the three pelagic longline restricted

1 areas, the preferred alternative would be to allow data collection
2 via exempted fishing permit. And in the yellow areas that you can
3 see for the Charleston Bump and East Florida Coast Pelagic Long
4 Line areas, these would be monitoring areas that would allow data
5 collection via monitoring, which would include effort caps,
6 expanded VMS reporting, and EM review or data collection via EFP.
7 And for all of these areas we'd be looking at future evaluations
8 happening when three years of data are available and finalized and
9 or triggered evaluation based on certain events.

10
11 For the electronic monitoring portion of this area, our preferred
12 Alternative F2, is transfer of EM sampling cost to industry. And
13 this is based on NOAA Fisheries cost allocation policy. So,
14 industry would pay 100 percent of sampling costs. And that shift
15 would be phased in over the course of three years. And there are
16 four components to this alternative. Vendor requirements, vessel
17 requirements, vessel monitoring plans, and modification of EM
18 spatial temporal requirements.

19
20 I'll get into a little more detail on those on the next slide. So,
21 here there would be EM vendors that would apply to be approved by
22 NOAA fisheries. The EM vendors would be responsible for installing
23 and maintaining EM equipment assisting vessel owners with their
24 vessel monitoring plans, reviewing 10 percent of sets, etcetera.
25 The vessel owner requirements would include coordinating with the
26 vendor to provide the EM services, ensuring EM equipment is
27 functioning properly, working with the vendor to develop the vessel
28 monitoring plan, declaring intention to fish in EM, data review
29 areas via VMS, and continue reporting bluefin catch after each
30 set. And those vessels monitoring plan requirements are shown in
31 the middle box here. And then the vendor would provide quarterly
32 reports and metadata to NOAA fisheries with information from video
33 review. So, that covers Amendment 15.

34
35 Now moving on to our scoping phase actions. The first one is
36 Amendment 16 on shark quotas and management. And looking at some
37 background for Amendment 16. Amendment 14 to our FMP was released
38 in January of this year. Amendment 14 established a new framework
39 to use to implement acceptable biological catch, or ABCs, and
40 annual catch limits, or ACLs, for Atlantic shark fisheries.
41 Operational changes as a result of Amendment 14 are being
42 considered in Amendment 16, as well as potentially in future
43 rulemakings. Another related piece of background is the Shark
44 Fishery Review or SHARE document that HMS finalized in March of
45 this year. This document examines a variety of factors affecting
46 the shark fishery, including commercial and recreational shark
47 fisheries, conservation and management, and shark depredation. And
48 identifies areas of success, concerns, and potential modifications

1 to regulations and management measures in the future. And so, some
2 of these Areas are being considered in Amendment 16.

3
4 There are a couple external factors that impact the shark fishery.
5 One of those is that in 2022, CITES listed bonnethead sharks, which
6 is currently effective, and also listed all remaining
7 Carcharhinidae species which will become effective in November of
8 this year. And so, those species will all be listed on Appendix 2,
9 which requires additional permitting for export and for
10 introduction from high seas. In addition, the Shark Fin Sales
11 Elimination Act became law in December, and this act bans all
12 possession and sale of shark fins in the United States.

13
14 Going into some detail of what's in Amendment 16's scoping document
15 this document was published in May and the comment period is open
16 through 18th, which is Friday. And consistent with Amendment 14 and
17 scientific advice, the purpose of Amendment 16 is to establish
18 ABCs and ACLs for non-prohibited shark species. To optimize the
19 ability for the commercial and recreational shark fisheries to
20 harvest quotas to the extent practicable. To increase management
21 flexibility to react to additional factors impacting the fisheries
22 and account for changes in the distribution of harvest among
23 sectors.

24
25 So, Amendment 16 really looks at everything to do with the shark
26 fishery. This is a description of some of the management options
27 that are included in the scoping document. The first topic is
28 establishing ACLs for stocks under various tiers. So, these are
29 the tiers of the ABC control rule, which are ranked depending on
30 the stock assessment. So, examples in the scoping document include
31 Atlantic Blacktip, which is tier one, which is a stock assessment
32 that is data rich. Another example is Bull Sharks, which are tier
33 four, meaning there's no accepted stock assessment. And then
34 another example is Sandbar Sharks, which are on a rebuilding plan
35 so they're outside of that tier structure.

36
37 Another set of options have to do with management group structure.
38 So, options include status quo, creating groups for assessed versus
39 unassessed stocks, creating groups for stocks caught together. The
40 next group of options have to do with regional and sub regional
41 splits in the quotas. So, it considers Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico
42 split, considers the blacknose Atlantic boundary. And here we're
43 also considering options to split out a Caribbean shark quota from
44 where it's currently included as part of the Gulf of Mexico.

45
46 The next set is exempted fishing permit or EFP quotas including
47 changes to the shark research fishery. Commercial retention
48 limits, which includes revising or removing limits depending on

1 species and permit. And recreational retention and size limits,
2 which again, looks at revising or removing limits depending on the
3 species.

4
5 To quickly go through one of the examples that I mentioned, the
6 Atlantic blacktip, this is a Tier 1 stock, and this example looks
7 at including all prior years of data and looking at an HMS risk
8 policy of 70%, which is one of the options for the percentage of
9 an HMS risk policy. So, here, going through the calculations to go
10 from the OFL to the ACLs and quotas, you can see that the OFL
11 coming from the stock assessment is 422.3, and then looking at the
12 ABC control rule, including the 70 percent HMS risk policy, we get
13 an ABC. Then we apply a management buffer to get the ACL, and that
14 ACL is then split between the commercial sector and the
15 recreational sector. So, the recreational sector ACL, in this
16 example is 50,180 sharks. And then the commercial sector ACL, the
17 commercial dead discards are taken off of that to get to a
18 commercial quota in this example of 136.3 metric tons dressed
19 weight. And so, comparing this example to current harvest levels,
20 both of these quotas would be above current harvest levels.
21 Commercial harvest is currently 38 percent of this example quota.
22 And commercial landings are currently 89 percent of the
23 recreational ACL.

24
25 Moving to the next, the last action that I'm going to cover today
26 that's electronic reporting. And here we have released an advance
27 notice of proposed rulemaking, which is again, looking at a variety
28 of different issues and options related to HMS electronic
29 reporting. This ANPR was published in May and the comment period
30 is open through Friday. The purpose of this action is to streamline
31 and modernize logbook reporting. Expand logbook reporting to for
32 hire and commercial vessel owners via electronic logbooks. Collect
33 additional vessel and dealer information for fishery management.
34 Incentivize HMS reporting compliance. Offer an electronic
35 reporting platform for HMS EFP program permit holders.

36
37 And here we're really looking across all of our fisheries to look
38 at ways to modernize and improve reporting. So, there's potential
39 changes to vessel reporting across all commercial fisheries,
40 charter head boat and angling permit holders. We're also looking
41 at changes to dealer reporting and EFP program reporting. And so,
42 this action would work towards one stop reporting or the submission
43 of a single electronic report that could satisfy overlapping
44 requirements. It considers various reporting options for
45 commercial and recreational entities, including expanding
46 requirements and looking at timing requirements for submitting
47 reports. And the options in the NPR for reporting requirements
48 take into account current requirements across regions and permit

1 types. So, for example, looking at which species would be required
2 to be reported, whether it would be some HMS, all HMS, all species
3 that are caught. Looking at which trips would be reporting whether
4 it's only trips where there's catch or all trips with effort. And
5 then looking at timing, so how many days someone would have to
6 complete and submit their reports?

7
8 Moving to summarize our request for public comment. So, as I
9 mentioned, Amendment 16 on sharks and the electronic reporting
10 ANPR, those comment periods are open through Friday. And Amendment
11 15 on spatial management is open through September. And here you
12 can find the web pages for these respective actions.

13
14 Looking at some of the remaining public webinars and hearings for
15 Amendment 15, there will be a public webinar tomorrow afternoon.
16 And there will be an in person hearing in Panama City, Florida on
17 August 29th. For Amendment 16 on sharks, we're going to have a
18 public hearing in this room at 5:30 today. So, anyone is welcome
19 and encouraged to stay for that meeting, and it's also open to any
20 members of the public. And so, we'll go into more details about
21 Amendment 16 this evening.

22
23 And then finally some contact information. If you have any
24 questions on these actions our branch chief for the Regulations
25 Branch is Karyl Brewster-Geisz. And here you can see the contacts
26 for the leads for these various actions. So, I'm happy to take any
27 questions.

28 29 **Question/Comments**

30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Any questions for Ann? Vanessa?

32
33 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes, thank you for that excellent presentation.
34 Just about the public meeting that you're going to have today. Was
35 this shared with the commercial sector in Puerto Rico, this
36 information?

37
38 **CARRIE SOLTANOFF:** Yeah, we shared the information on our HMS email
39 list, yeah.

40
41 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Okay.

42
43 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Cristina, did we ever publish the bulletin
44 announcing the hearing today in our social network or any other
45 place?

46
47 Okay. Anyway, the other thing is, Cristina, can you send the
48 presentation to everybody? Because I have the contacts. And it's

1 also available on our webpage.

2
3 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** The presentation is available on the
4 webpage and also in ISSUU.

5
6 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, but send it to the voting Council members
7 via email, please. But the rest of the group, you can look at it
8 at the webpage of the Council, and you will be able then to have
9 the information that was presented today.

10
11 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes, thank you. This will be a question for
12 Daniel. Do you have the number of how many commercial fishermen
13 are active in the sharks, right now in Puerto Rico?

14
15 **DANIEL MATOS CARABALLO:** What I know about the shark's fishery in
16 Puerto Rico is mostly incidental. Probably over 90 percent of the
17 catch are incidental. When they are fishing deep-water snapper, or
18 they are fishing with the gillnets many times they catch sharks.
19 So, I don't have a number of people that only fish shark around
20 Puerto Rico. I don't know that.

21
22 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, Vanessa, to that question. The other
23 problem that we are having is that some people report directly to
24 the HMS, whether they are incidental, but at least I know three
25 people, fishers of shark, they don't report a pound and they sell
26 the shark as 'pincho de pollo,' 'pincho de' anything but shark.

27
28 **DANIEL MATOS CARABALLO:** Yeah, thank you. We know there are a few
29 of them, but most of the catches are incidental. Yeah, there are
30 people, Miguel. That's right. Thank you. Thank you, Vanessa.

31
32 **CARRIE SOLTANOFF:** Yeah, I just wanted to add, at least from the
33 perspective of those who hold HMS permits, we have a commercial
34 Caribbean small boat permit that allows retention of some sharks,
35 and there are currently around 27 of those permits issued here.

36
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I've got a question on that. Those 27 permits,
38 do you know who's for U.S.V.I.? How many for Puerto Rico?

39
40 **CARRIE SOLTANOFF:** I don't off the top of my head, but we can look
41 into that.

42
43 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Alright, thanks. Graciela?

44
45 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, a question on the research aspect of
46 things. We've been told that there are more sharks in near and
47 shallower areas around Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, is there
48 any type of reporting that people can do to let you know what's

1 happening, what the species, what the depth, you know, why are we
2 getting these smaller sharks all over the place. Probably popping
3 grounds that we need to identify and things like that. Is there
4 anything on that? Especially with sharks.

5
6 **CARRIE SOLTANOFF:** Yeah, I don't know off the top of my head what
7 research, I do know that there is research going on that here, but
8 I don't know exactly the details off the top of my head, but we
9 can get back to you on that.

10
11 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you I want to go touch a little bit about
12 this Caribbean small world permit, but I know [inaudible]. Some
13 people are interested, however, you can't have an HMS and have a
14 Caribbean small boat permit and that's been one of the things,
15 that they don't want to give up their HMS permits to get that
16 other, because I think now you can get a lot more swordfish than
17 before with a Caribbean small boat permit and that's become kind
18 of an issue, but we'll talk about that some other time. Thanks.
19 Any more questions for Ann? Hearing none. Thank you so much.

20
21 Next, we're going to go to Wessley Merten on the WECAFC Dolphinfish
22 Fishery.

23
24 **Update on Western Central Atlantic Dolphinfish Fishery—Wessley**
25 **Merten**

26
27 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Can you hear
28 me? Very well.

29
30 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Wes, I'm hearing you. I will make you a
31 co-host so you can share your screen.

32
33 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Excellent. It still says disabled on my end. Oh,
34 here we go. Okay. Can you see the presentation view?

35
36 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yes.

37
38 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Excellent. All right. So, I'll get started. Good
39 morning, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends. So, our
40 last talk with regards to dolphinfish to the Council was on
41 December 8th, 2021. So, about 20 months ago. So, today's talk is
42 to serve as an update to that presentation. But the last time we
43 did present to the Council with regards to our FAD specific work
44 was actually 15 months ago. And so, today I'll be incorporating
45 information collected through our tagging program and through our
46 FAD research program.

47
48 And so, just as a refresher, you know, our tagging program is known

1 as the Dolphinfish Research Program. And it's an international
2 tagging program designed to collect movement, life history, and
3 population trend data on the species. And so, this program actually
4 began as a state funded study in South Carolina back in 2002. It
5 went to the private sector in 2006, and we are now in our 21st
6 year. As of today, we've had 34,589 fish tagged, 804 recaptured.
7 We've had 84 satellite tags deployed. 81 on dolphinfish and 3 on
8 wahoo, and we've had 12 papers published.

10 So, looking at the FAD research component. So, there's been 41
11 FADs deployed off the North Coast of Puerto Rico. Currently, there
12 are 23 active FADs. As of the end of 2022, we've logged 2,225 trip
13 reports. And throughout the Caribbean Basin, we've had 1,106
14 dolphinfish tag and release at FADs. Of those 41 FADs, 24 have
15 been surface, 17 have been subsurface. Actually, as of the end of
16 July, we have 2,779 trips logged. And that is a current number as
17 of today for the number of fish tagged at FADs.

19 So, Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources,
20 they've sponsored 31 satellite tags through this work. 27 on
21 dolphinfish, 3 on wahoo, and 1 on silky shark. We've had 26
22 acoustic tag deployments. 16 on dolphinfish, 5 on yellowfin tuna,
23 3 on wahoo, 1 on blackfin tuna, and 1 on a silky shark. Throughout
24 our history of our program, for our FAD research, we've had 51
25 vessels involved in our catch and effort volunteer initiative.
26 We've published one paper, we have one in review, and one in prep.

28 And so, I present this information just to provide you with the
29 origin of the data that we present during our talks to the Council
30 and for our talk today. So, the objective today is to provide a
31 comprehensive update of specific data collected through the DRP in
32 the U.S. Caribbean Sea and the broader Caribbean Sea Basin.

34 And so, I'll be presenting three case studies. The first is catch
35 and effort off San Juan over the last 15 months. And another part
36 of this case study will be commercial catch trends for dolphinfish
37 in D.R. and areas to the West. And then we'll look at dolphinfish
38 movements in the Caribbean Sea with an emphasis on the Dominican
39 Republic. And lastly, end with a brief case study on dolphinfish
40 growth.

42 And so, looking at catch and effort off San Juan over the last 15
43 months. So, this is actually an animation, a rolling animation,
44 just to nail down the point that, you know, we collect daily data
45 from volunteer charter boats and recreational anglers. And so,
46 obviously, on the left part of the screen here, you see the, the
47 rosters of that effort depicting where these boats are fishing you
48 know, during the different months and during the different time

1 periods that we're logging this data. It varies around the island
2 by season for our participating boats, but by and large, most
3 effort is off of Arecibo and off of San Juan, that's where we have
4 the most participation. And then, I also included on this graphic,
5 just the number of trips logged per month, and then the cumulative
6 number of trips logged over the last 15 months.

7
8 And so, by the end of this time period, over the last 15 months,
9 we've actually logged 830 trips. And the average number of trips
10 per month is 59 trips. From those trips, we have 94 percent
11 landings reporting rating from our boats, which is decent. And 89
12 percent of the trips are charter boats, with 11 percent being
13 private recreational anglers.

14
15 Now here's another animation of the catch from those trips. And
16 so, this is just a rolling animation that goes month by month. I
17 just like to point you to the green pie, which is dolphinfish, and
18 the yellow pie, which is yellowfin tuna, which constitute the two
19 major landed species from those trips. Obviously, it shows, just
20 like with the effort data, you could break this down by different
21 temporal periodicities, look at it on a daily basis, weekly,
22 monthly, seasonally, but by and large, throughout this time period
23 the majority of fish landed from these outings is dolphinfish. And
24 so, over the last 15 months 54 percent of catch or 1,289
25 dolphinfishes were landed by the boats we monitor. 22.97%, so
26 almost 23 percent was yellowfin tuna. Followed by blackfin tuna,
27 skipjack tuna, and wahoo, which are the top five species.

28
29 So, obviously you could break this down by seasonal trends, and so
30 we've done this here in this slide. So, June to August is
31 categorized as summer. September to November being fall. December
32 to February being winter. March to May spring and then back, you
33 know, June to present being summer again. And so, obviously you
34 can break this down and look at just dolphinfish over this time
35 period and look at how it may or may not dominate the catch. Last
36 summer it actually wasn't the majority of the catch it shared with
37 yellowfin tuna, a good portion of the catch. But as you head
38 towards winter, dolphinfish does start to dominate the catch, up
39 to 78 percent during winter and spring months off San Juan. And
40 so, obviously these data are helpful in looking at the seasonality
41 of the pulse of dolphinfish along the North Coast of Puerto Rico.

42
43 But then we're also categorizing this as whether the fish are being
44 caught by the FADs or away from the FADs and the size range of
45 those fish being landed. And so, last summer, catch was FAD
46 dominated. The size range was small fish on up to 20-pound fish.
47 During fall, actually, it's non-FAD dominated. And this could be
48 indicative of that annual pulse of fish coming through, beginning

1 in the fall off the North Coast of Puerto Rico. And actually, 30
2 percent of that non-FAD dominated catch is small fish. So, you
3 know, fish less than 10 pounds being caught at the sargassum lines
4 offshore.

5
6 As the season progresses, you know, the catch becomes FAD dominated
7 again during winter, but we have a higher dominance of the catch
8 being in the 11-to-20-pound range. And so, this could be indicative
9 of larger fish following those smaller fish in that annual movement
10 of biomass of dolphinfish off the North Coast. We also have a
11 greater percentage of fish 30 pounds or greater being landed during
12 the winter months. During spring, you've got FAD dominated catch,
13 but it's actually an equal percent of the small and the medium
14 sized fish at the FADs versus away from the FADs. However, at the
15 FADs, you have a greater amount of large fish being caught at those
16 FADs.

17
18 And so, the FADs are holding large fish longer, providing increased
19 opportunities for these boats to capture larger individuals during
20 spring. And then I'd just like to mention that this past June,
21 just two months ago, and July, have been extremely slow off of San
22 Juan. From June through July, only 61 dolphinfishes were caught,
23 and that's, you know, looking at about 80 or 90 trips. And the
24 majority are less than 10 pounds.

25
26 And so, in terms of size at catch frequency for the monitored
27 recreational vessels. The small size class does dominate the catch
28 with a greater number of small fish actually caught away from the
29 FADs. And so, like I mentioned earlier, this is likely due to the
30 fall catch success as a new annual pulse of fish comes through.
31 But with the exception of that size class, you know, FAD catch for
32 all other size classes is higher at the FADs. One thing obviously
33 we do recognize here is the need to bend that smaller size class
34 into two-pound bins, which will allow us to garner a better
35 understanding of the size breakdown for the smallest size class.
36 So, that's something we're doing to improve our data collection.

37
38 In terms of dolphinfish landed per trip and the frequency of that.
39 And so, here this basically shows the number of dolphinfishes
40 landed per trip. And this is looking at, you know, 722 angler trips
41 over the last 15 months. And 96 percent of the trips were with
42 dolphinfish landings less than 15 fish per trip. And actually, the
43 majority of the trips are anywhere from 1 to 3 fish landed per
44 trip. And so, one thing that is interesting in the last 15 months
45 is we've had a 66 percent of total trips landed with zero
46 dolphinfish. And so, this shows that fishing hasn't been that
47 stellar. And then looking at NOAA's data presented yesterday, you
48 know, this is 930 trips over an 18-year time period which shares

1 some similarities with our data being that the highest incidence
2 of catch here is for small landings per trip. But one thing that
3 is missed in this NOAA data is the incidence of the anglers being
4 skunked when they go offshore.

5
6 And so, pardon my jargon here, but it does stink to go offshore
7 and not catch any dolphin. So, the take home message here is, you
8 know, we have to bring back abundance for this species. And we
9 were pleased to see the direction the Council took yesterday with
10 regards to the minimum size and vessel limit preferred alternatives
11 for this species to bring back abundance.

12
13 And so, now on to the second portion of this first case study,
14 looking at commercial catch in D.R. and areas to the West. And so,
15 we recently had a commercial angler South of D.R. recapture one of
16 our dolphinfishes. And so, I requested from that angler to share
17 with me their catch, their landings over this past summer. And so,
18 this is actually the last 16 trips this angler's made South of
19 D.R. And the average for dolphinfish per outing was 416 pounds per
20 outing, with a maximum of 670 pounds landed per outing and a
21 minimum of 40. Over the last 16 outings from one boat, this is
22 5,430 pounds of dolphinfish being reported to us from this angler.
23 And then, there is small dolphinfish represented in this catch.
24 Now it would be interesting to see the size frequency among the
25 South Coast D.R. dolphinfish fishery.

26
27 And so, this first image does represent the smallest catch we
28 recorded. The dolphinfishes are in that cooler. Then, we counted
29 at least eight individuals in that cooler. And so, the point being
30 with this part of this case study is that small catch is
31 represented in this catch. And so, we hope that the preferred
32 alternatives and the actions being taken by the Caribbean Fishery
33 Management Council are measures that can be considered and adopted
34 by nearby nations and other nations throughout the Caribbean Sea.
35 Especially at locations with FAD dominated catch, which in the
36 case of what I'm presenting here. Most of these fish is being
37 caught at FADs South of D.R.

38
39 We also recently learned that the FAO is funding a Fish4ACP project
40 in D.R. to improve the supply chain for the Southern D.R.
41 dolphinfish fishery. And so, we were provided with this
42 infographic, and we also had a meeting with two project scientists
43 where we learned that there are an estimated 2,369 dorado anglers
44 in D.R. and that the catch in D.R. amounts to about 610 tons of
45 dolphin per year. So, if you break that down by angler, that volume
46 by angler, that breaks down to about 0.25 tons per angler or 551
47 pounds per angler annually. And so, over the last 16 trips for one
48 angler, we found that that angler is catching 416 pounds per trip.

1
2 And so, the statistics go on to say that currently 36 percent of
3 the volume is estimated, which means obviously the amount of
4 landings in D.R. is likely higher. But the question is, you know,
5 how much higher?
6

7 And so, you know, with the, the D.R. dolphinfish fishery and the
8 commercial directed fishery, there's high uncertainty with the
9 amount of volume production within that EEZ. Through our
10 participation with WECAFC and the FAD working group, we've also
11 learned that over the past 20 years, there's been some significant
12 advances in the artisanal fleet in Haiti, with a lot of boats
13 getting motors and getting better boats and getting FADs. And so,
14 we wonder, what's the volume production within Haiti? Currently,
15 there's no landings reported for Haiti and there's actually no
16 landings for all of these nations here in black. And so, that
17 represents eight EEZs in the Western part of the Caribbean Sea
18 where we have no recorded FAO dolphinfish landings for this
19 species.
20

21 Now these other red nations here, Mexico and the Cayman Islands,
22 also represent high uncertainty. Back in 2007, Mexico reported 230
23 metric tons of annual volume production within the Caribbean WCA
24 EEZ. The following year in 2008, it went down to two and it's
25 remained at two metric tons per year. But all of us know that there
26 are massive resorts within the Yucatan area that are likely feeding
27 their guests dolphinfish.
28

29 And going back to the Fish4ACP project in D.R., the volume has
30 increased three-fold over the last 20 years in D.R. Likely, due to
31 the fact that more resorts are there, and they need to feed their
32 guests dolphinfish and whatnot. So, take home message here being
33 that there's, you know, a lot of uncertainty with the condition of
34 the international fisheries for dolphinfish within this region.
35 Last year we did publish a paper on this topic and I do urge you
36 to seek out additional information there to look at the trends
37 that we depicted in our publication.
38

39 And so, there's significant data gaps that we need to rectify to
40 really understand the status of this population throughout the
41 Western Central Atlantic.
42

43 I'm not going to summarize this case study. I included this for
44 the briefing book, but I'm going to move to the next case study,
45 which is movements in the Caribbean Sea. And so, here, there is
46 one specific point I wanted to get to through these slides. So,
47 here we go.
48

1 So, first off, we've had 24 fish that have been tagged along the
2 East Coast, recaptured in the Caribbean Sea and the tropical
3 Atlantic. Obviously establishing the connectivity with the U.S.
4 East Coast dolphinfish fishery and the broader Caribbean Sea
5 fisheries. We published a paper back in 2016 that looked at the
6 specifics of this. Data that we haven't included in that
7 publication would be a more specific look at movements to the
8 tropical Atlantic, which are depicted here. And so, 33 percent of
9 those international movements have been to the tropical Atlantic,
10 with 58 percent being to the tropical Atlantic and the Northern
11 Leeward Islands, which highlights the fishing activity along this
12 portion of this region.

13
14 So, our data collection is increasing throughout the Caribbean
15 Sea. The last time I spoke, we actually had a lower percentage of
16 releases within the Caribbean Sea relative to our database. We've
17 had 352 fish tagged over the last 20 months in the Caribbean Sea
18 and throughout other parts of the region. And so, our data
19 collection is increasing, and we're getting more reports of fish
20 being tagged at FADs and recaptured at FADs. And so, the Xs here
21 represent where fish were tagged or recaptured at FADs throughout
22 the Caribbean Sea, with 36.7 percent of our total Caribbean Sea
23 tagging database represented as fish tagged at FADs.

24
25 When you break this down, when you break all fish tagged down by
26 the size class there's 27 percent are less than 20 inches fork
27 length, and actually 63.8 percent are less than 24 inches fork
28 length. And so, again, these are volunteer anglers that are
29 throwing back fish with tags in them which shows support for the
30 preferred alternative being pushed forward for your Amendment 3 to
31 the Pelagic FMP. And so, obviously, there's support across the
32 basin for the preferred alternatives that you guys are pushing
33 forward through your FMP.

34
35 As of today, we have 67 conventional recaptures throughout the
36 Caribbean Sea. This has increased 16 recoveries since the last
37 time we spoke. We have 17 satellite tag movements with 28 total
38 deployments. Most of our deployments are focused on that South
39 Coast off Puerto Rico to garner a glimpse into what this species
40 is doing throughout the broader Caribbean Basin.

41
42 And so, this leads me to closer to the point that I want to make
43 through this movement segment. And so, this is actually a 44-inch
44 cow that we tagged and released in March of 2022. And this fish,
45 this is the most probable track for this fish. It was tagged and
46 released South of Cabo Rojo, and this is the most probable track
47 for the species or for the individual. It moved up into the Mona
48 Passage and it remained in the Mona Passage for about two weeks

1 before it moved to the West, and it was recaptured at a FAD South
2 of Barona, Dominican Republic. And so, this is actually the second
3 satellite tag over the last couple years that have been recovered
4 South of the Dominican Republic. We've deployed 12 tags. So, in
5 total, 2 of 12 have been recovered.

6
7 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Wes, we are not hearing you.

8
9 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Can you hear me now?

10
11 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Yes, thank you.

12
13 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Okay, don't know what happened there. Where did
14 I lose you?

15
16 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Right there in the explanation of the
17 captures, recaptures in the Southern part of Dominican Republic.

18
19 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Got it, got it, okay.

20
21 So, our satellite tagging database is showing high fishing pressure
22 off Southern D.R. But our conventional tagging database is showing
23 the opposite. It's showing high fishing pressure off the North
24 Coast. And so, our conventional tagging database shows that the
25 Northern D.R. fishery as having a higher pressure. Yet in recent
26 meetings with the Dominican Republic Fish4ACP project leaders,
27 they were actually unaware of the magnitude of this Northern
28 fishery. And so, the D.R. fishery is really the major focus for
29 the Dominican Republic dolphinfish fishery.

30
31 And so, I'll just go on to show a couple more slides with relation
32 to this. And so, one recreational fishing team has tagged 146 fish
33 off Punta Cana, generally, over the last two years. And of those,
34 12 have been recovered or, you know, an 8.2 percent recovery rate.
35 And so, this recapture rate is higher than the highest recapture
36 rate for our other top tagging teams within the Florida Keys. The
37 Killin' Time II tagging team and the Wam-Jam tagging team. And so,
38 this leads me to my point, which I was actually unaware that the
39 South Coast D.R. fishery was the major fishery in D.R. according
40 to our conventional tagging data. I thought it was high all around
41 the island.

42
43 And so, it could be that the North Coast D.R. dolphinfish fishery
44 is a major source of underestimated landings. And we wonder if the
45 North Coast fishery is even being estimated at all in the D.R.'s
46 volume, given the fact that the Fish4ACP project officials were
47 unaware of the fishery on the North Coast and mainly focused data
48 collection improvements on the South Coast fishery. And so, I

1 included here a summary of that. I'm not going to get into this.
2 But I will say that tagging data are helpful in showcasing
3 different trends than the catch data reported earlier.

4
5 And then furthermore, again, we would just like to reiterate here
6 that there is an increase in FAD use, an increase in large episodic
7 sargassum events throughout the Caribbean Sea over the last several
8 years, which does raise the need for increased protection for
9 juvenile and sub adult dolphinfish. And so, this figure depicts
10 fishing activity collected by a recreational angler off
11 Southwestern Guadalupe, who is also tagging fish with our program.
12 This angler has tagged 517 fish and 121 outings. With the average
13 fish released at 21 inches fork length. Showing support for the
14 preferred alternative for a minimum size that the Council is moving
15 forward with for the release of small fish in this part of the
16 Caribbean.

17
18 And so, lastly, on to growth. Just to nail down this measure of
19 protecting small immature fish. With data collected through our
20 tagging program, we are modeling the growth of dolphinfish tagged
21 and recaptured using a polynomial regression. These are
22 preliminary results, but unique results of growth for fish that
23 extend beyond juvenile stage up to the second-year class. And so,
24 currently we have 245 examples of growth for fish at liberty up to
25 561 days. So, with this model, which is still under development,
26 with the intercept and the daily growth rate you can plug in days
27 at liberty, and it'll predict the total growth. And so, what this
28 model predicts is that the total growth for a dolphinfish in a
29 year is 23.42 inches. That breaks down to a daily growth rate of
30 0.06 inches, or a weekly growth rate of about 0.44 inches. And
31 this is likely an underestimate.

32
33 And so, we're breaking this down between males and females to look
34 at sex specific growth rates and one action that is needed is that
35 we do need more taggers to note the sex of the fish when they are
36 tagged. Nonetheless, our growth work shows nearly a linear growth
37 rate early in life. So, very fast, which starts to level off and
38 slow as the fish age. So, in other words, you know, if we let the
39 small ones go there, we're going to be able to watch them grow.

40
41 And so, bravo to the Council for supporting the effort to have
42 small immature fish remain in the water longer with a 24-inch
43 minimum size being the preferred alternative. And so, we hope this
44 positive management measure for this stock is extended throughout
45 the Caribbean Sea and in the Gulf of Mexico and along the U.S.
46 East Coast to bring back abundance for the WCA stock.

47
48 And so, I'm not going to go through all the different issues facing

1 the WCA stock that I've outlined in this talk. They're included
2 here for the briefing book. I forgot that this slide was animated.
3 Apologize for that and I'll just move on to questions.

4 5 **Questions/Comments** 6

7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Wesley. Any questions for-- Kevin?
8

9 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thanks for the really great presentation. Lots of
10 information there. So, I have a lot of questions, but I'll try and
11 keep it to just a couple. I guess the first one is, and maybe you
12 mentioned it and I missed it, do you have any estimates of release
13 mortality?
14

15 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** So, we are collecting release mortality data. I
16 have not analyzed it for the Caribbean Basin. We did publish a
17 paper with some folks at a North Carolina State University, which
18 does show high discard mortality. That paper was published back in
19 2019. Our database in the Caribbean has grown since then.
20

21 But to answer your question, for specifics, for the Caribbean
22 Basin, no, I haven't done the analysis. But one point I'd like to
23 mention to your question is that we do need to promote the use of
24 non-offset circle hooks for fishing for dolphinfish. So, that more
25 fish are lip hooked and less fish are gut hooked. And it really
26 boils down to a question of ethical angling. And to me it's a more
27 of a beautiful catch when your fish comes in hooked in the lip
28 rather than basically dead hooked in the gut bleeding and whatnot.
29 So, your point about fishing mortality is taken. And one key thing
30 we could do, management wise, is promote the use of non-offset
31 circle hooks for anglers.
32

33 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Right. And one other quick question, if I may. In
34 the first part of your talk, you mentioned a high rate of zero
35 catches. How do you determine what is a true zero? So, is the
36 expectation that anything, any vessel in your group that goes
37 offshore has a chance of catching a dolphin on any given trip? Or
38 is there some sub-setting of the data to get at those zeros?
39

40 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Yeah. So basically, we do an interview after each
41 trip and we ask, you know, what the angler caught and landed during
42 that trip. And so, they'll report to us the number of landed
43 dolphinfishes, yellowfin tuna, skipjack, wahoo, whatever it be.
44 But over the last 15 months, we've had a very high incidence of
45 days when these boats get skunked. Now there is one issue with
46 that, that some of these boats are charter boats, and so there are
47 clients on board that perhaps get sick and call the trip short.
48 And so, we can look into that too, because we do categorize the

1 trips as the ones that are cut short. You can also look at the
2 duration of the trip to see those boats go out quick and then they
3 come back. And so, it's likely that-- it's not necessarily in all
4 cases the skill of the boat, but in some cases it could be the
5 customer requesting the trip be ended and then obviously they're
6 not out there longer, which might result in catch.

7
8 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Right, yeah. Yeah, that-- I mean, I guess that
9 would be fairly easy to weed those out, I suppose, if you've got
10 that information.

11
12 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** But to that end, there is a private recreational
13 angler we monitor off Arecibo, and he has a high incidence of zero
14 catch. And he's a seasoned angler. And so, I have seen that he's
15 gotten skunked a lot. Some will say that "Oh, maybe he's getting
16 older, and his skills are not as good or his eyes aren't as good."
17 And I've actually heard that from some folks.

18
19 So, obviously there's a lot of different variables involved, but
20 the last 15 months we've seen a higher incidence of zero reported
21 catch.

22
23 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Right. And with the, with the expectation that
24 those trips were actually targeting dolphin among other things,
25 and they just got skunked.

26
27 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Exactly. Yes. And so, we do categorize vessels
28 that switch to deep drop fishing as nearshore. And so, what I'm
29 reporting on is the offshore trolling activity. And generally,
30 these recreational charter boats are using the same kind of
31 trolling techniques. There is a case where when they're targeting
32 blue marlin, they'll pull more [Kona?] baits, but you still can
33 get big dolphin hitting [Kona?] baits. So, by and large, we feel
34 it is representative of the offshore dolphinfish fishery but there
35 are some customer situations and skill situations to consider.

36
37 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Right. Thanks.

38
39 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Graciela?

40
41 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Hola, Wes. Graciela here. I have three
42 questions for you. One, are the anglers taking any notes on water
43 quality, transparency, turbidity, anything that is related to the
44 to the quality of the water? Two, are you already collaborating
45 with the U.S. Virgin Islands and the connection between U.S.V.I.
46 and Puerto Rico? And three, any comments or do you have any data
47 on the catches of these pelagics, the dolphin, the wahoo, etcetera,
48 from MPAs, especially the ones out in the EEZ? Thanks.

1
2 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Okay, So, I heard your first two. The last one,
3 I didn't get what you said there. So, the marine protected areas,
4 Bajo de Sico, Tourmaline, Abrir la Sierra, the Hind Bank, the
5 Grammanik Bank, Lang Bank, and the Mutton Snapper area of Saint
6 Croix. All these protected areas. Any information that you have on
7 the presence or the catch of dolphin in these areas.
8

9 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Okay. So, for your first question with water
10 quality. No, we're not collecting water quality specific data.
11 There will be times when the anglers will report sargassum, but
12 not necessarily turbidity data. Now, one aspect of our FAD research
13 though is that we have submerged cameras on the FADs, which we're
14 seeing are actually very useful for looking at turbidity. Which
15 could be then looked at relative to remote sensing data. And I
16 think what you're getting towards is like, you know, the incidents
17 of green water, which could push pelagics out of the area and
18 affect you know, fishing success. So, through our fishery
19 independent research with FADs, we are getting water quality, but
20 in our surveys, we're not generally capturing it with the anglers.
21

22 For the connection with the U.S.V.I.'s. I've had numerous
23 discussions with Sennai and Nicole, and I used to participate with
24 another fishery biologist there years ago. And so, I'm definitely
25 willing and able to collaborate with them. We do have boats tagging
26 dolphinfish in the V.I.s for us and boats out of Saint Croix and
27 Saint Thomas. And so, yes, I'm willing and able, and I have had
28 considerable conversations with folks over there.
29

30 In terms of catching MPAs. No, we're not, I'm not seeing any
31 recorded catch in those locations. You know, this project started
32 back in 2016, and so we had more participation out West, which is
33 close to Abrir La Sierra, and all those locations, and Mona
34 Passage, and Mona. And so, had we kept with that portion of our
35 project, perhaps we would see anglers reporting catch there. But
36 no, we have not seen representation of catch for the MPAs.
37

38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Cristina, you have the chat and then
39 I got to move forward because I need Nelson to do his presentation
40 before the break.
41

42 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** We have two comments from Yamitza
43 Rodríguez. There are many fishers targeting sharks, especially in
44 the East Coast. There are many fishermen that are catching sharks
45 without permits. There is a difference--
46

47 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿Pero tienes algo que tenga que ver con Wes?
48

1 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Yeah, I heard that question.

2
3 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿Que si tienes algo que tenga que ver con Wes?

4
5 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** No, I'm just reading what she wrote during
6 Wes's presentation.

7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** That's fine, thank you. So, now we're going to
9 work--

10
11 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Now I noticed that it was before, thank
12 you. Thank you for clarifying.

13
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, thank you, Wes, for your presentation.

15
16 **WESSLEY MERTEN:** Thank you all for your time and for the
17 opportunity.

18
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** All righty. Nelson, DAP report, Puerto Rico.

20
21 **District Advisory Panel Reports**
22 **Puerto Rico—Nelson Crespo, Chair**
23

24 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nelson Crsepo, for the
25 record. Good morning, everyone. On July 18th, at our Advisory Panel
26 meeting, we talk about various topics such as how to improve data
27 collection, the implementation plan of equity and environmental
28 justice, and status of marine reserve areas in Puerto Rico, among
29 other matters.

30
31 About how to improve data collection, these were the most
32 important, the most relevant comments and recommendations. It is
33 necessary to create a mechanism for the fishing community to
34 provide reliable data that is considered when evaluating a fishery.
35 We all know that the results we currently have are not in tune
36 with the reality of our fisheries.

37
38 The distrust that exists in the fishing sector with the scientific
39 community is not a secret and it is necessary to increase the
40 participation of fishermen when evaluating the fisheries and there
41 must be feedback with the results of these collaborations. Most of
42 the time, the fishermen do not find out the results of these
43 investigations and this contributes to mistrust. You need to do
44 something different to get different results.

45
46 The Caribbean Branch should be the leader in facilitating new data
47 collection participatory forms and to be fair to the science and
48 the fishing community, we ask to the Science Center for a balance

1 to place numerical data on facts that could increase the
2 opportunity to fish, in the same way that the collection of data
3 that potentially closes a fishery is facilitated.

4
5 Although outreach is very important, there is a structural problem
6 and for some time there has been a claim to do things in a new way
7 including the industry. To get the messages and priorities of the
8 fisheries sector with numbers, the DAP should have an active
9 participation deciding one or two scientific research priorities
10 for each budget cycle. It is necessary to develop workshops with
11 the DNER, the P.R. Fisheries Research Lab, the Science Center and
12 the CFMC on how to improve data collection, including the fishing
13 sector.

14
15 You must have information on hand such as flyers explaining more
16 about the data collection process. We ask this Council and NOAA
17 Fisheries to evaluate, when it's necessary, the possibility of
18 expanding the 3 years before establishing a regulation. It is
19 necessary to expand the collection of data with dealers,
20 restaurants, etcetera to include an assessment of the resource.

21
22 To evaluate alternatives for data collection, we suggest the
23 creation of a committee that includes members of the DAP, Science
24 Center, PR DNER Lab, and the team of scientists from this Council.
25 We should meet after this meeting.

26
27 Regarding EEJ, it is necessary to develop a research scheme that
28 responds to the needs of the fishing sector. Each study that is
29 carried out must have the experience of the fishers from the
30 beginning and it is necessary to train the fishers to create a
31 scientific bank of fishers.

32
33 It is necessary that the fishers have a fair compensation when
34 working in the studies. At present, this payment does not
35 compensate for the time that the fishers dedicate to participate
36 in them and for this reason they do not show much interest. It is
37 very important to reach out to fishing communities to strengthen
38 their resilience and open communication with the agencies in charge
39 of distributing funds. It is needed to have effective contact with
40 the industry. The use of community leaders and entities that bring
41 information to all sectors to achieve an impact on all fishing
42 communities would be very effective.

43
44 It would be helpful to have some liaison staff that could provide
45 guidance in the process of writing proposals so that fishing
46 communities can participate.

47
48 Regarding the marine protected areas. The community in general

1 only knows that these areas are protected but they have no idea
2 what status they are in. We suggest evaluating these marine
3 protected areas with the most effective frequency possible and
4 bringing these results to all fishing sectors.
5
6

7 Regarding the Tourmaline Bank, there is great concern if
8 aggregations of Red Hind are currently occurring. This is because
9 in an article published by Dr. Rowell where Dr. Schärer and Dr.
10 Appeldoorn, among others, appear as co-authors, he says that in
11 data from visual censuses of groupers in Abrir la Sierra, the
12 density values are reported between 0.5 to 3.3 individuals per 100
13 square meters versus in a study carried out by Dr. Reni García at
14 the Tourmaline Bank. They found a density of 0.073 to 0.074
15 individuals per 100 square meters. This reflects a 10 times higher
16 density of Red Hind in Abrir la Sierra than in the Tourmaline Bank.
17 Although Dr. García's study does not suggest that Red Hind
18 aggregations do not exist in the Tourmaline Bank, there may be a
19 possibility that they are not occurring, which was the main reason
20 for protecting this area.
21

22 In other business. We briefly discussed the continued absences of
23 our non-voting members. And we are very pleased that the DNER
24 representation is back. I would like to know, and I wish they
25 would've been here today, if the U.S. Coast Guard is interested in
26 maintaining their presence on our panel, which we feel is very
27 important. This concludes my report.
28

29 **Questions/Comments**

30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Crespo. Any questions for Crespo?
32 Jack?
33

34 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Nelson and thank you, Mr. Chairman.
35 Jack McGovern, for the record. That's a very good report, Nelson,
36 a lot of good information in there. I was wondering if you could
37 share a written report with the Council so that we could look at
38 it more closely.
39

40 **NELSON CRESPO:** Sure.
41

42 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Kevin.
43

44 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Kevin McCarthy, Southeast Fisheries Science
45 Center. Thanks, Nelson. Great report. And a lot of great points
46 and we look forward to working with you all and continue the good
47 work that we can all do together. Thank you.
48

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Alright, thank you. I just caught onto a text
2 that we need a break desperately, so take a break real quick.

3
4 **St. Thomas, U.S.V.I.—Julian Magras, Chair**
5 **St. Croix, U.S.V.I.—Gerson Martinez, Chair**
6

7 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Before the break Julian and Gerson do not have
8 report, but I wanted to give a half a minute for Julian to tell us
9 about the activity in December.

10
11 By the way, the hotel will be open August 24th. And I insist,
12 anybody going to travel to the meeting on December 5th and December
13 6th, start making your reservation, airplane reservation, now.
14 Julian, very quick.

15
16 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** Yes, Julian Magras, for the record. So, finally,
17 since the hurricanes. The Marriott Western Hotel will be opening
18 up, like Miguel just said, August 28th in that area. It's been
19 delayed, but the Council will be back in the Virgin Islands. And
20 the Saint Thomas Fisherman's Association would like to host
21 everyone that attends the meeting with their other halves, if they
22 come with them. We're going to host you guys at the Frenchtown
23 Community Center where the fishermen and local chefs will be
24 preparing a Seafood dinner for everyone. It won't be hors
25 d'oeuvres. It will be a dinner. We will have fish. We'll have
26 conch. We'll have lobsters will have all the good stuff.

27
28 And I am looking forward of having five of our main restaurants in
29 the island, who have local chef from the Virgin Islands, to be
30 preparing some of these dishes along with the fishers that will be
31 preparing food. We will have drinks. We'll have music and I hope
32 everyone can attend and enjoy this.

33
34 We're also working on providing a couple shuttles with taxis
35 because it's very expensive on the island. It's not like Puerto
36 Rico where three or four people get the same price they charge
37 individually. So, between the group of us that will be attending
38 the meeting and hiring a couple taxi vans to provide the
39 transportation for free also so you guys can come out and enjoy an
40 evening on behalf of the Saint Thomas Fisherman's Association.

41
42 So, Miguel, all I would need from you guys is, as we get closer
43 and you have an idea who will be attending, if we can get somewhat
44 of a number of who we'll be providing to it would be greatly
45 appreciated. Thank you.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Julian. So, break time. 10 minutes.
48 Thank you.

1
2 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)
3

4 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, we're going to get started again, and
5 the next item on the agenda is the Outreach and Education Report,
6 Alida Ortiz, Chair.
7

8 **Outreach and Education Report— Alida Ortiz, Chair**
9

10 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Okay, good morning. So, we are going to
11 make a very short report on what the Outreach and Education has
12 been doing at this time, and especially the projects that we would
13 like to present to you for approval. Next one.
14

15 As I said before, we are always going to find a strategic plan for
16 the Council, and our concepts for working on outreach and education
17 are the Ecosystem-Based Management, the Island-Based Fishery
18 Management Plans for each island, the Sustainable Fish and Seafood
19 consumption, and that is not only for the fishers, it's for the
20 entire community, all the consumers, all the people that buy in
21 the fisheries and the markets. And the Marine Protected Areas in
22 Puerto Rico, Saint Thomas/Saint John, And Saint Croix. It was good
23 to hear this morning from Nelson the need to get more information
24 on the status of these MPAs so we are going to be working with
25 that. Next one, please.
26

27 So, the thing that we have been doing in the past meeting,
28 especially was working with the equity and environmental justice
29 group to help Heather Blough and the fishers in Puerto Rico finding
30 where they're going to do their meetings. These meetings are going
31 to be from August 21st to the 24th in Puerto Rico, and they're going
32 to be, one, in Manatee, that's the North Coast, and it will take
33 the fishers and the communities of all that area; Cabo Rojo in the
34 West, which is probably one of our largest fishing community;
35 Ponce, South, not just Ponce, but all the small towns and the
36 fishers group that are in that area; Ceiba, that will be in the
37 East and that will take also the fishers from Vieques and Culebra.
38

39 The Liaison, Wilson and Jannette, who is part of the outreach and
40 education advisory panel, are going to attend to all those meetings
41 and we will then take the information and see how and what NOAA
42 wants to do in equity and environmental justice. That way we can
43 follow it completely in our outreach and education products. Wilson
44 is going to do that.
45

46 The other Activity that we have been working with is the Marine
47 Resources Education Program, MREP. That's a workshop that is done
48 in Puerto Rico, and they are going to do it sometime in the U.S.

1 Virgin Islands. With the MREP, we have helped them with the areas
2 they're going to work, and then the people that are going to
3 participate as members of that workshop. I will be attending part
4 of it in Humacao and Naguabo, but the entire group is going to
5 meet in Fajardo from August 25th to 27th. And at the end, when we
6 get the results from the discussions and what the fishers want
7 from the workshop, we will bring back the information to you in
8 the December meeting. Next, please.

9
10 There are two projects that we want to present to you for Council
11 approval. It is this one. We mentioned it in the April meeting,
12 and it is the illustrated catalog of the fish and invertebrate
13 species that are included in the Island-Based Fishery Management
14 Plans for Puerto Rico, Saint Thomas/Saint John, and Saint Croix.
15 This was a request made by the three DAPs, the Puerto Rico, the
16 Saint Thomas, and the Saint Croix, that they wanted to more
17 information or probably some kind of product that they could look
18 at it immediately with the information that is in the Island-Based
19 Management Plans about this species, but that they will have an
20 illustration, a short description, and then they could have that
21 in the boat, they could have that in their fisheries schools, all
22 that.

23
24 So, the objective is to familiarize the stakeholders, not just the
25 fishers, both fishers and consumers, in an easy to understand
26 language and illustrations with the important issues related to
27 the species managed in each island. The text will be in English
28 and Spanish. And then, before we complete the entire project, we
29 are going to send it to the people we met with in Saint Thomas/Saint
30 John, Ruth Gomez, Nicole and Julian, so that they can take a look
31 at it and if they have different names for those species, if they
32 have different information than the one we collected from the
33 regular references, we will change it and we'll make a different
34 one.

35
36 And then, there will be also the collaborators in Puerto Rico,
37 Nelson Crespo, Eliso, and if you have another person that would
38 want to look at it, we'll send it also. And also in Saint Croix,
39 where we are sending it to Gerson, and I forgot the other person,
40 but all the DAPs are going to look at the material before it is
41 finished and then when it is finished, we will give it to the
42 Council for production. Next one.

43
44 This is an example of what we're trying to do. Probably that
45 description that you have there is too long because they will take
46 a lot. We have around 73 species uniting all the Island-Based
47 Fishery Management Plans, but we are going to have a very short
48 description on the color, on the size, and on the regulations that

1 these species have in the island-based. And then, there will be
2 references to go to the Island-Based Fishery Management Plan, the
3 complete document, and the formal document, and check out those
4 things. We will use illustrations. We are not using photographs
5 because sometimes we have a description that is a color, but the
6 photograph that we can find is a different color because it was
7 taken on the water and it was taken, you know, with a different
8 thing.

9
10 So, we have all the illustrations ready. We got those from Sea
11 Grant and also an artist has made those that were not included in
12 the Sea Grant material. So, as soon as we have that, probably in
13 a draft, but a complete draft, we are also going to send it to
14 Miguel and to Carlos, so that you can either send them to the whole
15 Council, but that way--

16
17 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, we have selected people that we're going. We
18 won't send it to everybody and his brother.

19
20 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Okay, great.

21
22 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** And then we have to double check whether the
23 species appear in the different areas for some mutton snappers,
24 Saint Thomas and all that. The other important part is that this
25 was an idea that came out of the fishers, to have this. Saint
26 Thomas's DPR group suggested the idea, Ruth Gomez and Julian and
27 it was followed by DAP Saint Croix and Puerto Rico. Both groups
28 all agreed to have the book.

29
30 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** And I have already received some
31 recommendations that were out and we're putting that in the text.
32 The next one? Cristina?

33
34 Okay, another one is the calendar of 2024. We did have a problem
35 with the calendar 2023, but calendar 2024 will be dedicated to the
36 Island-Based Fishery Management Plans, because that calendar gets
37 to the fishers, but also it gets to all the consumers, and we want
38 that information available for the entire community. And then we
39 have information on each one of the indicator species, manage
40 species, and then we will have maps of where they are found.

41
42 Then, Puerto Rico will have January, February, March, and April.
43 Saint Croix, May, June, July, August. Saint Thomas/Saint John,
44 September, October, November, and December. And this must be
45 completed by December for printing. Because the problem with the
46 2023 was that the material didn't get all together even though
47 some material was there. So, now we have to collect that material
48 that was for fisher's families that some of you people gave us

1 information on, and that should be probably for 2025. But the 2024
2 will be dedicated to Island-Based Fishery Management Plans, and it
3 must be could be completed by September.

4
5 Next one.

6
7 The products that we are already working on, some of them are about
8 to be finished or are finished. We have to work with fact sheets
9 and booklets on the island-based essential topics. That will be
10 stickers or infographic on each one of those island-based fishery
11 management plans for each island. Then we would also like to have
12 some kind of product on the content of the fishery ecosystem plan,
13 because that is a topic that is mentioned all the time that is
14 discussed in each one of these meetings of the Council. But we a
15 have very complex text in terms of fishery ecosystem plan, and we
16 have to put that in a language and a style that all consumers can
17 read it.

18
19 We will be working with all the illustrations that we have already.
20 We would like to have information for the schools. Because in many
21 of the fishing villages that we have, we have a school near them.
22 And then if the children, if the students, from the very beginning,
23 recognizes the species and see the importance of that product,
24 then it will be a different culture about the value of our
25 fisheries.

26
27 We would be working-- right now there is a school in Parguera, and
28 even though it is probably something that we are doing not from
29 outreach and education, since I have been for so long in Parguera.
30 One of the schools in Parguera has been turned into a marine
31 education secondary school. It's one of the Montessori schools.
32 And they are working with the fishers, they are working with the
33 community, and the curriculum will be accepted by the Department
34 of Education. But much of it will be on fisheries, not just marine
35 biology, but fisheries from history, from philosophy, from
36 socioeconomics, so that they understand the, from the intermediate
37 school, that fisheries are an important economic activity in our
38 island. And we are doing that too. Next one.

39
40 We have been asked to produce material for snapper/grouper deep-
41 water fishing. That was one of the requests of the DAPs when we
42 met with them. But for that, we are still getting the information.
43 Something that I hear all the time, an explanation in very simple
44 terms of a stock assessment and how a stock assessment done and
45 what participation do the consumers and the fishers and the people
46 who know the resource can have on it.

1 Understanding management terminology. We still have to go all the
2 time to get optimum yield, ACL, ABC, and other terms. So, we should
3 have some kind of a poster or something that you can stick on the
4 fishery store with these abbreviations or these terms that are
5 used constantly. Next one.

6
7 We were also asked but haven't gotten all the information on a
8 fact sheet for Bajo de Sico and the fishery management regulations
9 in the area. There are recommendations that I get from listening
10 to the information that the fishers bring when they come to this
11 meeting and it is that there should be a workshop on fishery
12 management regulations for new DAP members, similar to the PEPCO.
13 This information is not included directly in the PEPCO, but it
14 should be like a different one on fishery management rules. What
15 do they mean? Where is the impact? What is the importance of the
16 fisher's participation in this communication about fishery
17 management regulations? Next.

18
19 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Alida? In that one we're-- Anyway, brainstorming.
20 It's better to add a section like that at the PEPCO rather than
21 double effort so the Council can assist. Then, make sure that the
22 new members of the DAPs in each one of the areas participate. In
23 case of a DAP member from Saint Thomas/Saint John, and Saint Croix,
24 we can invite them over to come to this particular meeting, the
25 new members.

26
27 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Okay, great. And that's something that we
28 can manage with Wilson. And the same way that I go there to the
29 PEPCO and give information about what is the Caribbean Fishery
30 Management Council and ecosystem-based management that, that will
31 also take the information. So, I'll talk to Wilson about that.

32
33 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** And the other thing some fishers suggested was
34 to use the social networks, especially Facebook, with that
35 information. So, it's a matter of getting with Cristina, yourself,
36 and others to include that information. We should include also
37 stock assessment because translating stock assessment from science
38 to common language is not that easy.

39
40 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** It's not that easy at all.

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** To start, in Spanish, there's no word for stock
43 in Spanish. It's 'abasto pesquero.'

44
45 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Abasto.

46
47 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** If you say to a fisherman, "abasto pesquero" the
48 fisherman will say, "¡Mas abasto pesquero seras tú! Cuidado como

1 me hablas." So, okay, thank you.

2
3 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Yeah, okay. Any questions,
4 recommendations?

5
6 **Questions/Comments**
7

8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** No, Vanessa?
9

10 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Alida. Vanessa Ramírez for the record.
11 Of course, I have to thank you because you have been a great
12 facilitator during all these months with all the activities that
13 we have been doing in the West area. Also, Wilson and Janet that
14 were in Vieques with the PEPCO.

15
16 I just want to take a moment bring something to the attention of
17 the Council. We started giving the workshop for the divers as we
18 saw in presentation during this morning. Our fishermen, most of
19 them are changing their kind of fishery to diving and we have a
20 big issue with the young fishermen. Last week we lost one, 28 years
21 and today I have one of my divers here and he just had two of the
22 worst experiences for a diver. He got lost in June. He was seven
23 hours out in open waters between the buoy four and six and it was
24 very difficult to work with that rescue. I have to thank Miguel
25 Borges. Sadly, 911 can't contact Coast Guard. Miguel was the one
26 that helped me put that on the line, and they helped a lot with
27 the rescue. We have an emergency plan in our area, but this is a
28 situation that is around Puerto Rico. I know that also Virgin
29 Island has the same.

30
31 We're taking care of our fishery, but we need to take care also
32 about our human resource that are the fishermen, especially if we
33 can develop a small booklet or an emergency card where they have
34 and know the procedure when they have an accident with barotrauma
35 or when they have their diver lost, who do they have to call first
36 instead of waiting in those. Because when you're in open waters,
37 each minute counts, it's a life that is right there.

38
39 And also, I want to put for the record the situation in Puerto
40 Rico with the medical personal that we have. The only chamber is
41 here in San Juan. I have Abdiel right here. He got a bubble on
42 Saturday; he went to the hospital in San Germán. They made him
43 wait until the next day. The emergency doctor didn't even know
44 what that was. He had to explain it. They wanted to let him go
45 home with some pills, some Advil for the pain. And it was very
46 difficult to make a request for the chamber to receive him.
47 Jannette helped me a lot calling directly to the director. Once we
48 got that done, he was transported in an ambulance to San Juan and

1 received the treatment. In two hours, he was already in the
2 chamber.

3
4 But the thing is most of our commercial fishermen, especially in
5 the West side or in Vieques and Culebra, when they have to go to
6 the chamber, many of them decide not to because they don't have
7 the facility for transportation once they are out. For example,
8 that's why Abdiel is here with me. I took him to the hospital and
9 brought him giving back. Some of you had the experience last night
10 talking to him. It's something that we need to address as a Council
11 because it's our younger fishermen generation that we need some
12 other fishermen getting. As we take care of our fisheries, we need
13 to spread the word that they need more workshops for security in
14 diving and especially also in the medical sector. We need some
15 education that all these people that are the first responders know
16 how to treat a diver when they come to the port. Thanks.

17
18 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Actually, I had a short meeting with
19 Jannette yesterday about that issue. So, Jannette, if you want to
20 say anything.

21
22 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Well, we are short on time for that one.

23
24 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Jannette is requesting a turn to speak.

25
26 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, I know. But the thing is that we have done
27 this before. Several times. And with Sea Grant. So, probably we
28 can talk to Chapa, the director of Sea Grant, and see if we can
29 have that collaboration. Cristina did a video with the doctors.
30 Actually, we have that. We can share it also with the social
31 network.

32
33 But the issue is that, as Andy Maldonado said at one of the
34 meetings, Andy Maldonado is one of the best commercial divers that
35 we have in Puerto Rico. He's been fishing for a long time. Many
36 young fishers don't care. They just go out. You know that guy has
37 three tanks? How many tanks? The thing is that we can have five
38 sheets and everything, but if you guys don't follow, it won't go
39 anywhere. But this is a continuum, we have to do it.

40
41 This is the last thing. We were going to have a workshop, at the
42 Council, in one December. The workshop was going to be given by a
43 diver that was a teacher on how to avoid bubbles. The meeting was
44 in December. He called me in November, and said he got himself in
45 bubbles. So, you know, it gives you an idea of the problematics
46 that we have. But I believe that following Vanessa, we can start
47 the ball rolling to work on the two areas. And Jannette also told
48 me about it. She helped on it. So, I believe between Vanessa, as

1 a Council member, Cristina, Alida, and Jannette, we can put
2 something together that we can report back to the Council in
3 December.

4
5 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** Okay. That'll be great. Jannette?

6
7 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Jannette, you need to use the mic and
8 introduce yourself for the record.

9
10 **JANNETTE RAMOS-GARCÍA:** Thank you. Jannette Ramos-García for the
11 record. I already called the Colegio de Medicos y Cirujanos de
12 Puerto Rico and asked them about how to do the continual medical
13 education for doctors. And I already have the information, so we
14 are going to proceed with the class.

15
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Vance?

17
18 **VANCE VICENTE:** Yeah, real quickly. Alida, thanks again for all
19 your contributions. Regarding the catalog of fishes and
20 invertebrates, I'm going to make another suggestion to add a small
21 section on seagrasses. Because, I mean, fishers know where they
22 are and what they do, but they may not recognize one from the
23 other. And this might be particularly important with the halophila.
24 Since we have halophila stipulacea, which is an invasive species,
25 which is also affecting the shallow benthic communities. And there
26 are only six species. You can use the presentation I gave the last
27 time on seagrasses, you can use the pictures and everything,
28 whatever for it, for anything that you want.

29
30 Sorry for causing all this commotion here. I stepped on some cable
31 here and I don't know. So, it's my fault again, again, and again.

32
33 So, anyhow, just for the record, if you can add a small section
34 with pictures showing the taxonomy of the sea grasses, which the
35 fishers know they exist, but maybe they don't know what they are,
36 you know, what species, and specifically what they do. You can use
37 all the pictures that I sent you and I can help you, voluntarily,
38 write something up if you need me to help. And maybe, another three
39 pictures showing an example of a Phaeophyte, a Rhodophyta, and a
40 Chlorophyte of what a brown algae is and maybe you can just show
41 Sargassum, a Chlorophyte, maybe Penicillus or whichever you wish
42 and a Rhodophyta, which you know more than anybody. Just to let
43 them know that other plants are autotrophic, and they contribute
44 to the productivity of the ecosystem. Thank you.

45
46 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** The only thing, Vance, is that since the
47 island-based strictly focuses on the reef fishes, pelagics,
48 invertebrates, then we could work with other products of the fish

1 communities in seagrasses or the fish communities in mangrove
2 roots, things like that. But for this product in particular, it
3 has to be only reef fishes and pelagics.

4
5 **VANCE VICENTE:** Thank you, I agree.

6
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Thank you. So, we're going to move
8 forward, but we're going to bump Ana Salceda ahead of the Council
9 Fisheries Liaisons. And then the lunch hour will only be one hour,
10 and we will be back here at one so we can catch up on some missing
11 items, the liaisons and Kevin McCarty. So, Ana.

12
13 **Big Fish Campaign Update—Ana Salceda**

14
15 **ANA SALCEDA:** Hello. Good morning and thank you very much for
16 opening a space for us to present the Big Fish Public Engagement
17 Campaign. I'm going to be sharing my screen so you can see our
18 presentation. My team, the digital team will also be participating
19 in the meeting in a few minutes. So, let's start with I understand
20 that there are different levels of information among these
21 audience. So, I'm going to provide a little bit of background of
22 these initiatives.

23
24 So, this initiative started in 2018 within the context of the
25 WECAFC Spawning Aggregation Working Group. I came out because the
26 group realized the importance and urgent need of putting out there
27 all the research and information that had been gathered on fish
28 spawning aggregations. In order to actually encourage action, we
29 needed to reach out to the three main target audiences of this
30 campaign.

31
32 So, as you know, our campaign is the first phase of implementation
33 of a 10-year communication strategy that is the communication
34 component of the regional fish spawning aggregations management
35 plan. This is a two-year campaign in three languages, English,
36 Spanish and French.

37
38 We originally had a dream campaign. So, we were talking to all the
39 target audiences, including young kids and everyone. But a reality
40 check forced us to actually focus on three target audiences. The
41 first is fishers, because, as you know, they are an indispensable
42 part of the solution. Then, decision makers, which includes not
43 only politicians and managers, but also enforcement officials. And
44 also, the general public. As you know, there's no such a thing as
45 a general public, so we are focused on tourists from Europe and
46 the U.S., especially, that travel to the Caribbean and when they
47 get here, they consume fish. And at the local level within the
48 entire wider Caribbean, which is the geographic scope of our

1 campaign and our strategy, we are focused on fish buyers since
2 they are consumers in all the countries in the region.

3
4 So, we originally focused on, when it comes to the logo, as you
5 know, is the face of the initiative, we had focused on two original
6 concepts that have been evolving, evolving, evolving, until
7 reaching this point. This is the final logo of the campaign. The
8 colors included in the palette of the campaign, which is basically
9 the Caribbean blues, this is the bright blue, and we are also
10 including the dark Caribbean blue, which is what you see in the
11 letters and the little fish and a palette of yellow, orange, golden
12 that includes that fish.

13
14 Well, the color of this fish has been an incredible battle. We
15 have consulted with so many people that we came up with this color,
16 which is, you see that the fish is kind of a hybrid between a
17 grouper and a snapper because we originally had a nassau grouper
18 but some of the group-- let me insert a very important note here.
19 This is a campaign that has been produced from the beginning and
20 will be until the end by the Spawning Aggregation Working Group.
21 And there's a communications subcommittee within that working
22 group that has been contributing with time, knowledge, opinions,
23 and constant feedback to the campaign. So, the scientists didn't
24 like the color that we had before, which was the color that the
25 fishers like, which was a very orangey, kind of happy color. So,
26 we ended up with this color. As you see, dog snappers are pretty
27 much like that underwater, and, well, I hope you like it. Because
28 it was not easy to get here.

29
30 As part of the, of this initiative, we have produced many outreach
31 products and communication products. One centerpiece of the
32 campaign is a one-hour film for broadcast that was premiered on
33 Nature/PBS last April and in the German market in last May. We
34 have great news already about this film. It's originally in English
35 for the international market, but we are going to produce a Spanish
36 version of the film. Not with subtitles, but dubbed, because based
37 on the fishers and some members of our communications subcommittee,
38 well, for a one-hour film subtitles didn't work. So, we are working
39 on the Spanish version to be distributed throughout the entire
40 region and the Spanish speaking countries, of course, of the wider
41 Caribbean.

42
43 The great news is also that we are finalists in three film
44 festivals in Europe, in Germany, in Austria, and in Rotterdam. We
45 are finalist in Jackson Hole. For your information, Jackson Hole
46 in the U.S. is the most important film festival of science and
47 natural history in the world along with Wildscreen that has
48 accepted already our film, and we think that we could be finalists

1 as well. So, that is already great because that assures us an
2 incredible distribution in Europe and the U.S. In the U.S. it was
3 premiered by PBS and it's on several streaming platforms right
4 now. That includes Apple and Amazon, etcetera, etcetera and it
5 will be there for a year.

6
7 So, regarding the film, we are also submitting the film to many,
8 actually, almost 50 film festivals in the wider Caribbean region,
9 where our executive producers wouldn't have applied, but we are
10 doing it because of this campaign. By the way, our executive
11 producers are the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Nature/PBS and
12 Red Bull Terra Matter out of Austria. In addition to this one-hour
13 film for broadcast, we also have short films. We are producing two
14 short films right now. One is in post-production, the other one is
15 being produced as we speak. And we already finished two films in
16 three languages. "Nassau Grouper Against the Clock" is focused on
17 the situation that nassau grouper is facing. And, well, you get it
18 from the title that it's a call to action for targeting decision
19 makers, but it's a product that can be watched and perfectly
20 understood by all the other target audiences.

21
22 The main messages of the campaign are-- again, I think you are
23 familiar already with the communication strategy, that is the
24 framework of all this, so you know the themes and subjects that we
25 are going to be talking about. But the main, main messages are: no
26 fishing, no sales from December to March for nassau grouper and no
27 fishing, no sales from April to July for mutton snapper. The second
28 film that we already produced in the three languages is "Fish
29 Smart" and it's addressed to fishers. It's about fish spawning
30 aggregations, the situations that we face in the entire region and
31 it's a call to action, not only for the fishers to participate,
32 but also explores ways for the fishers to get involved in the
33 decision-making process, find alternative livelihoods in
34 collaboration with institutions like this one, and alternative
35 livelihoods, but also with opportunities for capacity building and
36 funding opportunities.

37
38 The short films that are in post-production right now, are pretty
39 much the same idea for mutton snapper that we included for nassau
40 grouper. "Love is in the Air" is the only short film that is
41 addressed to a younger audience, the tourist that come from Europe
42 and the U.S. and come to the Caribbean. So, it includes, of course,
43 because for this campaign solutions are really important, they are
44 part of our content. So, this short film includes many ideas for
45 these target audiences of what they can do when they are here.

46
47 The Howard Hughes Medical Institute is also producing four adds as
48 part of the campaign and apply to these target audiences where

1 they are going to be able to see a which species they can eat when
2 they get to the Caribbean and the ones that they cannot eat because
3 they are in season. It provides alternatives for sustainable
4 species to consume while in the Caribbean.

5
6 We have, as part of our research for our communication strategy,
7 we realized that radio is very important for fishers and for the
8 general audience radio is back. So, we have a very important
9 component of radio. We have created, produced already the Radio
10 Kit in English. The Radio Kid in Spanish is being produced as we
11 speak. We have incorporated fishers from Mexico. This week we are
12 going to be producing, here in Puerto Rico, with many of the
13 fishers that are part of this Council and work with this Council,
14 the podcast in Spanish. So thus far we have the English version,
15 as I said, and it includes two podcasts and two FSAs. One, for
16 nassau grouper to promote the closed season of nassau grouper and
17 mutton snapper at the regional level.

18
19 The podcasts. One is focused on nassau grouper. Of course, being
20 radio, we used an audio approach. So, thanks to the constant
21 support of Michelle Schärer and some of her colleagues. I think
22 it's a juicy podcast to hear the love calls of the nassau grouper.
23 And "Fish Smart" is complementary with the film that we produce,
24 and it keeps exploring alternative for fishers during the fishing
25 bans, right? In addition to provide information about fish spawning
26 aggregations.

27
28 The Caribbean Fisheries Management Council has produced beautiful
29 Posters for both species that are the flag species of the
30 management plan, the nassau grouper and the mutton snapper. So,
31 they are in the three languages of the campaign, including French.
32 And thank you to Alida, Graciela, and all the people from the
33 Caribbean Fisheries Management Council for contributing with this
34 to the campaign as well.

35
36 The Big Fish Hub is the digital phase of not only the campaign,
37 but the spawning aggregation working group phase. The idea of
38 creating a hub, as you know, Miguel and I really had great
39 conversations about the difference between a website and a hub,
40 right? So, a Hub is, as Miguel says, the enhanced version of a
41 website. It's more interactive, and it's more specialized, and in
42 fact, you are going to see the three sections for the different
43 target audiences that we are creating, because the Hub is in a
44 very rough draft state. It's basically a resource library as well.
45 So, you are going to be able to find here not only the materials
46 that we have created for this campaign, but we have been curating
47 a collection of existing materials that were produced in the last
48 10 years by partners on fish spawning aggregations and the species

1 that aggregate to spawn. So, we have curated that collection. You
2 will find it there, as well as all the scientific papers, popular
3 science, management plan, regulations, and of course, all these
4 products that are additional to the ones that we produce.

5
6 I'm going to walk you through this very, very rough draft of the
7 hub. But just to finish this part of the presentation, we are also
8 working with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and PBS. They are
9 creating additional materials for the respected platforms, more
10 educational. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute has a section for
11 teachers that is called biointeractive, and they are creating
12 videos and workshops and all kinds of materials to focus on reef
13 ecology and fish spawning aggregations for this group of students,
14 freshman students in college and for this group of teachers that
15 include teachers from the Caribbean, by the way. The idea is to
16 bring the teachers in Puerto Rico closer to this group, but we
17 already have presence of teachers from Colombia, Chile and many of
18 the countries that are part of the wider Caribbean. So that's work
19 in progress. But we have many years ahead of us. So, for now they
20 are being incredible partners. They are supporting us with these
21 additional materials.

22
23 The same goes for the educational section of the website of PBS,
24 Nature/PBS, WNET. And they are producing more materials as we
25 speak. We are also working with, of course, all of our partners in
26 the region including GCFI, COBI, and many others to serve the
27 communication purposes or needs of their respective organizations
28 and dovetail both initiatives.

29
30 Let me show you a little bit of the hub. As I said, forget about
31 the design, please. Let's focus on structure and main content. So,
32 there will be a better explanation of what the Fish Initiative is.
33 A link to learn more, so there will be a background. So, the
34 viewers will be able to understand where this initiative comes
35 from who are the main stakeholders and a little bit of history of
36 the project.

37
38 We have, as you see at the bottom, we have a resource library,
39 which is the one that I just mentioned, where you can find the
40 collection of videos, radio production, papers, protocols,
41 management plans, etcetera, etcetera, that could be useful for any
42 of the target audiences of the campaign. And we have also, next to
43 resource library, another section, because we are going to have a
44 lot of Live events. We have put together a calendar for the first
45 year of the campaign. Our partners are inserting their respective
46 events and activities in their respective countries. So, the idea
47 is to do a lot of streaming. So, as I said, this Hub is very
48 interactive and there will be a lot of streaming and materials

1 that our partners will send us and keep completing.

2
3 Speaking of life events. The campaign will be launched the second
4 half of September. It will be launched from Belize as part of a
5 series of special screenings of "Treasure of the Caribbean," the
6 film for broadcast. In Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras, who are
7 the countries were the main character of this film, which is the
8 nassau grouper, but also the coral reef which is the set of the
9 film. These three countries have a lot of importance for the future
10 of this wonderful and resilient coral reef called the Cayman Crown.
11 So, we start with a series of live events and screenings of this
12 film for decision makers, fishers, and the community, always going
13 to our three target audiences.

14
15 We will start in Belize, because as you know, there's a tradition
16 and history of Belize protecting fish spawning aggregations, and
17 we will launch the campaign. We are waiting for the decision makers
18 in Belize, the Fisheries Department, to tell us when the event
19 will be. We think that it could be around the 17th of September so
20 that will be the launch date. But we are still waiting for
21 confirmation. We will keep you posted.

22
23 So, let's go to policy makers. So, the first video that you see
24 there is the one that we produce for them. We have three cuts on
25 this. Everything that you see, including the pictures, the
26 animations, everything, are rough cuts, right? Basically, this map
27 is where we are going to include the information that we have been
28 gathering on those 10 species that are going to be the focus
29 species because we cannot include all of the species that aggregate
30 to spawn. So, we have selected, based on the advice from our
31 partners, these 10 species. There will be a database of the
32 regulations, existing regulations in each country of the region.
33 Then, there are three asks for decision makers. One, is help us
34 complete the database and the information. Second, promote and
35 support the enforcement of the closed season in your country and
36 this is a series of steps. What you see there, the moving text, is
37 a series of steps that decision makers and the rest of the
38 stakeholders involved in enforcement should take in order to get
39 prepared for the spawning season. Michelle Schärer, has been doing
40 this work in Puerto Rico. Stephania Bolden and Michelle were
41 instrumental in putting together this guide of what to do when the
42 spawning season is approaching. And the third task for decision
43 makers is to coordinate with your neighbors. Conservation,
44 protection, and enforcement.

45
46 So, we have started again. This is a rough, rough cut. So, you
47 will be able to navigate and look for your country and you will
48 have the information of the fisheries department of that country

1 and the enforcement office or unit or whatever it is in the
2 different countries. This animated map that is going to be much
3 bigger includes all of the known and confirmed aggregation sites
4 of the different species in the wider Caribbean. The different
5 colors respond to different species, and it will be bigger. So,
6 it's right next to that section of work with your neighbors so
7 that everybody knows who their neighbor is, right? But it helps
8 with the content.

10 Here are also the ten things that have been chosen to focus on.
11 Priority species let's call it. There will be a basic description.
12 The ones that have posters, there will a link to the poster. And
13 here we have the final link to go back to the library for more
14 information. And of course, since we are requesting more
15 information and data from the different countries here is the way
16 for them to submit it. We still need to decide who is going to
17 receive these emails, by the way.

19 So, this is decision makers that includes the managers,
20 enforcement, and the policy makers. I look forward to whatever you
21 think we are missing, big things, big content that should be there
22 that we haven't included or we should include. And we will review
23 this also with a group that is going to be meeting today at 6:30
24 to get their feedback on the hub.

26 So, this is the section for fishers, right? So, we have the film,
27 and this is the main content. Training opportunities, financial
28 support, connection with other fisher folks in the region, and the
29 media, and more resources. So, here is a Big Fish film manual. The
30 ten species that we mentioned before will be here, described. We
31 will have the radio content that we have created, and we are
32 producing right now. It will be linked to Spotify. We have created
33 a channel for them, and it will be placed here.

35 Here we have alternative livelihoods. Basically, this is a section
36 that is going to be to celebrate fishers, right? And we are working
37 already with many different fishers and associations and groups
38 and co-ops from Mexico and other countries to have a network of
39 influencers, fisher influencers from the entire region that are
40 going to be filling out this section. Here we have training
41 resources. The same mechanism. You go to your country, and you can
42 find the capacity building opportunities for you. The funding
43 resources as well.

45 Here we will have a story map that Michelle Schärer suggested to
46 have, but it's so complex and sophisticated that we have decided
47 to change what we were going to do, and we are putting together
48 something that takes actually 20 days to be produced. So, it

1 basically will be about the situation in each country regarding
2 the different species that aggregate to spawn. It will be
3 interactive so you will be able to go to the different countries,
4 and there, a window will pop up with the fishers that are making
5 a difference in that place, in that country, right? And what they
6 are doing to tackle the fisheries crisis. And there will be,
7 contact information of these, it could be individuals, there are
8 countries that are not as well organized as others, so there will
9 be information of associations, co-ops, and individuals.

10
11 That's pretty much the two sections for fishers and decision
12 makers. We are also working on the community. And as I said, this
13 will be much different, this for the general public, tourists, and
14 people that will come to the Caribbean. So, it will include the
15 call to action, and all the information about the application, so
16 they can download before they take their trips.

17
18 We will have the ten different species that we discussed before.
19 And as you see, you will be able to see the different species, the
20 description, links to the posters. And you will be able to hear
21 the sound that the groupers make as well as part of the
22 descriptions. Here we have basically a billboard of what the events
23 are going to be at that moment. So, everybody can get online and
24 connect to it, or at least know what's going on in the region
25 regarding fish responding aggregations.

26
27 Many ideas to help, which include volunteer and also fundraising
28 for fishers, organizations, that really want to keep building
29 capacity and for research as well. We will be raising money for
30 those specific goals. Research and fishers, capacity building for
31 fishers.

32
33 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Ana, we only have a couple more minutes because
34 we have a cutoff for lunch.

35
36 **ANA SALCEDA:** Okay, okay. So, that's basically it. Now we are going
37 hear very, very briefly-- I'm a little worried that we don't have
38 the time because this presentation should be 10 minutes and you
39 guys will-- Isabella and Addie, need to make it very, very short.
40 So, go ahead.

41
42 **ADDIE BRIGGS:** Hello, can everybody hear me?

43
44 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Yes.

45
46 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Ana, we don't have 10 minutes because we have to
47 break. We can do it after lunch at one o'clock.

1 **ANA SALCEDA:** Okay.
2
3 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** So, the first thing after one o'clock, we'll do
4 that.
5
6 **ANA SALCEDA:** Okay. Addie and Isabella, we will reconnect with you
7 after lunch at 1 p. m., which is 4 p.m. for you.
8
9 **ADDIE BRIGGS:** Okay, cool. Sounds good.
10
11 **ANA SALCEDA:** Thank you. Bye bye.
12
13 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** I believe that the work that Ana has done with
14 the collaborator is exceptional. When we were discussing this, I
15 called the Hub a glorified webpage, but it's a little bit more
16 than that. This is probably one of the best things that we have
17 done for the promotion of Pan-Caribbean management of the species
18 that aggregate to spawn. The three components are management,
19 fishers, and science and you have seen that it all will be there.
20
21 I believe, Mr. Chairman, that Kevin wanted to say something before.
22 Is it good news, before we go to lunch?
23
24 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Kevin.
25
26 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Sure, thank you. This is Kevin McCarthy, Southeast
27 Fisheries Science Center. And this was something I forgot to
28 mention yesterday in our presentation. But working with Laura and
29 Rachel at headquarters, Laura Cimo and Rachel O'Malley at
30 headquarters, we were able to get funding to hire a person to work
31 in support of our efforts with WECAFC. So, essentially this will
32 be a position that will evaluate U.S. data reporting obligations.
33 So, as we become more and more involved with the WECAFC, there's
34 data that is required from each nation that's a member state.
35
36 So, we've got reporting obligations just like we do with ICAD and
37 these other international organizations, but we haven't developed
38 those mechanisms yet and we haven't identified all the data that
39 are required for WECAFC reporting and we don't quite understand
40 the WECAFC reporting system. So, this person would be hired through
41 the Cooperative Institute just like many of the folks that are
42 working with the Caribbean Fisheries Branch are and they would be
43 working on that data reporting obligation and understanding that
44 system and developing guidance for future implementation of data
45 reporting.
46
47 So, we're looking for somebody who knows about data sets, who knows
48 how to code in, say, R or SQL, that sort of thing. It doesn't

1 matter where they live. They could live down here. They could live
2 in Colorado. They could live wherever because the Cooperative
3 Institute doesn't care. They could be located in Miami if they so
4 desire. Although, I got to tell you, the cost of living there is
5 going through the roof. So, much like everywhere else, but it's
6 especially so in Miami.

7
8 So, the job announcement has not come out yet. We'll make sure
9 that the Council gets it. I don't quite know what they do, if they
10 send out a job description as well as the job announcement, but we
11 have both of those documents that have been prepared for CIMAS.
12 And CIMAS does the logistics of the hiring. We will have a hiring
13 panel that will interview candidates. So, that's something to look
14 forward to, hopefully in the not-too-distant next month or so. But
15 we'll see, and we'll let you know.

16
17 I meant to mention that yesterday so it's a great opportunity for
18 somebody. We're probably looking at a master's level, like a new
19 graduate, but who's got some coding skills and knows about some
20 databases. And that's it.

21
22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Kevin. So, we're going to break for
23 lunch. We'll be back in one hour. So, one o'clock sharp.

24
25 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on August 16, 2023.)

26
27 - - -

28
29 AUGUST 16, 2023

30
31 WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

32
33 - - -

34
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** We're going to get started again. So, are we
36 ready?

37
38 **ANA SALCEDA:** So, thank you for giving us a little bit more time.

39
40 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Ana, no nos pasemos de los 10 minutos.

41
42 **ANA SALCEDA:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. It won't. What you are going to
43 listen to now is the digital part of the campaign. I presented the
44 Hub, and the digital team of Big Fish is going to present pretty
45 much the social media.

46
47 **ADDIE BRIGGS:** Awesome. Can everyone hear me?
48

1 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yes.

2
3 **ADDIE BRIGGS:** Okay, awesome. Hi, everyone. My name is Addie, and
4 I'm really excited to be with you all today. Super honored and
5 excited to kind of share the progress on the digital strategy.
6 I've been the digital coordinator with Big Fish since June. And
7 yeah, I'm just super excited. I'm going to pass it off to Isabella
8 to introduce herself.

9
10 **ISABELLA SAPORITO SANTOS:** Hi, buenos días a todos. I'm Isabella
11 Saporito Santos. I am so excited to present the work we've done so
12 far so we can just hop right into it because I know we're short on
13 time. So, we'll go ahead and get started.

14
15 **ADDIE BRIGGS:** Next slide.

16
17 So, this is just a campaign overview and kind of what we're going
18 to be going over today. We're going to touch briefly on the Hub,
19 even though Ana already talked about it. We're going to talk about
20 our social media platforms and our social strategy, our newsletter,
21 and then lastly, how we're bringing that all together through our
22 Linktree, which is this super cool platform.

23
24 If we could go to the next slide.

25
26 So, as Ana talked about, the Big Fish Digital Hub is the absolute
27 centerpiece of the campaign. It's where all of our resources,
28 videos, information, calls to action are going to live across our
29 three audiences, which are fishers, decision makers, and the
30 community. And as Ana mentioned, it's also going to be in three
31 different languages.

32
33 So, all of our different digital platforms really kind of serve to
34 drive traffic to our digital Hub, because it's one of the most
35 important parts of our campaign.

36
37 If you go to the next slide, I'll talk a little bit about social.

38
39 So, Big Fish has launched across the following platforms. We are
40 @BIGFISHINITIATIVE across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok,
41 Threads, YouTube, WhatsApp and Spotify. An important part of our
42 social strategy is using kind of the research from our 10 years.
43 The work that all of our partners, many of you all also contributed
44 to with our recovering Big Fish 10-year plan and making sure that
45 we cater content on these specific platforms to the audiences that
46 are most active on it.

47
48 So, for example, we know that from this, from our previous research

1 from 2018, we know that WhatsApp is extremely important for
2 fishers. So, that's going to be a really key part of our strategy.
3 On the other hand, we know Twitter is going to be really important
4 for decision makers. So, kind of a key part of how we're going to
5 cater our content is just by slight differences in tone and wording
6 so that our messages come across better to our different audiences.

7
8 If we could go to the next slide.

9
10 So, another key part of our social strategy is how we actually
11 plan on generating buzz is through kind of leaning on our partner
12 organizations and leaning on the current social media presences
13 that our partners have. So, we are not planning on spending any
14 money, at least in the beginning part of our campaign, on boosting
15 our posts or doing paid social advertisements. But what we do plan
16 on is synchronizing our posts and using resharing and stories and
17 collaborative posts and tagging to build up our following from
18 zero and kind of direct traffic to our social channels, which then
19 leads traffic to our digital Hub.

20
21 We're currently working with our incredible, expansive network,
22 many of you, our partners are here today, which we're really
23 excited to be presenting to you all. But we're going to kind of
24 sync up our posts and time our posts to kind of generate attention
25 that way through our social platforms.

26
27 So, we go to the next slide.

28
29 So, in terms of the actual content that is going to live on our
30 social channels and our digital platforms, we have lots of
31 different content types. We have still images, we have graphics,
32 we have video, and we have audio. We've spent the past two months
33 kind of building out the themes and strategies from the Recovering
34 Big Fish 10-Year Plan and we have kind of created pieces of content
35 that are balanced in terms of the audience sections that they reach
36 and the campaigns that they highlight.

37
38 The campaign messages that they highlight, I'm just going to talk
39 about a few of them. In terms of themes, obviously, FSAs are our
40 most important theme. That's kind of the backbone of the campaign
41 and everything-- FSA education is an extremely important part of
42 our content. We also have ecosystem education focused on the
43 species that aggregate to spawn, the importance of enforcement,
44 responsible consumption, stakeholders, alternative livelihoods,
45 connectivity, and building community. Those are kind of our themes,
46 our subject matters, and our content.

47
48 And then our strategies, our stories of success, hope and triumph,

1 mathematical reasoning, beauty and wonder, critical calls to
2 action, solutions, vicious charismatic animals, ocean stewardship,
3 and viral content. And again, this entire digital plan is all
4 thanks to the work that all of our partners have done over the
5 past five years. It's kind of the culmination all the work. So,
6 we're just really thankful to have had all that great research to
7 kind of build the strategy off.

8
9 Another note I wanted to make about our social content is that
10 we've ensured that all our video content features both Spanish and
11 English which are kind of the two main languages for our campaign.
12 So, any video content that is in Spanish will have English
13 subtitles, and any video content that is in in English will have
14 Spanish subtitles. I don't know if I mixed that up. And then our
15 captions will be trilingual. So, they all have English, Spanish,
16 and French in the captions so that we're making sure we're not
17 isolating or alienating any audiences by not having content in
18 their language.

19
20 So, I think that's it from me, for these slides, but I am going to
21 pass it on to Isabella to talk a little bit about our calendar and
22 some newsletter. So, if we could go to the next slide, that would
23 be great.

24
25 **ISABELLA SAPORITO SANTOS:** Hi everyone, again. So basically, we
26 have a calendar that's a brief outline of some of the dates we're
27 following apart from the collaborative calendar we've created for
28 partners, which we'll talk about shortly.

29
30 So, in August through September, we're going to begin distribution
31 of a Big Fish weekly newsletter. This will include basically
32 everything that's going on, the posts we have scheduled and
33 everything we're up to and our partners are up to. And then, in
34 mid-September, our Big Fish campaign will launch across all our
35 digital platforms with key in person activations in Belize. In
36 September through October Treasures of the Caribbean will be
37 released in the Caribbean. And the first two months of social
38 content will be centered around the general themes and strategies
39 that Addie went over.

40
41 And then in November, we'll be preparing for the grouper spawning
42 season and gearing up messaging that will, you know, discuss that
43 you can't fish or sell a grouper during this period through March.
44 And then December through March the grouper spawning season will
45 be at its active point, so we'll maximize the messaging during
46 this time. And in March, as it's ramping down, we'll begin
47 preparing for snapper spawning season, which will begin in April.

1 Then May through June, we'll be establishing our most active part,
2 a snapper spawning season. And then at that time, there'll be no
3 snapper fishing or sales messaging that we'll be sharing with our
4 partners that they can share as well on their platforms. And in
5 July snapper spawning season will begin. So, this is a brief
6 outline until July. And of course, there'll be changes as things
7 happen. But this is generally what we'll be speaking about.

8
9 If you could go to the next slide.

10
11 So, we, as Anna mentioned during her presentation, we created a
12 partner event calendar. So, basically, we have a collaborative
13 calendar that all of our partners can add on important dates
14 happening in their own company and organization. That, we will try
15 to synchronize in our posting and add to our calendar as well.
16 That way we're including all that is going on that are happening
17 in both the natural world and the cultural world. This will include
18 screenings, workshops, and live events, and especially our
19 screenings for the films and all the short films.

20
21 If we could go to the next slide. One forward, please.

22
23 So, our newsletter our newsletter is going to be a very important
24 piece of strategy for our campaign. We're highlighting-- you know,
25 we're trying to aim to include messaging that will be able to be
26 shared through our partners' network. Since we're relying so much
27 on organic strategy, our synchronized efforts will be key. So, the
28 most important part of the newsletter is that we will include what
29 we're posting, when we're posting it and where and how people can
30 reshare it. We also will be giving our partners certain materials
31 depending on their country that they can prepare for enforcement
32 and for the season that they can also share on their platforms.

33
34 So, that's going to be a very important part of our strategy. And
35 as we mentioned, you know, we're trying to bridge the gap of also
36 including French in our captions and in our content because our
37 partners have brought to attention that in the past, there's this
38 historic French gap. And with such a regional project, we really
39 want to focus in on bridging that gap. So, while there will be
40 more content in English and Spanish, we're definitely trying to
41 include French to the best of our capabilities.

42
43 And then if you go to the next slide. Two forward, please.

44
45 As Addie mentioned, we will have a Linktree that will connect
46 everyone that follows our pages to our different platforms. So, it
47 will connect you to our digital hub, a donation tip jar, which is
48 an included feature on Linktree, all of our social channels and

1 our newsletter subscription page. I think Linktree is going to be
2 very important, and we'll be sharing that in all of our social
3 platform's bios. The way that it functions differently from a
4 website is that, to reiterate, it is a database for our target
5 audiences and its six years' worth of research. It kind of narrates
6 their needs, and each section has its own narrative. So, we're
7 really excited to share all of this.

8
9 If you could go to the next slide.

10
11 Thank you. Gracias. Merci. Thank you, guys, so much for listening
12 to our presentation. We're so excited to take advantage of all
13 this amazing work that has been done by our partners over the years
14 and be able to share it and really get people interested in the
15 initiative. I don't know if Addie has any last words.

16
17 **ADDIE BRIGGS:** Yeah, you said it really well. We're really, really
18 excited and we appreciate the time you've given us to present.

19
20 **ISABELLA SAPORITO SANTOS:** Yeah. Thank you all.

21
22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Okay. I'm trying to catch up here on
23 the agenda.

24
25 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** Carlos, Phil Karp is ready online. Okay.
26 So, I'm going to move him up and then do the liaisons after that.
27 So, Lionfish Market Presentation.

28
29 **Lionfish Market Presentation on National/International Projects--**
30 **Phil Karp**

31
32 **PHILIP KARP:** Great. Well, thank you very much for--

33
34 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I don't know if I can give you that full 45
35 minutes though. If you can move kind of fast.

36
37 **PHILIP KARP:** Sure. Yeah. Thanks for the opportunity to present to
38 the to the Council. What I'm going to be talking about today is
39 value added products as a tool for dealing with the Atlantic
40 lionfish invasion. I would like to share my screen.

41
42 **CRISTINA OLÁN MARTÍNEZ:** I made you a co-host. So, you have the
43 permission to share your screen.

44
45 **PHILIP KARP:** Thank you, Cristina. Let's see. I'm actually looking
46 for the share screen button. I'm not seeing it right now. So, maybe
47 Cristina, if you could just launch the slides. Great.

1 So, like I said, I'm going to talk about value added products as
2 a tool for management of invasive lionfish.

3
4 Next slide, please.

5
6 I think you're probably all familiar with the problem of invasive
7 lionfish. So, I don't want to spend a lot of time on that, other
8 than to note that this is a problem that has been becoming
9 increasingly an issue across the wider Caribbean.

10
11 Next slide.

12
13 I think you probably have all seen this infographic from NOAA and
14 USGS that tracks the growth of the invasion over time. It's not
15 it's not showing the growth here. So, let's jump to the next
16 slide, please.

17
18 Since over the last two decades, lionfish essentially have become
19 problematical throughout the wider Caribbean and up and down the
20 Atlantic Sea bordering the U.S. and even as far South as the
21 Orinoco River in Brazil.

22
23 Next slide, please.

24
25 In addition to their spread, their population densities in the
26 Atlantic are up to 10 times those found in their native range.
27 Next slide.

28
29 The nature of the problem is again one that I'm sure many of you
30 are familiar with. The fact that they have no native predators
31 that consume juveniles of commercially important fish, as well as
32 biologically important species such as herbivores. They reproduce
33 very rapidly, reach reproductive age at an earlier age than other
34 mesopredators of their size, highly adaptable to a range of
35 environments. Next slide.

36
37 This is just evidence of the degree to which they consume juveniles
38 of native fish. Indiscriminate widely adaptable predators can
39 reduce native fish populations by up to 90 percent in a matter of
40 weeks. Next slide.

41
42 In terms of dealing with this problem, and this is what I want to
43 focus on, there's broad agreement that eradication is impossible,
44 but there's also growing evidence that with regular removals,
45 lionfish populations can be controlled and that native fish
46 populations will recover fairly quickly. The problem is, how do
47 you undertake the regular removals that need to be done on a
48 regular basis and in a financially sustainable way? You know, you

1 can't rely on volunteer divers and lionfish derbies and the like
2 indefinitely.

3
4 Next slide.

5
6 And increasingly, there's a recognition that one of the major
7 solutions and most effective solutions is the development of
8 markets for lionfish products. And particularly the development of
9 a series of vertical markets that can provide sustainable approach
10 to suppress the lionfish populations at the same time providing an
11 alternative income source for fishing communities, particularly
12 women and supporting native stock recovery. Next slide.

13
14 The vertical market that is probably most well-known is that of
15 development of a commercial fishery and lionfish as a seafood item.
16 The idea of eat them to beat them. Next slide.

17
18 This has been something that's been expanding quite a bit
19 throughout the wider Caribbean and was given a boost about five
20 years back when Seafood Watch listed lionfish as best choice, which
21 that in turn gave confidence to supermarkets such as Whole Foods
22 and Publix on the mainland U.S. to start stocking lionfish. Next
23 slide.

24
25 The second vertical market and the one I want to focus on is
26 lionfish jewelry and handicrafts. Next slide.

27
28 Lionfish spines, fins and tails can be dried and preserved in a
29 variety of shapes and colors which results in an attractive
30 material for use in jewelry and handicrafts. Next slide.

31
32 A variety of jewelry items can be produced using lionfish spines.
33 Tails and fins can be produced to make both very high-end type
34 jewelry products as well as sort of basic handicraft product. Next
35 slide.

36
37 Some innovative artists are even using other parts of the fish,
38 such as the pectoral fins or the operculum, and are making other
39 types of products such as Christmas ornaments, or hair stylizers,
40 hat fins and the like. Next slide.

41
42 They're also mixing lionfish fins and spines with other materials
43 such as sea glass, feathers, coconut shell, coconut husk, bottle
44 caps, to make some rather interesting and innovative products.
45 Next slide.

46
47 In terms of where lionfish jewelry is being produced, this is a
48 relatively new, I want to say, industry. Probably only about a

1 decade old. There are currently clusters of production in Belize,
2 Colombia, Grenada, Saint Vincent of the Grenadines, as well as a
3 lot of individual artists across the wider Caribbean, including at
4 least one or two that I'm aware of in Puerto Rico. There's a dive
5 master in Rincon. Taino divers that's involved in lionfish removals
6 and also is producing jewelry. The Reef Environmental Education
7 Foundation sells kits. So, a lot of people are, you know, making
8 jewelry just for their own use. Next slide.

10 Another new value-added product that I won't spend a lot of time
11 on, but which is very exciting, is lionfish leather. There's a
12 company in Florida, Inversa, which focuses on leather from invasive
13 species, including lionfish. And the leather that they are
14 producing is then being used in turn for a variety of products
15 from watch bands to wallets to even tennis shoes. These are very
16 high-end very high-value products. Just to give you an idea, those
17 tennis shoes sell for about \$400. The Lionfish wallet sells for
18 about \$600. So, these are really high-end and high-value products.
19 Going back down to the value chain, the price that this company is
20 paying for Lionfish skins is also quite high, \$6 per skin. Next
21 slide.

23 So, you know, Lionfish jewelry is cool, but how does this address
24 the challenge of managing the lionfish invasion. And I want to
25 give some empirical evidence from a few countries based on a study
26 that I did with some colleagues a while back. Next slide.

28 What we looked at was the degree to which production of lionfish
29 jewelry would incentivize removals. And specifically, we looked at
30 how the sale of fins and spines by fishermen to artists would
31 affect the landed value per fish. What we found is that this
32 actually increased the landed value per fish by up to 40%, which
33 is significant. The reason why this is important is that, as
34 compared to other commercial species that the fishers who typically
35 would remove lionfish, target lionfish are relatively small. The
36 return from a purely seafood standpoint isn't all that high, and
37 there's a risk of losing fishing days due to envenomation. So,
38 fishermen weren't all that excited about targeting lionfish.

40 You had a lot of lionfish being removed by divers, adventure
41 tourism, ecotourism, but as a commercial fish species there are a
42 lot of constraints. But with the development of jewelry and leather
43 markets, you have a value-added product and an additional source
44 of income as fishermen are able to sell the fins and skins. To
45 give you an idea here, you'll see the price, average selling price
46 for fins and tails, anywhere from 25 cents per fin up to \$3 per
47 fin for a really nice pair of pectoral fins.

1 As I mentioned, lionfish skins sell for \$6 per skin. So, you
2 compare that with the average price per fish for whole fish or
3 fillets which is, you know, around \$3 or \$4 it really makes a
4 significant difference. Next slide.

5
6 It also has a significant impact in terms of livelihood
7 contributions for the female artists who are involved. In most of
8 the countries where lionfish jewelry projects have been developed,
9 the artists who are trained are women from coastal communities
10 most of whom previously were not involved in any kind of commercial
11 venture. We found that from a survey of 35 artists across the
12 region, that 82 percent indicated that production and sale of
13 lionfish jewelry substantially or to a great deal, increase their
14 household income. And even more so, nearly all of them reported
15 enhanced self-worth and sense of contribution to their
16 communities. Next slide.

17
18 And in fact, that may well be the biggest contribution that
19 lionfish jewelry production makes in addition, of course, to
20 supporting increased removals, which is the empowerment and new
21 opportunities for women, acquisition of new business skills. In
22 virtually all the cases where lionfish jewelry training has been
23 organized, we've also provided small business skill training,
24 everything from basic cost accounting, to marketing, to customer
25 satisfaction and the like.

26
27 Also, this helps to increase awareness about the threat posed by
28 invasive lionfish because jewelry artists also are trained to know
29 about the invasion and to be able to be ambassadors in a sense for
30 explaining the threat to the reef posed by lionfish and how it can
31 be addressed. Next slide.

32
33 Lionfish jewelry initiatives have found to be most effective when
34 they're included as part of an integrated lionfish management
35 program, including commercialization of lionfish as a seafood
36 item. You know, training and awareness raising. As I mentioned,
37 jewelry artists are trained and become spokespersons around this.
38 The small business skills.

39
40 An example of how the integration works. In Belize, for example,
41 when we trained lionfish jewelry artists, at the same time there
42 were efforts to promote awareness about lionfish to introduce it
43 in restaurants. So, what we did is we provided earrings to servers
44 in the restaurants who also then became spokespersons, raising
45 awareness not only through lionfish as the seafood item, but also
46 using the jewelry they were wearing as an entry point to talk to
47 customers about the invasion.

1 Another thing that we found important is involving fishers in the
2 fin harvesting and preservation so that they see how this aspect
3 of selling fins and skins can raise the return per fish. And then,
4 as I mentioned, the combined with commercialization of skins. Next
5 slide.

6
7 So finally, I just want to reiterate to say that the development
8 of these value-added products can have an important role in
9 managing invasive lionfish. You know, public organizations like
10 MPA managers, fishery and wildlife services really can't do it
11 alone. They don't have sufficient manpower or resources to
12 undertake all the removals that are needed. So, developing these
13 value-added products gets commercial incentives in place to have
14 lionfish removed on a regular basis. The development of these
15 vertical markets not only supports the regular removals, but it
16 also has important ancillary benefits, particularly for women.

17
18 And then finally, what I would say is that particularly in areas
19 where there are concerns about lionfish as a seafood item due to
20 ciguatera, even though the risk of ciguatera with lionfish is--
21 there's some question about it, but in any event, in areas where
22 there is concern about promoting lionfish as a seafood item,
23 jewelry and handicrafts provide an alternative commercial use of
24 lionfish, which can incentivize removals, even if the seafood
25 markets aren't a possibility.

26
27 So, I'll stop with that. Thanks for your attention. I'd be happy
28 to answer any questions.

29 30 31 **Questions/Comments**

32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Do we have questions? Ana.

33
34 **ANA SALCEDA:** It has been a while since we have seen the presence
35 of lionfish in the in the region. Have we learned anything about
36 predators for the lionfish?

37
38 **PHILIP KARP:** So, I mean, there's still quite a bit of uncertainty
39 about predators. There's a lot of anecdotal reports of groupers,
40 particularly nassau groupers, consuming lionfish. Certainly,
41 groupers, moray eels, sharks will all take lionfish off of a spear
42 and they will eat lionfish that's been speared. So, lionfish have
43 been found in the stomachs of nassau groupers and goliath groupers,
44 but what is unclear is whether those lionfish have been speared
45 and then left on the reef and were eaten by the groupers
46 afterwards, or whether they actually were preyed upon.

47
48 In their native range, it's definitely clear that groupers are

1 consuming lionfish. Even octopus have been seen to consume baby
2 lionfish. But in the Western Atlantic, it's still unclear. There
3 have been studies that look at the relationship between biomass of
4 groupers and biomass of lionfish. Some found an inverse
5 relationship, some did not. So, it's unclear.

6
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Alright Jannette is going to talk
8 about Puerto Rico Activities on Lionfish.

9
10 Oh, and thank you much, Mr. Karp.

11
12 **PHILIP KARP:** Sure. My pleasure.

13
14 **Puerto Rico Activities on Lionfish Marketing—Jannette Ramos, Sea**
15 **Grant Puerto Rico**

16
17 **JANNETTE RAMOS-GARCÍA:** Good afternoon, everybody. My name is
18 Jannette Ramos-García. I'm going to talk about our campaign here
19 in Puerto Rico that is called Eat Lionfish! En Español, ¡Come Pez
20 León!

21
22 Next slide.

23
24 Well, what have we done here in Puerto Rico? A long time ago, a
25 proposal was submitted to the Caribbean Fisheries Management
26 Council for the purchase of 20 zookeepers and Hawaiian slings to
27 be given to commercial fishermen. Those were delivered through the
28 island. But also, we trained the fishermen on how to cut the spines
29 and how to maneuver the fish safely. We educated them so they learn
30 how to handle injuries with the thorns, and to give the correct
31 information to the doctors if they have to go to the fisherman.
32 Next slide.

33
34 Also, we carry demonstrations showing what was in the stomach
35 contents of the lions so that the public understand the danger
36 they represent for species of commercial interest. Proxima.

37
38 We created a cookbook with recipes that are easy to reproduce at
39 home with simple ingredients. So, if I'm going to make arepas with
40 lionfish, and that is my recipe. I use what I have at home. It is
41 simple, very simple recipes so you can reproduce them. Next slide.

42
43 So, in the meantime we also presented lionfish to different chefs
44 around the island. Right now, there are over 25 restaurants selling
45 lionfish. Lionfish in every restaurant is a hit. I have many, many
46 more restaurants calling me, asking for lionfish for their
47 restaurants. We offer samples of lionfish ceviche in different
48 activities so that the consuming public knows the quality of the

1 meat. That's very important for us because that's the way that
2 people knows that it is a safe meat to eat. And also, that it's
3 very rich.
4
5 We created the Eat Lionfish Festival. It has been held three times.
6 This year we're planning to hold it again during the month of
7 September.
8
9 Let's wait a second. That's in a restaurant in Cabo Rojo, that
10 one. The other one, Christina. The ceviche, that was in the Banco
11 Popular in San Juan y la Milla de Oro. Next slide.
12
13 The Lionfish Festival is being held in Guayanilla, in the
14 municipality of Guayanilla. We have the Hub of Michelle Schärer,
15 Dr. Hector Ruiz, the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council, the
16 Municipality of Guayanilla, and also commercial fishermen and
17 other people and the community of Guayanilla, because that's held
18 around La Playa, el sector La Playa. Next slide.
19
20 Those are different instances of the Lionfish Festival in
21 Guayanilla. In the first picture, you can see Dr. Chelsea Harms.
22 Under here is a chef. I don't know the name, in Spanish is
23 'marioneta,' in English puppet. In the middle is a puppet made by
24 an artisan, and demonstrations. In the other Pablo. Pablo from Las
25 Marías. Next slide.
26
27 And right now, I want to talk about what we are doing as well here.
28 One of the efforts that has brought extraordinary fruits, came
29 from the hand of this young artisan named, Gloria Albino Caraballo.
30 I know her by Lola Irie. I've known her since she was a little
31 girl. So, I spoke to her once and I asked, "Are you interested in
32 doing jewelry with the lionfish spines?" And she was like, "Oh, of
33 course."
34
35 Have you seen the table with the art that she brought with her?
36 You have to go there. Also, her husband is a carver and part of
37 his work is there as well. She is here with us today all day with
38 her work along and with her husband who creates wood carvings.
39 Today I want to introduce her and have her talk a little bit about
40 her work with the lionfish spines. Just a little bit because we
41 don't have time.
42
43 **GLORIA ALBINO CARABALLO:** Okay. Thank you. Well, good evening,
44 everybody. My name is Gloria Albino. I'm from the coastal town of
45 Cabo Rojo. So, there's a lot of beaches in my town. We are part of
46 the beach culture. I have been working with lionfish fins since
47 the year 2016. With this initiative of ¡Come Pez León! and my long-
48 time friend I have been able to connect with other fishermen in my

1 area, so I have the fins accessible to me.

2
3 By trial and error, I have been working with it and perfecting the
4 art. I am working right now with epoxy resin as a way of preserving
5 the fins. I also work with other sea materials like sea urchin
6 skeletons, sand, seashells, etcetera, a lot of things. But the
7 lionfish is my main, like, the wow factor. And right now, I am
8 certified with the lionfish fin as the 'renglón' the material as
9 an artisan here in Puerto Rico and I am the only one holding that
10 title right now. So, I'm certified by the state, working with
11 Lionfish fins. Nice to meet you everybody. Thank you.

12
13 **JANNETTE RAMOS-GARCÍA:** Thank you. So, we have finished with the
14 ¡Come Pez León!

15 16 Questions/Comments

17
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Jannette. Vanessa?

19
20 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez for
21 the record. I just want to say congratulations to Jannette, because
22 I know the hard work that you have been doing also with the
23 commercial sector and helping them with the equipment and the
24 training. This book is very good. I hope that we could have more
25 hard copies to spread around the fish markets in the area.

26
27 Two issues that are coming up right now with the commercial sector.
28 One, is the price. Most of the commercial fishermen only catch the
29 lionfish, especially in the West, if it's an order because it's
30 paying like five dollars per pound in the fish market. Sometimes
31 if it's directly to a restaurant, then they pay more. But, of
32 course, especially for our divers that are deep diving it's very
33 difficult for them to handle the zookeeper at that area. Sometimes
34 they get pricked with spines, and for them it's a very hard way.

35
36 So, it's not that they are not haunting them. Many of them, if
37 they see small areas with them, they just prefer to kill them and
38 leave them in there. But yes, we have information as well, for the
39 record, that the goliath and nassau grouper that we have in the
40 West area, they are eating the lionfish alive. Of course, if the
41 divers kill them, usually, the reef sharks and the sharks around
42 come and eat the lionfish.

43
44 So, there are a couple of ways that we are working and helping
45 with that, but we know that there's a lot of work that has to be
46 done, especially by letting the community understand that the fish
47 is a good fish, that we should try it. Once you try it, you will
48 continue consuming it making it more commercial in our fish

1 markets. Thanks.

2
3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. All right. We're going to go back a
4 little on the agenda to finish off the liaison reports. We have
5 for Saint Croix, Liandry De La Cruz. Okay. Greaux first.

6
7 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Nicole, are you going to do your own? No, because
8 you can use this mic here and she can help you. This mic is for
9 the presentation.

10
11 **CFMC Liaison Officers Reports**
12 **St. Thomas/St. John, U.S.V.I.— Nicole Greaux**
13

14 **NICOLE GREAux:** Good afternoon, everyone. I am Nicole Greaux, the
15 Fisheries Liaison through the Division of Fish and Wildlife for
16 Outreach and Education.

17
18 Next slide, please. Próximo, por favor. Gracias.

19
20 So, some of the fishing community activities that I have done
21 within the last quarter are pretty important and definitely very,
22 very meaningful. Conversations and emails with assisting fishers
23 who sell at the Joseph Bryan Fish Market. That is one of our fish
24 markets that are in the middle of town being able to have a readily
25 available supply of water. Not only for sanitation, but also for
26 the cleaning of the fish themselves. That has been something that's
27 been an ongoing struggle. The fishermen who utilize that one
28 particular fish market have reached out to me to try to see how we
29 can manage to get them a readily available and a consistent supply
30 of water.

31
32 Traveling to Saint John to return pickup forms for a fishing
33 license and also to gather catch reports. So, the island of Saint
34 John, unfortunately, does not have any sectors that are available
35 to the fishermen over there on a weekly basis. So, when they hear
36 that I'm coming over there to speak to a fisher or if I have any
37 errands to run on behalf of, Fish and Wildlife, they usually meet
38 me at the dock or they set up appointments with me so that I can
39 assist them with their registration forms, bringing them back and
40 forth with where the main offices are, because a lot of the offices
41 like agriculture and licensing do not have the ability to do what
42 the fishermen need in able to obtain their registration forms. So,
43 this summer has been very busy for me within that.

44
45 Liaising with the Office of the Administrator with Fishers, whose
46 dry landed boats are being cited because of where they are placed.
47 So, right now, the Virgin Islands is doing a clean-up campaign
48 where they would like to remove anything, whether it's a boat or

1 a vehicle, a motorcycle, that is on what is considered the
2 government highway system, and a lot of these fishers have their
3 boats either on trailers or on platforms on the outside of their
4 properties or on friends properties, and they were in danger of
5 having these boats towed or taken to the landfill. So, when the
6 administrator's office puts a ticket or a citation, or they call
7 the fishers for removal of these boats, they have a short window
8 of time before that boat is taken to the landfill. So, once it is
9 cited and they cannot get in touch with these fishers that have
10 these boats, they do take them away.

11
12 So, that was communication between the particular office of the
13 administrator and the fishermen directly. And also, involving the
14 division of enforcement with assisting the enforcement officers to
15 please let the fishermen know, this is something that is not being
16 done under the Division of Enforcement or the Department of
17 Enforcement, but it's being done through the Administrator's
18 Office because that was a main concern with a lot of the fishers.

19
20 The last thing is the Responsible Fisher Certification Program.
21 That has been the most fun. This is something that we are doing
22 through the Reef Responsible Program, and it is a new initiative
23 to help fishers both recreational and commercial understand that
24 it is not only your duty, but it's also something that you need to
25 do is be a responsible fisher because you are contributing to the
26 removal of these resources from the ocean and we want to make sure
27 that whether you're recreational, commercial, you do so as
28 responsible as possible.

29
30 Okay. Next slide, please.

31
32 Now on to the fun stuff. This is the best part of my job as a
33 fisheries liaison is being able to interact with the public in
34 this particular capacity. So, speaking with fishers and giving
35 them updates on any changes or any grant availabilities or any
36 programs that are up and coming is one of the things that I love
37 enjoying. And I love and I enjoy doing the best. Directing fishers
38 to things like the NOAA websites where they can find information,
39 or the meat of information is also something that I enjoy doing.

40
41 The reef responsible presentations on how to become a responsible
42 fisher. This is something that I did about three weeks ago. It was
43 a request from a dive club. And right there, that is from las Islas
44 Virgenes, "Los Peces de las Islas Virgenes de Puerto Rico" poster,
45 which was given out to two of the members to put in their offices.
46 So, thank you very much. It's such a beautiful poster and it was
47 very good to utilize that poster to help them identify fish
48 species. They also had to take a quiz. And they had information

1 given to them as well for reef responsible fishers and how to be
2 able to identify good fish and fish that you might probably want
3 to eat less of as far as recreational catch. So, I'm very proud of
4 being able to do that.

5
6 And then something else that's very close to my heart. Next slide,
7 please.

8
9 And this is interacting with children. So, before I start with the
10 two groups that are off there on the left, those are projects and
11 pictures that the kids from the summer camp and also the school
12 group that I took out for the tour, sent to me. The far right,
13 that is a puffer fish and it's supposed to be a snapper in a
14 fisherman's net. And these are things that were done through our
15 little projects and activities that we did and also talks that we
16 had. The blue, very colorful one is when I asked them to create
17 your own environment of an ocean habitat, one of the groups did
18 that particular fishbowl, and those are all of the creatures that
19 they think would be perfect to have in a reef habitat. So that was
20 pretty cool.

21
22 At the very top left-hand side, that is the ELS class from the
23 Lockhart Elementary School. These Children all have special needs.
24 A lot of them are autistic, and this was mostly done for the
25 parents than the Children. So, teaching the parents that showing
26 the children fish, letting them have a chance to see the different
27 shapes and sizes and also the textures of the touch pool. We
28 utilized our Marine Park for this particular program to get the
29 kids that are touch sensitive involved in doing things like picking
30 up sea stars, touching the sand, being able to see the things that
31 move in the water are not necessarily dangerous, so they won't
32 harm you. Having them put their hands in the water while different
33 creatures crawled across them just to get them more comfortable
34 with being in the water and in the ocean.

35
36 A lot of these Children do like to float, and we thought that
37 giving them a chance to view the ocean underworld would quiet their
38 very busy, chaotic mind. And most of the Children that we took on
39 this trip, doing so in that particular building there, really
40 calmed and soothed them down. So, the marine environment does have
41 an advantage to a lot of these children that were in the ELS class.

42
43 Below them is the Jane E. Tuitt school. That was a class right
44 before summer. We did a Mangroves to Open Ocean Habitat Tour. We
45 started out in the mangroves that were available at Coral World
46 and then after that particular tour and program, that whole class
47 during the summer went on a walking tour of a real-life, real-time
48 mangrove habitat at Mandal Bay. So, it's very important to get

1 these children from early where they learn about the marine
2 environment and how important not only the mangroves are, but how
3 important their contribution to keeping them clean and healthy is
4 as well.

5
6 Next slide, please.

7
8 The Youth Ocean Explorer Summer Camp. This is a camp that's done
9 by scholarship funding, and it is also a camp that is done with
10 the V.I. Epscor, VMAS, and the University of the Virgin Islands.
11 What you're seeing here is a fishing clinic and fish ID program
12 that I helped conduct with collaboration of the Youth Ocean
13 Explorers Clinic. This is something that's really cool. It teaches
14 the children not only fish ID, but also the different
15 characteristics of the fish and how they can directly and correctly
16 identify different fish in the same species by using just really
17 telltale signs on gobies and blennies and the inshore snappers.

18
19 That's me doing a hook and line rigging for the kids. So, we teach
20 them how to set up the lines, what kind of hooks to use, how to
21 bait and cast, but then we make them identify the fish as they
22 bring them in and whether the fish stays inshore, or does that
23 particular fish also go out into the open ocean, which was really
24 cool.

25
26 I would like to thank both the Council, definitely Jannette and
27 Sea Grant and the Division of Fish and Wildlife for having
28 materials available for me to take to this particular event. So,
29 the children had a lot of takeaways to go with them as well as
30 really important information from the Council, as well as from
31 Reef Responsible.

32
33 Last slide, please. And that concludes my report. Thank you very
34 much.

35 Questions/Comments

36
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Nicole. Any questions for Nicole?
38 Julian?

39
40 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** It's not a question, but it's actually a
41 compliment. Thank you for a great presentation and for all the
42 hard work that you've been trying to do in the U.S.V.I., especially
43 the Saint Thomas/Saint John district. One of the things that was
44 very touching here is the time that you took to deal with the
45 autistic kids. I must highlight, between myself and my association,
46 we are very thankful for you taking the time and spending it with
47 the kids because that's very important with their disability
48 already, because one of them is one of my good friends son. So,

1 you know, really thank you and on behalf of the STFA for the hard
2 work that you've been doing and continue to do a good job.

3
4 **NICOLE GREAUX:** Thank you very much, Mr. Magras.

5
6 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel?

7
8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Nicole. You don't have to say, but we are going
9 to embark into a project with Nicole and Liandry regarding outreach
10 and education following the presentation that she put together.
11 So, Angie, you and myself, we need to talk a little bit more to
12 use the funding for that project. It's a follow up to the outreach
13 and education program that we have with the liaison officers for
14 the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. So, we'll talk soon.

15
16 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Liandry.

17
18 **St. Croix, U.S.V.I.—Liandry De La Cruz**

19
20 **LIANDRY A. DE LA CRUZ:** Afternoon, buenas, ladies and gentlemen.
21 I am Liandry De La Cruz. I'm the port sampler and fisheries liaison
22 on Saint Croix's [inaudible] Division. I'm going to give my report
23 on the things that I've been doing. I'd like everybody to know
24 that I haven't been here that long. I've been here for like a
25 couple months, but I still have had the opportunity to work at a
26 lot of events and do a lot of things, and I've learned a lot so
27 far.

28
29 Next slide, please.

30
31 So, I'd like to start with the events and activities that I've
32 been doing. The first thing that directly jumped into as soon as
33 I started working was the Lionfish Derby. It was super fun, because
34 I got to be one of the weight masters. I not only worked a lot
35 with recreational and commercial fishers because, you know, on a
36 day to day basis, I work mainly with commercial fishers. So, I got
37 to meet, you know, a lot of people in our community wives,
38 families, kids. I was placed at Altona Lagoon. I was learning most
39 of the things that I already do on a day-to-day basis and that is
40 taking data, and learning how to handle the fish, and etc.

41
42 The next thing was the Annual Fisher Pre-Registration meeting. I
43 was put at the sign-up table and I got to meet a lot of them as
44 they came in and dealing with them, whether they were English or
45 Spanish speakers, and, you know, just personally conversing with
46 them. It went super-fast, but it was just like, you know, they
47 kept coming in and in. But it was super cool because I went from
48 table to table, I floated around a couple times, and I assisted

1 them as they came in. I introduced myself and once they named me
2 as their new port sampler and liaison a lot of them took it really
3 well and they weren't afraid to come and ask me questions and talk
4 to me and you know voice their opinions. Whatever they had to say
5 they came, and they said it and that's basically the basis that
6 you develop in a relationship with them.

7
8 The next thing was the Annual Fisher Registration. By then, I had
9 done a couple port samplings, one that you can see in the picture.
10 And so, a lot of them had already known me. But it was good because
11 I developed an actual foundation with them because I took the time
12 to learn about the process that they take to either get their new
13 licenses or renew their licenses so I could basically closely tend
14 to them even before they came in the building. Because a lot of
15 them was elderly. A lot of them didn't know how to read or write.
16 A lot of them didn't know how to, you know, speak English. And I
17 tended to their needs the best I could, and they value that. They
18 appreciate that. They take all of that into consideration.

19
20 And the next thing was the Monthly FAC Meeting that I attended to.
21 I do my best to attend to. I do my best to learn about and take in
22 a lot of information, but it's things that I learn. And I take in
23 because that's how I inform the fishermen that I work with. That's
24 how I teach myself, and that's how I continue to move forward when
25 it comes to learning about what it means to be in fisheries.

26
27 And the last thing was personally conversing with and meeting the
28 fishers, which I say a lot because it's really important when it
29 comes to developing a kind of relationship with them. I'm just
30 taking the time to get to know them and them to know me.

31
32 So, can we move to the next slide, please?

33
34 Yes. So, my current endeavors right now, the things that I'm
35 working with presently. The first thing was reviving the Reef
36 Responsible Program as a liaison, which was one of the first things
37 that they introduced to me, and I found really important. But I
38 also noticed that it was a bit stagnant over the years because of
39 how busy we've been with other projects. But one of the biggest
40 things for me was not only, you know, calling restaurants, calling
41 fishermen, getting the word out there and working at different
42 events, with the different materials that we have, but it's also
43 about expanding our audience, well, at least for me, to our
44 children and overall community. Because while the sole purpose was
45 to connect those restaurants and connect those fishermen to be
46 able to work together towards the goal of sustaining our reefs,
47 it's about having the potential to begin educating our kids.

1 The reality of it is that we live on an island. This is the type
2 of life we live, and these are the things that we have to
3 understand. And when you implement those understandings on our
4 education, into their hearts, their minds, they grow up and they
5 continue forward. They talk to their parents, their families. Their
6 kids, when they grow up, they become fishermen themselves and they
7 continue teaching that, because they have those understandings
8 already implemented into them.

9
10 Now the next thing was catering more to our Hispanic demographic
11 in every way possible. That means having a translator at every
12 event, translating the flyers, the presentations, because most of
13 our public and most of our community, they're Spanish speakers.
14 You know, me and all, my own dad is a person who doesn't understand
15 English fully and you have to be able to take the time to level
16 with them and have them understand the things we do. Because I
17 noticed that a lot of the events that we went to, a lot of them
18 were disinterested simply because they couldn't understand what we
19 were saying or what we were doing. But once you took the time to
20 explain it to them and speak in their language, you know, something
21 as simple as that, is the things that they value the most. And all
22 of this plays a part in building those solid relationships with
23 them all the time.

24
25 Can we move to the next slide? Thanks.

26
27 And the last thing I want to talk about are present improvements
28 for future successes. And these are the things that I've noticed
29 and taken into consideration, whether by observing or hearing those
30 who actively voice their opinions to me, whether it's out in a
31 field or at these different events. And aside from everything to
32 do with science and logistics we have to take into consideration
33 that this, the fishing community in itself is a family. And it's
34 based upon a culture and based upon traditions that we uphold. And
35 it's a matter of taking these values, whether it's a simple three
36 words, and being able to implement them within the dynamic of our
37 agencies and the way that we present this service to our fishermen.

38
39 The first thing being communication. And that's being able to speak
40 with them, not only to hear them, but to listen to them. And once
41 we both can understand and value each other's perspectives, we
42 could move forward to develop those solutions that we all take the
43 time to discuss on our own, to be able to discuss it with them as
44 well, and understand each other, and that's how we move forward
45 into their concerns. Caring about their concerns, because at the
46 end of the day, this is their livelihood. Their children, their
47 families that we're affecting.

1 You know, here at this conference, a lot of us are fishers, have
2 families that are fishers, are commercial or recreational and we
3 value and essentialize those opinions, and I've seen that in the
4 way that we discuss different issues. And doing that, that's how
5 we basically move forward when it comes to putting those opinions
6 and perspectives first. Because that's where we get professional
7 experience from.

8
9 And the last thing being connection. Connection because whether
10 it's in events or community meetings that we create or take the
11 time to create, once we begin to understand that we have all the
12 same goals together, to save fisheries, to save our businesses,
13 and to work together better to be able to contribute, we could
14 start contributing as a whole to that cause. And that's basically
15 connecting governments and the communities as one big system.

16
17 I'd like to also mention something that was told to me yesterday
18 by Commissioner Oriol, he's not here, but he also told me that
19 this industry is something that's based on trust. And that's one
20 of the things that I've taken as my responsibility as a liaison to
21 build that trust and to continue advancing forward with the work
22 that we're doing by connecting as much as we can with our fishing
23 communities. Thank you for listening. That's the next slide.

24 25 **Questions/Comments**

26
27 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Liandry.

28
29 **LIANDRY A. DE LA CRUZ:** Thank you.

30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Julian.

32
33 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** I want to say welcome aboard. I loved, loved your
34 presentation and the energy that you have put into it because Saint
35 Croix has been lacking this for a long time. Saint Croix Fishers
36 need someone that they trust. That's the key word. That they can
37 communicate with, and feel comfortable with because they have a
38 lot of catching up to do.

39
40 I hope you can continue for a very, very long time with the help
41 of a leader and the Council. And everyone in this room, don't be
42 afraid to call any one of us to help you. I'm here, Gerson is here,
43 we're all here, we're all in the boat together, but I know this
44 was long coming. Excellent presentation and keep up the good work.
45 Thank you.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. I have Wilson Santiago.

Puerto Rico—Wilson Santiago

WILSON SANTIAGO: Yes. Hello everyone, good afternoon. Wilson Santiago for the record. I am the Puerto Rico Fisheries Liaison. I'm going to present my report of the 2023 activities and the next steps as liaison. Continue to the other.

Okay, in 2023 as a liaison, I had a participation on coordinating and bringing the Educational Program for Commercial Fishers. This year we have been in three municipalities including Vieques, Dorado, and Naguabo. Two of them are in the East Coast, and Dorado is in the North. We are going to continue coordinating more around the island.

We have been supporting Helena Antoun with the Educational Program for Recreational Fishers. We started in person this year. Weekly, with Cristina Olán, and other educational materials that they bring to me, we have a broadcast list in the in WhatsApp app. We have a broadcast list where we have like 400, maybe, contacts of commercial fishers, and recreational fishers too. So, we send weekly advertisement, educational materials, meetings, everything that is regarding the fisheries in Puerto Rico.

We continue supporting the fisheries with issues and information via mobile and in person. In person I visited the fishing villages around the island. And this year I have been in partnership with Jannette Ramos from Sea Grant. We have been around the island visiting almost all fishing villages. Last week we were in Vieques. The only municipality that we haven't visited is Culebra, but in September there are plans to go there and give an educational program over there. On those visits, we take educational materials, like the poster from the CFMC, educational material from Sea Grant, DNER educational materials. In those visits, we just go and give all of the educational materials to the fishers and fishing communities.

We evaluate the state of fishing community, fishing villages. That is the same that I was talking about, the visits to the fishing villages. We participate in a focal group as a liaison with students from UPR in Mayagüez.

We have been in a conservatory with the fishers from Dorado Fishing Village. This conservatory was before the PEPCO program, so it was a meeting with the mayor of Dorado and the Department of Agriculture. We were there fixing issues and orienting the fishing community, recreational and commercials.

We are also in the steering committee of the MREP Puerto Rico.

1 That will be soon, maybe next week, I think. We have continued
2 helping them. We participate in the Caribbean Branch Spatial Data
3 Development Workshop. We also participate in a seaweed field that
4 is going to be a pilot project in Parguera. So, we go to these
5 workshops because all these topics we bring them to the fishing
6 communities. And an educational table at the Festival del Pescado
7 at Puerto Real Cabo Rojo with educational material from the Council
8 and Sea Grant.

9
10 Next, please.

11
12 Okay, for the PEPCO and the PEPR program. We call it PEPR. Yeah,
13 for recreational fishers and commercial fishers. Like I said for
14 the commercial we attend Dorado, Naguabo and Vieques. For the
15 recreational, the first one was in Rio Grande. And the second one
16 was in Dorado. In Dorado we mixed the commercial and recreational
17 fishers. We mix both presentations. Helena Antoun was with me that
18 day. So, in the laws, regulation, federal and state, like, maybe
19 some of them are the same, so we mix them, and we attended the
20 recreational and commercial at Dorado. Okay.

21
22 Next one, please.

23
24 So, my next steps as a liaison. I will continue supporting Helena
25 Antoun with the Recreational Fisher Program. Continue the PEPCO
26 program in different municipalities. Like I said, in September I
27 am starting to coordinate one in Culebra. That is the next
28 municipality that we are going to attend. And with all of these
29 workshops that I've been attending to I'm bringing new topics to
30 create a second part of the PEPCO program.

31
32 I will continue supporting the Council, DNER, and other agencies
33 regarding the communication with the fishing communities or their
34 issues so we can canalize through me. So, continue educating in
35 the process of license, statistics, reports, state laws, and
36 federal laws to maintain the responsibility in the management
37 agency.

38
39 Okay, So, participate in workshops for learning new topics, like
40 I said, to bring them to the communities. We're going to have to
41 attend more in the second part of the educational program. We will
42 continue supporting fishers to resolve the issues with the DNER
43 license and permits. I think maybe with my partner Daniel Matos in
44 the statistic program, me and my partners, we are always getting
45 calls from the fishers, so we canalize their issues through
46 ourselves.

47
48 And bring educational materials and posters to fishing

1 communities. Communicate with them to know where we can do better
2 regarding the outreach and education of fisheries communities.
3 Whenever we go to a fishing community, we communicate with the
4 fishers, their families, everyone that participates in all the
5 process, so everything that they tell us, any issue, we try to
6 help them. And if not, we find a solution for them. Okay?

7
8 Next one, please.
9

10 So, issues and concerns and participation from fishers. The queen
11 snapper and cardinal snapper state permit, that's been an issue
12 for a couple of years. Maybe this year that is going to get fix.
13 Puerto Rico DNER commercial fishing license and permit. Like I
14 said, at the statistic program and me as a liaison, we work
15 together to help them with everything with the state license and
16 permits. Continue our orientation in Electronic Statistic Reports,
17 how to use it. We have made a guide for new fishers or fishers
18 that were accustomed to file it in paper. So, they're going to
19 change the technology in the phone with the app, so we made a guide
20 and we always orient them how to use it.

21
22 Okay. Fishers, via feedback that they sent from the WhatsApp
23 broadcast list are more interested in participating in meetings
24 and bringing comments. In the WhatsApp broadcast list, every time
25 I send them an educational material, a meeting, they always tell
26 me, "Oh, thank you. Where is it going to be? can I--." Every time
27 I post I get very good feedback, and I think that in the meetings
28 like the CFMC, the DAP meeting, the OEAP meeting, we have gotten
29 more participation of the fishers. Right now, there are some of
30 them connected. This morning Cristina sent me the YouTube link for
31 this meeting and right now, I was writing with one of them.

32
33 An issue we have with that right now is, I was writing with a
34 fisher from the North and he said that in YouTube the meeting is
35 only transmitted in English so I had to guide him via text, so I
36 could help him connect to Zoom since in Zoom they have the
37 translation. So, maybe later we can make something different for
38 the Spanish speaker fishers. That will be all for me. Any
39 questions?

40 41 **Questions/Comments** 42

43 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Wilson. Alida?
44

45 **ALIDA ORTIZ SOTOMAYOR:** I do not have a question. I just feel
46 extremely happy. I'm very proud of the work that the liaisons are
47 doing. That's the way we can get the information, what I learned,
48 what you learned, to all the communities. And also, it's probably

1 the only way that we can get the real needs that the community
2 has, because if we wait for the newspapers or for the what the
3 local government is going to tell us, it doesn't work very much.
4 I get more information from Wilson about what's going on in
5 fisheries around Puerto Rico than what I get from the official
6 government.

7
8 So, thank you so much. Without your help, we would not be able to
9 do any outreach and much less education. So, I'm glad you were
10 here.

11
12 **WILSON SANTIAGO:** Thank you, Alida. I want to congratulate my
13 counterparts in the U.S.V.I. too.

14
15 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Wilson. Okay. Now we're going to go
16 to EEJ, NOAA's fishery equity and environmental justice strategy.
17 That's María.

18
19 **NOAA Fisheries' Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Strategy**
20 **Update—NOAA Fisheries**
21

22 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Good afternoon. This is María López. This is
23 going to be really quick so we can move on. So, this is just
24 additional information about the efforts that are ongoing to engage
25 communities in helping NOAA Fisheries to advance the national
26 equity environmental justice goals and objectives through the
27 development of the Southeast Equity and Environmental Justice
28 Implementation Plan.

29
30 NOAA Fisheries published a public request for information in the
31 Federal Register on July 21st. And we want to thank Cristina for
32 her efforts to widely publicize that through social media. The
33 comment period in that request for information will be open all
34 the way until September 30th and I encourage everybody interested
35 to submit their ideas and suggestions to the link that we're
36 providing here. This is also included in your briefing books.

37
38 We will also take verbal comments during a virtual webinar on
39 August 29. The webinar will be conducted in English, Spanish, and
40 Vietnamese. So, we hope to have a good turnout there and to get a
41 lot of helpful information. So, please mark your calendars. And
42 finally, the dates of the focus group meetings that we have been
43 discussing are approaching soon and we're also looking forward to
44 that opportunity to hear from community members in those smaller
45 group forums.

46
47 As you know the purpose of the focus group meeting is to gather
48 the participants perceptions, experiences, and expectations

1 related to the work that NOAA Fisheries is conducting in the
2 Caribbean region so that we can improve the delivery of the
3 products and services that are prepared for the communities.

4
5 The Council liaisons and the Council's OEAP staff has been
6 instrumental in helping us to identify the dates, the locations
7 and the participants for those meetings. And we're super grateful
8 to them and to the Council staff for the tremendous amount of help
9 and expertise that they have dedicated to this work to date.

10
11 So, after those focus groups are completed and the public comment
12 period closes on September 30th, we will begin drafting our regional
13 implementation plan, which is due to headquarters at by the end of
14 this year. So, we intend to continue working with the Council
15 through that process.

16
17 So, that's all. This is some information of how you can comment
18 and also the virtual listening section for August 29. And then
19 those are the days for the six focus groups that are going to be
20 conducted next week and then in the U.S. Virgin Islands in
21 September. These focus groups are very small groups of
22 participants. And then as I said the final implementation plan is
23 going to be due January. So, this is a great opportunity for
24 everybody to comment and see how we can improve our services to
25 our community. Thank you.

26 27 **Questions/Comments**

28
29 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, María. The focus group and community
30 members, is that virtual or is that in person?

31
32 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** So, the focus groups are by invitation and
33 they're going to be in person. Yeah. So, we're working on setting
34 those up. We have some that are going to be happening next week
35 and the others are going to be happening in the U.S. Virgin Islands
36 in September.

37
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Any questions for María on EEJ? Okay,
39 hearing none, we're going to go to Protected Resources Update on
40 Island-Based Fishery Management Plan Biological Opinion and
41 Endangered Species Act Rules. Jennifer Lee.

42 43 **Protected Resources Updates on the Island-Based Fishery** 44 **Management Plans Biological Opinion and Endangered Species Act** 45 **Rules— Jennifer Lee, NOAA Fisheries**

46
47 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** ¿Estamos ready, Cristina?
48

1 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Jenny, can you hear us? We cannot hear
2 you.

3
4 **JENNIFER LEE:** Can you hear me now?

5
6 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Okay. Can you increase the volume of
7 your voice?

8
9 **JENNIFER LEE:** Is that better? Can you hear me now?

10
11 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Hi Jennifer, this is Liajay. We hear you,
12 but you sound very far, so we are doing some audio tests on our
13 side.

14
15 **JENNIFER LEE:** Okay, I'm so sorry. I'll try to have my sound up
16 really loud. Okay, we hear you better now.

17
18 **LIAJAY RIVERA GARCÍA:** Oh, good. All right. Well, thank you for
19 having me and sorry for the tech delays. I am here to present to
20 you an overview of the island based biological opinion and
21 incidental take statement.

22
23 **JENNIFER LEE:** I was going to present this in April but we ran out
24 of time. So, thank you for having the time today and next slide.

25
26 So, just really quick, because I know not everyone has the same
27 familiarity in terms of what is a biological opinion. It is the
28 end product of a formal Section 7 consultation, which is a
29 documented exchange of information on potential impacts on listed
30 species. A biological opinion summarizes the effects of federal
31 action on ESA listed species. It identifies the conclusion of
32 whether or not it's likely to jeopardize or result in adverse or
33 destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat, and it
34 represents the opinion of NOAA Fisheries and considers technical,
35 legal, and policy issues relative to the proposed action.

36
37 So, NOAA Fisheries has dual responsibility as both the action
38 agency under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the consulting agency
39 under the ESA. And we recognize Councils have a unique role in
40 shaping our action and the importance of sharing information on
41 consultations with you.

42
43 In this case, technically, the Sustainable Fisheries serves as the
44 action agency and Protected Resources as a consulting agency.

45
46 Next slide.

47
48 So, these are just the components of the biological opinion. They

1 are actually the components of all of our biological opinions, and
2 it just walks through essentially like a book, the setting, you
3 know, where it occurs and the action, the characters being, the
4 status of the species and critical habitat. It goes through other
5 activities in the area, then gets down into the effects of the
6 particular action summing it all up and looking at population level
7 effects of destruction of adverse modification. And makes a
8 conclusion and then it moves into the incidental take statement
9 where we specify the authorized take as well as requirements
10 related to the consultation.

11
12 Next slide.

13
14 This document represents our opinion on the effects of approving
15 and implementing the Puerto Rico Fishery Management Plan, the Saint
16 Thomas and Saint John FMP and the Saint Croix FMP. It evaluates
17 all three of those actions on threatened and endangered species
18 and designated critical habitat.

19
20 The opinion batches the consultations together. They are all
21 separate federal actions. However, they are related as each is
22 derived from the former species-based plans across the Caribbean
23 EEZ. And the types of gear and anticipated impacts are similar
24 across FMPs. So, for consultation efficiency and comprehension we
25 put it all together and the bio-op looks at all three plans.

26
27 Next slide.

28
29 Here you can see just what the status of the species are that are
30 or the action areas in this case. And it also identifies-- I've
31 underlined the species that are likely to be adversely affected.
32 That are analyzed more in depth in the biological opinion.

33
34 Next slide.

35
36 And here, same thing. These are the critical habitats in the action
37 areas. And you can see that staghorn and elkhorn corals have
38 critical habitat in the action area that may be adversely affected
39 and so it is analyzed in depth in the consultation.

40
41 Next slide, please.

42
43 So, here in the effects from the proposed actions, this is where
44 we look at the effects in terms of the number of individuals and
45 associated captures and mortalities with the best available
46 information. We anticipated adverse effects stem from capture and
47 entanglement in fishing gear or physical impacts from that gear
48 that could adversely affect them.

1
2 We also anticipate adverse effects from vessel activity. In that
3 case it's specific to boat strikes on sea turtles, and then looking
4 at anchoring effects on corals in Acropora critical habitat. Then
5 we also consider adverse effects stemming from the harvest of
6 herbivorous reef fish, and that pertains to the Acropora critical
7 habitat in the ESA listed coral species only.

8
9 We estimate the number and the amount of each species that's likely
10 to be incidentally affected or affected in the future, and then
11 the amount of Acropora critical habitat likely to be affected. And
12 we also evaluated effects relating to the dynamics of the
13 herbivorous fish, algae, and coral and Acropora critical habitat.

14
15 Next slide.

16
17 Alright. So, here you can see our data limitations and sources.
18 While the information in the biological opinion is best on the
19 best available science and commercial information, we do
20 acknowledge that we have lots of data limitations throughout the
21 document. Our primary data sources, though, for estimating
22 interactions for sea turtles focused on strandings, the number of
23 fishing trips for our vessel strike analyses. For ESA-listed fish,
24 we looked at 2012-2018 commercial and recreational landings
25 records. And then for corals we evaluated the number of-- it was
26 based on the number of traps of fish and lobster in federal waters,
27 the average size of those traps, and the percentage of those traps
28 reported to be used in coral or hard bottom areas, and then the
29 total area of coral cover.

30
31 Next slide.

32
33 Ultimately, we take those individual effects on everything, and we
34 then, in the Jeopardy and Structural Adverse Modification
35 Analyses, that's where we're looking at population level
36 responses. There are potential population level responses to the
37 effects of the action and whether those, when we consider it in
38 the context of the status of the species, the baseline, cumulative
39 effects are likely to jeopardize their continued existence in the
40 wild or result in that destruction of adverse mod.

41
42 So, we consider the extent to which the proposed actions are likely
43 to result in destruction or adverse modification of coral.

44
45 Next slide.

46
47 And ultimately, after reviewing all that information we did
48 conclude that, it's our opinion that the proposed actions are not

1 likely to jeopardize the continued existence of all the species
2 that we said were likely to be adversely affected. So, that's the
3 North Atlantic DPS green sea turtle, the South Atlantic DPS green
4 sea turtle, hawksbill sea turtles, nassau grouper, oceanic
5 whitetip sharks, Central and Southwest Atlantic DPS of scalloped
6 hammerhead sharks, elkhorn coral, staghorn coral, rough cactus
7 coral, pillar coral, lobe star coral, mountainous star coral, or
8 boulder star coral.

10 All those are not likely to be jeopardized or, and the bio-op says
11 is also not likely to result in destruction of adverse modification
12 of designate Acropora critical habitat. And I think I just said
13 the bio-op doesn't do that. So, yeah. I, sorry, I meant the
14 proposed actions. I'm trying to be quick here.

16 All right. So next, once we've made that finding, it takes us to
17 the incidental take statement. That's the area where it specifies
18 the amount or extent of take. Defines reasonable and prudent
19 measures and terms of conditions for their implementation. I want
20 to point out these are measures, so sometimes people get confused
21 between reasonable and prudent alternatives versus measures.

23 Alternatives are things with only jeopardy opinions that are major
24 changes. Measures are things we're doing to minimize the impact of
25 that anticipated take that we've just said is not likely
26 jeopardized.

28 Complying with the terms and conditions of an ITS does exempt
29 federal agency from take prohibitions. The case of our threatened
30 species such as giant manta rays and oceanic white sharks that
31 don't have a take prohibition, they are still included because we
32 still need to track the anticipated take and know when we
33 potentially exceeded it, and we still need to minimize the impacts.

35 Next slide, please.

37 And so, this is the Incidental Take Statement. As you can see, our
38 interactions or the number of mortalities associated with most of
39 the species is relatively low. It's a little harder to judge when
40 you're looking at all of the coral impacts that we can still take
41 as in feet squared but again, relatively small areas.

43 next slide. Sorry, I have something covering up my screen. I'll
44 just go on to the next one. That's okay. Yeah. Next slide please.

46 So, for the purpose of the ITS, again, we talked about the
47 potential or the effects of harvest of herbivorous fish. So, we
48 have a take proxy for that. It's not really bio biomass, it's

1 really relative biomass. So, we're monitoring it via the numbers
2 of fish relative to the numbers of observed previously. And our
3 relative biomass values, again, will be estimated using visual
4 census data and subsequent values can be used to infer a relative
5 increase or decrease in biomass detected via those surveys over
6 time.

7
8 Next slide. And so, we just shared with you about the incidental
9 take and the amount or extent. So, next we're going to move on to
10 what the requirements are under the instant take statement. Next
11 slide.

12
13 Okay. So, here, our first reasonable and prudent measure is to
14 minimize sea turtle and fish take and mortality through outreach
15 and education. So, our implementing terms and conditions has us
16 working with you, the Council or Council staff, U.S.V.I. DPNR, and
17 Puerto Rico DNER to develop and implement an outreach program to
18 educate commercial and recreational fishermen on the benefits to
19 sea turtles and fish from using circle hooks, a sea turtle release
20 equipment, use of available fish release equipment, and then our
21 handling protocols and guidelines. So, basically, we want to make
22 sure that we're informing people on how to minimize impacts through
23 proper handling and release.

24
25 Next slide.

26
27 The second reasonable and prudent measure has to do with monitoring
28 and assessing parrotfish in the functional grazing group biomass.
29 So, here we're monitoring the parrotfish species and grazing groups
30 via NOAA's coral reef conservation program, fishery independent
31 visual census surveys on coral reefs and through the Trip Interview
32 Program. So, all the data that we use to come up with a biological
33 opinion, we're going to continue to use to try to monitor the
34 impacts. And again, we'll be working with Puerto Rico DNER and the
35 U.S.V.I. DPNR to maintain improvements to fisheries, landing
36 reporting, particularly species-specific landings and additional
37 bycatch data.

38
39 And then we do have a requirement to have an annual report which
40 will, again, go over essentially that information, the biomass for
41 parrotfish species and grazing groups and other relevant
42 parrotfish information like length-frequency, and the percent
43 cover of habitat strata, you know, focusing on the macroalgae and
44 coral cover data, and the benthic communities, the TIP length-
45 frequencies. Again, just all the things that went into to try and
46 estimate those impacts, we need to continue to monitor.

47
48 Next slide.

1
2 Again, the reasonable and prudent measure three has to do with
3 monitoring frequency, magnitude and impact of incidental take. In
4 this case these terms and conditions relate to coordinating, again,
5 with the same groups as far as Council and Puerto Rico DNER and
6 U.S.V.I. DPNR to ensure data collection methods are in place and
7 collected on the number and disposition and condition of ESA listed
8 species taken by commercial and recreational fishery components,
9 the area of coral impacted by traps and anchors associated with
10 the proposed action, and the commercial trap use in terms of number
11 deployed, size, use, location, and anchoring.

12
13 Next slide.

14
15 Again, same reasonable and prudent measure and more implementing
16 terms and conditions. We're requiring ourselves to work with the
17 island sea turtle stranding coordinators to improve collecting and
18 reporting of sea turtle incidental, captures and stranding and
19 reporting of that data to the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvation
20 Network. Next one says, "developing a proposal for conducting a
21 survey on ESA-listed sea turtle and fish interactions similar to
22 Lewis et al., 2007.

23
24 That was a fisherman survey in collaboration with Council P.R.
25 DNER and U.S.V.I. DPNR. And then, annually report on the take of
26 sea turtles associated with the proposed actions and the area of
27 coral impacted by traps and anchors associated with the proposed
28 actions.

29
30 Next slide.

31
32 Okay. Reasonable and prudent measure four, reducing the frequency
33 and amount of trap and vessel anchor damage to corals to the extent
34 practicable. We know that there's already efforts underway and the
35 bio-op just requires us to assist fishers and the U.S.V.I.
36 government with those efforts to control effort through a trap
37 certification program and consider whether a similar effort is
38 appropriate and feasible in Puerto Rico. Collect information on
39 the amount of anchoring in coral areas in federal waters, including
40 the specific locations. And then, coordinate with the council,
41 U.S.V.I. DPNR and Puerto Rico DNER on an outreach program to
42 educate commercial and recreational fishers on the impacts of gear
43 use and anchoring in coral areas.

44
45 So really, I ran through all of this very quickly, but we just
46 wanted to give you a quick sense of the types of requirements that
47 came out of this biological opinion. You know, the biological
48 opinion was completed in 2020 but now that the FMPs are actually

1 in place we thought it was important to go over this and make sure
2 that you all were aware of the overall findings of the biological
3 opinion as well as get a sense of the types of requirements that
4 we have resulting from it.

5
6 And the next slide.

7
8 This just touches on conservation measures. Oh, I'm sorry. I missed
9 one. I skipped ahead. I left out preventing fishing on nassau
10 grouper spawning sites during spawning periods by maintaining
11 existing protections for nassau grouper spawning aggregations.
12 Sorry about that. It's obviously important.

13
14 The implementing term and condition is to submit an annual report
15 summarizing data from law enforcement on compliance with federal
16 regs that prohibit fishing on nassau grouper spawning
17 aggregations.

18
19 Next slide.

20
21 Okay, yeah. So, I already gave you, like I said, I sort of wrapped
22 that up. We just wanted to not get into the weeds too much, but
23 make sure you knew what was in there. And conservation measures
24 are just actions to minimize or avoid effects. Those are
25 recommendations. They're not requirements. So, I'm not going to
26 run through those, but they're organized mainly by species group.
27 There's 13 that have recommendations related to data improvement.
28 So, they're basically things that, you know, we would like to see
29 happen to improve our information and better understand.

30
31 And the next slide is just the conclusion slide. I will see if
32 there's any questions. Like I said, if anyone wants to learn a bit
33 more, they can always contact me too after this.

34 35 **Questions/Comments**

36
37 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Jennifer. Questions? Graciela.

38
39 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Thank you, Jenny. I have a couple of
40 questions. One, we saw in the table that you provided that there
41 had been some encounters with nassau groupers in Saint Thomas. So,
42 the source of that information would be of interest to the Council.

43
44 We also would like to provide information that we've received from
45 fishers, for Puerto Rico specifically, that there are nassau
46 grouper recruiting to some areas. So, this is definitely something
47 that we need to look into. They're mostly in state waters, but
48 again, I mean, it concerns everyone that has regulations to protect

1 the nassau grouper.

2
3 And the third thing has to do with the recent mortalities of
4 urchins that are very of great concern because of their function
5 in on the reef. So those mortalities, we know that they have been
6 providing us with some information, but I don't know of anyone
7 who's actually keeping track of those urchin mortalities.

8
9 **JENNIFER LEE:** Okay so, related to the nassau grouper all of the
10 ESA-listed fish were all based on commercial and recreational
11 landings records. So, we did have some information showing that
12 some had been caught-- I can look quick, and I can also follow up
13 on the details of the specific reports. It might take me a second.
14 I wanted to check on, could you repeat what it is that you're
15 asking with respect to the sea urchins?

16
17 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, recruitment of nassau grouper, that
18 is something that really needs to be assessed right now. It appears
19 that they are recruiting to the shallower areas around Puerto Rico.
20 But we don't have, I don't think right now we have any program in
21 place to actually keep track of that. And that would be essential
22 to the recovery of the nassau grouper.

23
24 **JENNIFER LEE:** Okay, thank you for that. So, that was information
25 for me as opposed to more of a question.

26
27 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Yeah, and the other thing had to do with
28 the mortality of the urchins. So, that's also something that needs
29 to be kept track of because it will have a negative impact on the
30 reefs. So, these are things that we need to consider. They are not
31 threatened or endangered, but they are essential to the best
32 function of the fisheries.

33
34 **JENNIFER LEE:** Yes. Thank you for that comment.

35
36 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Any more questions for Jennifer?
37 Vance?

38
39 **VANCE VICENTE:** Hey, Jennifer. Hi, this is Vance Vicente from the
40 SSC. One quick question. On the incidental take statement under
41 the column "LETHAL (Turtle/Fish, number of individuals, and coral
42 ft²).\" If you look at the seven ESA listed scleractinia coral
43 species, I see some numbers there and my question is how, in ft²
44 square, how did you make that estimate?

45
46 That the incidental take for the next three years is going to be,
47 let's say for example, staghorn 566 feet square. How do we know?
48 Just a curiosity. Thank you.

1
2 **JENNIFER LEE:** All right, it was based on the area we had for coral
3 cover. I apologize. I'm not really intimate with the details of
4 some of the analysis. I should have refreshed between now and when
5 I was going to present this in April. So, I apologize for not being
6 able to answer specific questions like that. I feel like I should,
7 but I might need to follow up and provide, perhaps, through a quick
8 email, I could answer that question but I don't want to misinform
9 and I'm not feeling very confident in giving you an accurate
10 answer.

11
12 **VANCE VICENTE:** Okay. no problem. Thank you.
13

14 No, the thing is that my concern is what the reef bottom looks
15 like out there, in all three islands. I mean, we don't have the
16 same coral cover due recently to the scleractinia coral tissue
17 loss disease. I personally have measured that over 60 percent of
18 the coral populations are gone, at least in the North Coast of
19 Puerto Rico. Probably the Virgin Islands has some more specific
20 data on their location, but the reefs are not the same anymore,
21 and coral cover is not the same anymore. The number of species
22 have varied, the proportion of species have varied significantly.
23 So that was my concern. Thank you.
24

25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. I hav--
26

27 **JENNIFER LEE:** Yeah. No, no. I was just going to say thank you.
28 And yeah, I'll definitely get right back to you. It's been a little
29 while since I've really looked hard at this, and I just wanted to
30 make sure that I give you a--
31

32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, I have from two more. One with the Director
33 Angeli and Sarah.
34

35 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Thank you so much. Thank you for presenting in
36 a very concise way the over 800-page document. It's much
37 appreciated. One of the questions I had was in regards to the
38 effect that this document might have on permitting through NMFS
39 for actions like moorings, we have long recognized that anchors
40 and anchoring are, as you said, a reasonable and prudent measure
41 is to reduce the frequency and amount of vessel anchor damage to
42 corals. We've long recognized that it takes us sometimes up to
43 three years to receive permitting to install mooring fields and
44 other actions and take other actions that may allow us to
45 reasonably reduce the frequency of anchoring in our waters. And I
46 was wondering if there's been conversation or how you anticipate
47 this specific document assisting with those efforts for us to
48 actually complete those actions.

1
2 **JENNIFER LEE:** This biological opinion should not have an impact
3 on the time involved in permitting. So, our requirements are
4 specific to working on, again, outreach education and minimizing
5 impacts. But the biological opinion doesn't have any specific new
6 requirements that would, sort of, you know, be an extra layer on
7 that permitting process that you're talking about. So, I don't
8 think the bio-op itself would have an impact on permit times, if
9 you were concerned by that.

10
11 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Thank you. No, I guess I was hoping it would be
12 the other way, that this would assist us with those actions to
13 reduce [crosstalk] activities.

14
15 **JENNIFER LEE:** I'm sorry.

16
17 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Sarah?

18
19 **SARAH STEPHENSON:** Hi, yes. I was just going to try to help Jenny
20 out with the answer to Vance's question because I helped with that
21 part of it. The studies, we had some coral specific densities that
22 were done from a study a few years ago. So, before the stony coral
23 tissue loss kind of was a big issue. So, all of those estimates of
24 area were put together using data from before that event occurred.
25 So, probably the next time we need to revisit we would want to
26 have updated coral densities to use.

27
28 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you for that. Jennifer, I think you have
29 another section.

30
31 **JENNIFER LEE:** Yes, thank you. Yes, you asked for an update on
32 some of our ESA rules that have been in the works, and we actually
33 have two recent publications that I'm just going to, again, for
34 the sake of time, just really be brief on.

35
36 Yep, that's the presentation and I'll get mine going here in a
37 second. My apologies. I just need one minute to-- Okay. All right
38 sorry, next slide please. Sorry, I'm juggling. I wish I was with
39 you all and not in my hotel on my tiny, tiny little laptop here.
40 But I'm sorry, I had to also attend the Gulf Council meeting this
41 week.

42
43 So, yeah. So, I'm going to be, again, brief. I'm just going to
44 remind you what critical habitat is and then do a quick synopsis,
45 not a summary of the green sea turtle critical habitat proposed
46 rule and then the Caribbean coral critical habitat final rule and
47 then I have, not in slides, but just an update on other rulemaking.

1 Next slide.

2
3 So, just to be clear on what is critical habitat, especially since
4 you're used to essential fish habitat. Under the ESA, critical
5 habitat is defined as specific areas within the geographical area
6 occupied by the species at the time of listing that contain
7 physical or biological features essential to conservation of the
8 species and that may require special management considerations or
9 protection.

10
11 So, We are required to designate critical habitat based on the
12 best available scientific data. And we must also consider the
13 economic, national security, and other relevant impacts of
14 specifying a particular area as critical habitat. The ESA requires
15 that we designate critical habitat, to the maximum extent prudent
16 and determinable, when a species is listed under the ESA.

17
18 And I put in a link there because we do have some great outreach
19 materials on our website if you want to understand a little bit
20 more about ESA critical habitat.

21
22 Next slide.

23
24 So, here you can just see the timeline of how we got to this
25 proposed rule, which was back in April 2016. We published a final
26 rule to list 11 green sea turtle distinct population segments as
27 threatened or endangered. That replaced the original listing for
28 the species. And at that time, the [inaudible] has concluded that
29 previously designated critical habitat remained in effect for the
30 North Atlantic DPS.

31
32 But just to explain a little further there. We actually said that,
33 at the time, that designating new critical habitat was prudent,
34 but not determinable. And then we went ahead and have been
35 maintaining the already existing designated critical habitat that
36 we had for North Atlantic DPS in this interim period.

37
38 In 2020, early 2020, the Center for Biological Diversity, Sea
39 Turtle Oversight Protection, and Turtle Island Restoration Network
40 filed a complaint, alleging failure to designate critical habitat
41 by the statutory deadline. We entered into a settlement saying
42 that we would submit our proposed determinations both us and U.S.
43 Fish and Wildlife Service on or before June 30th. And the, we just
44 did on July 19th, 2023. We proposed Our critical habitat for all
45 of our DPSs, and the Fish and Wildlife Service also has a rule
46 dealing with the nesting beaches.

47
48 Okay. Next slide. Oh, it went two slides. Great. Thank you.

1
2 So, here, you can just see the life history of the green sea turtle
3 and its marine habitat needs. They all say number ones for some
4 reason. I don't know what happened there. But the first couple
5 stages obviously are in the jurisdiction of the Fish and Wildlife
6 Service but once they leave the nesting beaches and are done with
7 their feeding frenzy, -- "feeding frenzy," sorry, swimming frenzy,
8 excuse me --they enter the surface-pelagic, forage and resting.
9 And they are for 10 years or so, in that stage at which point they
10 move further inshore. And then, of course, we have the breeding
11 migrations when they, the sea turtles, both males and females,
12 move off the nesting beaches. The females, obviously, then will go
13 on to shore and nest. Then, they move back off into the near shore
14 waters and they forage and rest and re-ovulate and then they do it
15 again. And they can have five to seven times of-- they'll do this
16 in a nesting season. But ultimately that describes these different
17 parts of their life history as they move through the waters.

18
19 If you go to the next slide, please.

20
21 And so, here, basically we use those life history stages and looked
22 at what features were essential to the conservation of green sea
23 turtles DPSs, and we broke it down into categories of essential
24 features. So, we have a reproductive essential feature that focuses
25 on the juvenile and hatchlings in the near shore. And then we have,
26 the migratory essential feature which is our adults. And our
27 foraging and resting essential feature, it's broken up into those
28 two stages, the post hatchling and juveniles. And then the
29 juveniles, sub-adults, and adults and that's when they're in the
30 benthic nearshore environment.

31
32 Next slide.

33
34 So again, with those categories we use the life history to develop
35 the features essential. The descriptions on here are very long,
36 but there's a few things I'll point out. For the reproductive
37 essential feature and the migratory essential feature, as well as
38 the benthic foraging and resting features, you can see that they
39 all are from the mean high-water line to 20 meters depth, defines
40 the area. And for the other essential feature, the surface-pelagic
41 foraging and resting, sargassum. basically, that's a North
42 Atlantic DPS essential feature only. And that is not in your
43 particular area. So, I will go into detail on that one.

44
45 Next slide.

46
47 Okay. So, this just shows the proposed marine critical habitats
48 for the six green sea turtles. Because, again, this is for all of

1 the DPSs. If you go to the following slide.

2
3 For the North Atlantic DPS in your area, there is Critical Habitat
4 designated off of Puerto Rico. It's for the proposed-- it's
5 basically all of the essential features, but the sargassums of the
6 benthic and foraging/resting. We just laid them on top of each
7 other because there's a lot of overlap. So, all of the maps just
8 sort of depict the layers on top of each other so you can see where
9 a critical habitat is.

10
11 Next slide.

12
13 On this slide you can see where the marine critical habitat
14 proposed is for the South Atlantic DPS. And again, all the areas
15 here are from the mean high water to 20 meters out.

16
17 Next slide.

18
19 Okay. So, we really just wanted to, again, just let you be aware
20 and give you an introduction, but we have an actual virtual public
21 hearing on the North Atlantic and South Atlantic DPSs coming up on
22 August 29th from 6 to 8 p.m. So, registration is required, and I
23 have the link there. I highly recommend you all join us for that
24 public hearing. Public comments are, going to be accepted until
25 October 17th, 2023. The schedule from there is that we'll review
26 and incorporate those public comments and submit a final rule to
27 the federal register by July 19th, 2024. And then, if you want more
28 information the website link on the slide there has a lot of all
29 of the background documents related to the proposal.

30
31 Okay. Next slide.

32
33 And here, just in terms of if you are evaluating what might be
34 important information to submit to us as comments. We have specific
35 areas that we're soliciting comment on. I have them all listed
36 here. I won't read them to you, but you can see, essentially, it's
37 specifics on the distribution and habitat of green sea turtles,
38 and then it's more information about activities that potentially
39 may affect critical habitat.

40
41 Critical habitat rules are different from ESA listing rules in
42 that we also consider economics, so we need information related to
43 economic, national security. Really any particular activity that
44 may potentially be impacted. And so, again, I don't really
45 obviously need to read that to you, but just wanted you to have it
46 available and in a handy spot.

47
48 Next slide.

1
2 So, just in terms of what it means for fisheries. Critical habitat
3 can confuse a lot of people. It's not a marine protected area. It
4 doesn't directly affect citizens engaged in recreational
5 activities such as recreational boating and fishing or limit their
6 access. It doesn't create any new regulations or restrictions on
7 fisheries. It really, what it does is, federal agencies, when we
8 have critical habitat, it's another analysis within when we do
9 biological opinions and consult. Federal agencies then need to
10 consider their potential effects on critical habitat. So, we
11 already consult, obviously, on our actions that may affect Green
12 Sea turtle DPSs and for that matter on the five Caribbean coral
13 species for which critical habitat was just finalized. That, I'll
14 also share very briefly.

15
16 So, again, that consultation is just evaluating whether the
17 proposed federal action would adversely affect critical habitat by
18 considering if it occurs in the critical habitat, and if so, if it
19 impacts any of the essential features.

20
21 Next slide.

22
23 I did want to point out that when we talk about Section 7, we're
24 usually talking about ESA Section 7(a)2 and our consultation
25 requirements. There is a section, Section 7(a)4, that talks about
26 conferencing, and you may not be familiar with that. But what a
27 conference is, it's a process where we have informal discussions
28 between the federal agency and the service regarding the impact of
29 an action on proposed species or proposed critical habitat and
30 recommendations to minimize or avoid the adverse effects. So,
31 essentially, it's like a consultation, but you're looking at a
32 proposed species and evaluating potential impacts.

33
34 It is actually required if an action is likely to jeopardize the
35 continued existence of a proposed species or result in the
36 destruction or adverse modification of the proposed critical
37 habitat. But federal agencies may also request a conference, even
38 if it's not jeopardy on any proposed actions that may affect
39 proposed species or proposed critical habitat. So, I bring that up
40 to let you know that we are working to conference on our proposed
41 species. We have a plan to conference on the green sea turtle
42 proposed critical habitat. And really, we're just trying to get a
43 jump on evaluating new species so that when they are listed, we're
44 able to quickly address them.

45
46 Let's see, I guess that's all I wanted to mention there.

47
48 So, I am now going to turn over to the final critical habitat for

1 the five Caribbean corals. This just published only last week. It
2 is a final rule, so it's not a proposal. Those five Caribbean
3 corals, as you can see, are boulder star, lobed star, mountain
4 star, pillar coral, and rough cactus are the species.

5
6 Next slide.

7
8 All right. So, here you can see this has been a long time coming.
9 We actually listed the five Caribbean corals back in September of
10 2014. In 2020, we proposed critical habitat and early in 2021,
11 that comment period closed. However, the CBD filed a lawsuit on us
12 for failure to finalize that rule, because we had not done that as
13 of March 27, 2023, and we entered into an agreement. And on, again,
14 just August 8th, we did publish our final rule, and it has a 30-
15 day effective delay. So, a month from now in September the final
16 rule will become effective.

17
18 Next slide.

19
20 So, for green sea turtle critical habitat, you know, I said we had
21 we had multiple essential features. For our five coral critical
22 habitats, we have one physical and biological feature, and it's
23 sites that support the normal function of all life stages of the
24 corals including reproduction, recruitment, and maturation.

25
26 So, these sites are natural, consolidated hard substrate or dead
27 coral skeleton, which is free of algae and sediment at the
28 appropriate scale at the point of larval settlement or fragment
29 reattachment, and the associated water column. And you can see
30 there's several attributes to these sites that actually determine
31 the quality of the area and influence the value of the associated
32 feature to the conservation of the species. So, that includes the
33 substrate with the presence of crevices and holes that provide
34 cryptic habitat, the presence of microbial biofilms, or presence
35 of crustose coralline algae; reef scape with no more than a thin
36 veneer of sediment and low occupancy by fleshy and turf macroalgae;
37 and then, marine waters with levels of temperature, aragonite
38 saturation, nutrients, and water clarity that have been observed
39 to support any demographic function. The last, marine waters with
40 levels of anthropogenically introduced (from humans) chemical
41 contaminants that do not preclude or inhibit any demographic
42 function.

43
44 So, it is somewhat similar, although not identical to the Acropora
45 critical habitat physical and biological feature that you're
46 familiar with but I say that because you, again, you might be more
47 familiar with that. And there was very little change between
48 proposed and final of this physical and biological feature, other

1 than them making sure that it was clear that it was the sites that
2 support the normal function.

3
4 Next slide.

5
6 So, you can see we have, again, it's five species. It's one unit
7 for each species based on really the depth distribution in each
8 geographic area that occurs. And so, resulting in 28 total units.
9 But again, within each geographic area, units are mostly
10 overlapping. And there is one excluded area, but outside of your
11 region.

12
13 All right, next slide.

14
15 And here you can see the different areas. What we have here is in
16 yellow, the Acropora Critical Habitat. We have on the map to show
17 as a reference again, cause you're more familiar with it. So,
18 again, there is a lot of overlap between that and our new
19 designation. You can also see that we really didn't have any, or
20 we did not have any changes between our proposed and final critical
21 habitat designation.

22
23 Next slide.

24
25 This is just Navassa, same thing. There weren't any changes between
26 proposed and final. But that is a new area we did not have Acropora
27 Critical Habitat.

28
29 All right. And again, that was really just kind of a very quick
30 fly through of the rule. I encourage you to look at it in more
31 depth and reach out to me or follow up. Jen Moore is our coral
32 expert in our region and is a great point of contact as well for
33 information about the new coral critical habitat.

34
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I have Nicole and then Graciela. Nicole.

36
37 **NICOLE F. ANGELI:** Thank you so much again for your presentation.
38 The proposed critical habitat for both sea turtles and corals are
39 something that's been on our radar in the U.S.V.I. for quite some
40 time, and we've had multiple conversations before this proposed
41 rule went out expressing our concerns with the amount of critical
42 habitat that's proposed. I strongly recommend that folks from the
43 public submit comments on this proposed rule.

44
45 I say all of this being a very classically trained endangered
46 species biologist. I think that one of the things that we don't
47 know is how this will affect how federal funds are used in our
48 territory and I'm very concerned about that and the Division of

1 Fish and Wildlife and Department of Planning and Natural Resources
2 are very concerned about these proposed critical habitat
3 designations. That's a comment, not a question, but thank you.

4
5 **JENNIFER LEE:** I appreciate that and we definitely encourage
6 comments on the proposal.

7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Thank you, Jennifer. So, we're going to
9 take a quick five-minute break.

10
11 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

12
13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Alrighty, we're going to get started again. We
14 need to finish this agenda up.

15
16 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Okay. Mr. Chairman. This section of the agenda
17 responds to two communications I received. One, from a fisherman,
18 another from a scientist. Both of them had the same idea, that the
19 Council should consider revising the closed area that is identified
20 as Grammanik Bank in the Marine Conservation District of Saint
21 Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. One reason, they believe that there
22 are people fishing within the closed season. So, they asked maybe
23 to consider expanding that closed season for another month into
24 spring. Then, they also believe that the area between Grammanik
25 and MCD, and thought that those areas should be considered for
26 expanding the closed area.

27
28 So, I asked Graciela to put together a presentation on what is it
29 that we have at this time, regarding regulations in the area. And
30 then, I wanted to ask the opinion of the fishers on something that
31 Julian and I discussed before. So, we have Graciela giving the
32 status of the regulations, followed by Ruth Gomez, on the
33 perspective from the Fishermen of Saint Thomas/Saint Johns
34 Fishermen Association.

35
36 **Grammanik Bank and MCD Present Regulations for the Protection of**
37 **Spawning Aggregations of Nassau Grouper and Other Species**

38
39 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Thank you, Miguel. So, very quickly-- I
40 think. Let's see.

41
42 I encourage everyone to read the comprehensive Fishery Management
43 Plans for each of the islands, in this case the Saint Thomas/Saint
44 John. If you don't want to read the whole document, go to Chapter
45 5, that has all the history of the regulations, especially Appendix
46 C that has all of the regulations and the complete history from
47 the first time that the Council implemented any regulations in the
48 EEZ. I would also encourage you to read, at some point, if you're

1 looking for specific answers and testimony from stakeholders, the
2 original FMPs that contain the comments that were received and the
3 information that was provided at the time when the regulations
4 were becoming a part of the implementation of fishery management
5 in the EEZ.

6
7 So, very briefly, you have two areas. South of Saint Thomas, the
8 Grammanik Bank, which is a seasonally closed area, and prohibits
9 fishing for any species of fish. And in this case, fish means fin
10 fish, mollusks, crustaceans, and all other forms of marine animal
11 and plant life other than marine mammals and birds. And the reason
12 for that description is because, in this case, the prohibition
13 does not apply for highly migratory species. So, it's kind of
14 something that we also need to consider.

15
16 So, HMS, it's allowed within the Grammanik Bank. That one it's
17 closed between February 1st and April, and it was originally
18 designated as a closed area for the protection of the spawning
19 aggregation of the yellowfin grouper. This was brought to the
20 attention to the Council by scientists and it was discussed and
21 talked about and agreed upon at the end, with the collaboration of
22 the fishers knowingly that economically it made a very big
23 difference in terms of allowing them to fish in this area during
24 those months. However, in addition to that, the bottom tending
25 gear, any kind of bottom tending gear that includes pots, traps,
26 bottom long lines, gill, and trammel nets is prohibited year-
27 round.

28
29 In the Hind Bank, which has a different story, it was a-- Well,
30 actually, yeah, a different story. A seasonal closure was
31 established in 1990 and then it became a no take area in 1999. So,
32 that's closed permanently year-round.

33
34 So, you do have a little bit of comparison in terms of why they
35 were established first, but the MCD was originally the Hind Bank,
36 that's what it was known as, but it also had other spawning
37 aggregations that were known from the area. Historically, from the
38 70s areas that included nassau grouper, for example. So, the areas
39 are very different in terms of the area that it's managed. So, 41
40 square kilometers for the MCD, or the Hind Bank, and 1.5 square
41 kilometers for Grammanik Bank. Close to the MCD from January to
42 December, Grammanik Bank February, March, and April.

43
44 The nassau grouper, which is the species that mainly concerned us
45 here today, and you've heard what Jenny had presented earlier
46 regarding the threatened status of the nassau grouper, spawns
47 between December and April. Other species that have been reported,
48 and this is not a complete list, include red hind, tiger grouper,

1 yellowfin for the Hind Bank, yellowfin, dog and cubera snappers,
2 and bermuda chub from the Grammanik Bank.

3
4 You already know where these two areas are. And what Miguel was
5 talking about is that area between the Hind Bank and the Grammanik
6 Bank. Between C and D in the in the picture that you're seeing.
7 And the Council does have these areas designated as habitat areas
8 of particular concern. Both the Hind Bank and the Grammanik Bank.
9 And that is because it responds to that function between the
10 habitat and the function that it carries for fish, in this case,
11 the spawning aggregation.

12
13 This is a summary of the history of how they became to be. So,
14 these all started, and this is specifically for the nassau grouper.
15 So, the nassau grouper had a size limit back in the 1980s increased
16 from 12 inches to 24 inches, becoming really economically extinct
17 in the late 80s. And then the Council took action in 1990 declaring
18 a no take for the nassau grouper in the EEZ. The no take for the
19 local governments then became, specifically for the Virgin
20 Islands, in 2006. Okay.

21
22 So, the Nassau Grouper has been prohibited in all of the area,
23 from the shoreline to the 200 nautical miles in 2006. The seasonal
24 closures that the nassau grouper had included the spawning months
25 of January, February, and March. But then that becomes mute because
26 now there is no take for these species.

27
28 So, I'm a visual person, so in this case we're just showing the
29 months of the year, the specific areas that are impacted the Hind
30 Bank and the and the Grammanik Bank post in the EEZ. The month
31 that they are closed. Red means that there is no fishing allowed.
32 The bottom gear, that it's completely prohibited. All of the months
33 when nassau grouper is completely prohibited. And if you could
34 take nassau grouper, you would be taking it during the month when
35 the other species are being protected, the red, the black, the
36 tiger, the yellowfin, and the yellowedged groupers. Those have a
37 seasonal closure that it's compatible and it's the same between
38 the territorial waters and the EEZ between February and April of
39 every year.

40
41 In pink, you'll see the nassau grouper spawning months when it's
42 been reporting that that takes place. So again, harvest and
43 possession, both in the U.S.V.I. territorial waters and in the
44 EEZ, it's prohibited year-round for the nassau grouper.

45
46 There are other regulations that impact or reduce the bycatch of
47 a nassau grouper, and that is the animal catch limit for which all
48 of these species that you're seeing on the screen has an ACL of

1 zero. So, anyone who's diving for queen conch, for example,
2 etcetera, that kind of thing, or is diving for any other of the
3 reef fish, should not be taking nassau grouper.

4
5 The other two groups that might have an impact, and this is where
6 the incidental catch of nassau grouper should be reported, the
7 animals should be returned to sea, unharmed and as soon as
8 possible. But those are the two groups that you have that have an
9 animal catch limit that is improving because of the way that
10 reporting is being conducted and they do have an annual catch
11 limit. So, these are the groups that there might be some
12 interaction with the nassau grouper.

13
14 The other regulations that protect the nassau grouper specifically
15 are that there is no filleting at sea. You have to bring the fish
16 intact. The other thing is that you have to release it immediately
17 with minimum harm. So, these regulations are also supposed to
18 protect the nassau grouper during the whole year.

19
20 You do have the recreational bag limits in place for other species
21 that are allowed to be harvested from the EEZ, and those include
22 other snappers and groupers. But again, all the fish that the
23 recreational fishers bring to the boat, they have to be landed
24 intact.

25
26 Okay? So, you have all that information in the Fishery Management
27 Plan. The Island-Based FMP for the Saint Thomas/Saint John. You do
28 have information, and these are the websites where you can find
29 the commercial fishing regulations for the Virgin Islands and the
30 NOAA website. These are all live links, and they will take you to
31 the specific place.

32
33 So, the question is really what else can be done to protect the
34 nassau grouper? And that's what brings us to that site between the
35 Grammanik and the MCD.

36
37 Mr. Chair, that's all I have to say.

38
39 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Thank you, Graciela. So, next would be—
40 Okay, Ruth, go ahead.

41
42 **Saint Thomas Fishermen's Association Statement - Ruth Gomez**

43
44 **RUTH GOMEZ:** Good afternoon, everyone. Just to give you a very
45 quick history of how we got to this statement. There was recently
46 a scientific paper published that talked about an expansion of
47 area and time when it came to the nassau grouper in the areas that
48 Graciela spoke of. So, what it did was it set off the fishermen in

1 the Virgin Islands.

2
3 Just historically, it hasn't always been the best relationship
4 when it comes to close areas, how they come about. Now, yesterday
5 afternoon, Julian and I had a beautiful conversation with María.
6 And María pretty much calmed our fears. This may be a little
7 premature, but we're going to put it on the record anyway, because
8 we like to get to first base before anybody.

9
10 So, we got together, the fishermen, the board of the STFA reached
11 out to their constituents and we all met and at a very rapid pace
12 I had six, seven, eight fishermen all very anxious and aggressively
13 trying to get me to write down all the things they wanted me to
14 come down here and say, so this is. This is it, this statement.
15 okay?

16
17 Dear members of the Caribbean Fishery Management Council. The Saint
18 Thomas Fishermen's Association is aware that there is a potential
19 for an expansion of the area for both the Red Hind Marine
20 Conservation District and the Grammanik Bank, South of Saint
21 Thomas, Virgin Islands. An increase in area would include the
22 closure of the corridor between the present closed areas. This
23 corridor is referred to by the fishing sector as the "alleyway."
24 The Grammanik Bank would receive an extension of time and closure.

25
26 The STFA supports the efforts to protect the nassau grouper and
27 encourages the protection of the marine ecosystem. However, we
28 cannot manage with blinders on. The fishery of the Saint
29 Thomas/Saint John District is a small boat and market driven
30 fishery. Virgin Islanders rely on the ocean as their main source
31 of food. Seafood is the number one source of protein consumed in
32 these islands. Managing the U.S.V.I. fishery does not fit in the
33 "typical" management toolbox, resulting in a complex task. As we,
34 the U.S.V.I., are rich in culture and history, it is crucial to
35 understand that fishing is a generational craft. Fishing is not a
36 way to make a living, it is deeply rooted in our culture.

37
38 The U.S.V.I. fishery currently is subjected to heavy handed
39 management. Closed areas, annual catch limit, species-specific
40 closed seasons, and size limits. Any additional loss of fishing
41 area would have a significant effect on the fisher's ability to
42 make a living and the people they service. Additional closure has
43 a direct correlation to financial compensation.

44
45 Observations of the nassau grouper spawning occurred late this
46 season. It is important to note that the full moon occurred later
47 in the months of December 2022 to April 2023. This occurrence may
48 have resulted in a later than usual spawning period. Of greater

1 significance is this unusual lunar cycle potentially in a once in
2 every 7-to-10-year event. The STFA recommends effort be placed
3 into looking into the lunar cycle for the last 10 years and at
4 least the next 5 years. There is no need to extend the closed
5 season if future lunar cycles coincide with existing management.

6
7 It is proven that closures and no possession regulations work.
8 Since 2015, observations of nassau grouper have increased in number
9 and location. It has been protected by the territorial and Federal
10 governments for over twenty years.

11
12 The question to be asked is, how much more protection will you put
13 on a fish that no one can catch at the stake of the people of the
14 Virgin Islands?

15
16 As a spawning season has already occurred for the 2022-2023 season,
17 there is an opportunity for all of us to ensure that we make
18 decisions based on data. The STFA recommends data be compiled on
19 the following: What was the total landings recorded for the area
20 referred to as the alleyway? How many fishers recorded landings
21 from the alleyway?

22
23 And I want to segue to this. The map on the back-- I'm talking to
24 María. I think we came to the conclusion that it's DPNR that holds
25 this, right? So, this goes to Nicole, Dr. Angeli. Is there any way
26 that we can put the closed areas on this map? Right? So, when the
27 fishers report, because these are half mile by half mile squares,
28 right? That would give us specific, like more data about what is
29 actually being caught in that alleyway.

30
31 How many traps were recorded in the alleyway? I think we could get
32 that from this as well. And at what month of the year? What data
33 is there to substantiate that nassau grouper solely travel to and
34 from the closed areas during the spawning aggregation via the
35 alleyway? Increased funding for outreach and supplies. And an
36 example of that would be descending devices. I think that we really
37 need to focus on making sure that aboard every commercial vessel
38 there is a descending device.

39
40 In the Outreach and Education Committee, we do our due diligence
41 in making sure that we hold workshops, getting the fishermen to
42 understand how to do it. Because it's like María said yesterday,
43 if you don't do it right, you're going to kill the fish. So, all
44 of that we can accomplish with just education and some time and
45 effort.

46
47 Increase the funding in order to increase the survival rate of
48 incidental capture. And this would include instructions on how to

1 deflate the swim bladder. Information on whether there are any new
2 spawning aggregations discovered inside or outside of the existing
3 closed areas. If there are new areas, have they been studied?

4
5 The STFA wants to ensure that due diligence by everyone is a
6 priority. We look forward to engaging in conversation with the
7 hope of finding the best solution for the nassau grouper and the
8 people of the Virgin Islands.

9
10 And it's signed by our president, Daryl Bryan.

11 12 **Questions/Comments**

13
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Vance.

15
16 **VANCE VICENTE:** Ruth, I'm trying to find out if there is a recovery
17 plan. Because for each ESA-listed species, whether threatened or
18 in danger, there has to be a recovery plan. In other words, when
19 will the species be delisted from the ESA species list? From what
20 I see from NOAA Fisheries, they have a recovery outline, but there
21 isn't a recovery plan which says, "Hey, when 50% of the population
22 recovers." What are the, the reference point? I don't see any
23 unless anybody listening to me from NOAA knows more than myself.

24
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel?

26
27 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Vance, when we sided with the nassau grouper we
28 were talking about one and a half generation of the animal before
29 they opened it. This darn thing lasts for 22 years before they
30 start spawning. So, it means that they might be able to have the
31 one and a half, 33 years after your closure. That has changed. But
32 this conversation took place in Saint Thomas with over a hundred
33 fishermen present a long time ago. The same question came up.

34
35 At that time, it was a recommendation to study the nassau grouper
36 better to figure out the actual spawning because we were using
37 another species for nassau grouper, but at the time, we didn't
38 have that much information.

39
40 But since that time, everything has changed. Not everything, but
41 a lot has changed. Now, the nassau groupers is under the ESA, so
42 in order to get it to the ESA, we have to follow, as we all know,
43 the regulation applicable to any species that is on the ESA. So,
44 probably Kate can give us an idea of where are we, and what the
45 future will bring to us.

46
47 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Right. Kate Zamboni for the record. As Vance
48 stated, there is no recovery plan completed, but there is a

1 recovery outline, which is pretty standard as part of the recovery
2 process. And that does identify priorities and sort of a process
3 to work through it. Identifying critical habitat is often part of
4 that. We have other statutory requirements to do it, but the
5 outline does guide us until the recovery plan is complete. And
6 that's available on NOAA's website if you want to look at it.

7
8 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** And, the other thing is, maybe, Kate, you can
9 expand, is that when you have a species that is overfished, then
10 a recovery plan kicks in and this is under the Magnuson-Stevens
11 Act, but the ESA, esos son otros veinte pesos. So, can you tell us
12 the difference between the two?

13
14 **KATHERINE M. ZAMBONI:** Yes. There is a difference between a
15 rebuilding plan under Magnuson, and a recovery plan under the
16 endangered species. They have different goals.

17
18 So, under the Endangered Species Act, our goal is to get that
19 species off of the list, to the point where it no longer needs the
20 protections that it gets by being identified as a, in this case,
21 a threatened species. So, you could have a, a stock rebuild, if
22 you will, perhaps before it's off the ESA, or maybe not. You know,
23 I don't know. It might be, locally there may be some ways to do
24 that. But just so you know, yeah, the goal is just very different
25 in terms of when you're talking about a rebuilding plan versus a
26 recovery plan.

27
28 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** The last time, Mr. Chairman, the fisherman who
29 called me said that he's not asking for more expansion, more this
30 and more that. He's asking for enforcement. What he's saying is
31 the laws and regulations that protect the nassau grouper are okay,
32 but he's seen a lot of people fishing-- well, not a lot of people,
33 but some of that he knows. --fishing for nassau grouper, filleting
34 their fish and selling them as something else at the dock. Anyway,
35 that's a concern.

36
37 So, what we need to hear from the Council is, taking into
38 consideration these two comments that we received. The
39 presentation by Ruth Gomez. The thing is, something that María
40 said, it doesn't mean that if the Council decides to do something,
41 the closure will be expanded, and close season will start tomorrow.
42 You have to go through a whole process.

43
44 Probably we need more outreach and education than another club in
45 the head of the fishers at this time. So, perhaps if we take into
46 consideration-- by the way, those are good recommendations. I like
47 what you presented on behalf of the fishers. Maybe Alida and I can
48 talk a little bit more about it and look at possibilities with

1 you, Julian.

2
3 What else can we do to enhance, let's say, the efforts that we
4 have for outreach and education? How can we take these
5 recommendations and make it effective? And I believe that if we
6 put our minds together, something good will come out of it between
7 2023 and 2024. Because the other thing is, my personal opinion is,
8 if you ask a fisherman for something and he gives you the input,
9 and then you do nothing for three or four years, don't ask him
10 again or don't ask her again. So, I believe that this is a good
11 momentum to move forward with some enhancement of the outreach and
12 education efforts that we have at this time.

13
14 However, we also need to be mindful that we have to review what we
15 have to see whether that area is enough for the protection that
16 was intended as presented by Graciela. For example, somebody told
17 me a long time ago, if you look at the alleyway and you have a lot
18 of traps there, and you have a lot of people there, then you have
19 a problem. Fishers, when we met at the Fisherman Association site,
20 where they have the new place, it was a long time ago, almost
21 nobody was fishing there. And actually, the fishers were the first
22 ones who told me, Miguel, the whole area is not used by the fish
23 that are spawned and it's only a rectangle. And later the
24 scientists found that it was the same rectangle that the fishermen
25 were telling me about.

26
27 And, anyway, enough said. We'd like to hear from the Council what
28 will be the next steps, if any, regarding this area.

29
30 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Jack?

31
32 **JACK MCGOVERN:** I think Ruth and the Saint Thomas Fishermen's
33 Association has a lot of good suggestions here. One thing maybe
34 the Council could do is to develop a white paper to try to gather
35 information and answer some of these questions. And then, you know,
36 some of this has to do with outreach and education, with the
37 descending devices. We're about to, you know, approve the trawl
38 amendment probably in December. And, you know, that could be a
39 component of that amendment as well. And so, I think that's one
40 thing that we could move forward on.

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mr. Chairman, regarding the descending devices.
43 We already received some funding and Marcos Hanke is spearheading that
44 effort. Dr. Michelle Schärer is preparing a video about the use of
45 the descending devices, materials and assembling and everything.
46 Once we have that, we will travel to the different places. We can
47 have a meeting with the fishers, present the video.

1 Marcos is willing to go and give a demonstration. I prefer the
2 demonstration to be from fisher to fisher. If I go there to
3 demonstrate something, "yeah, you're always behind the desk, we
4 don't believe what you're saying." But if we have a fisherman
5 telling the other fisherman, not only that, but a fisherman can
6 also tell you how to enhance the device. Because the regulation
7 should be flexible enough so we can use different materials to
8 achieve the same goal, which is sending that fish back to a place
9 where it can survive. The swim bladder is another issue because
10 there are fishermen telling me that some of these fish, their swim
11 bladder is going to be damaged when you punch them so they're going
12 to die. We're going to be feeding the sharks.

13
14 So, I would propose, Mr. Chairman, that you need to answer to Jack
15 about the white paper. But while that is happening, we should
16 continue with the discussion for the betterment of the efforts
17 that we have for outreach and education.

18
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Graciela and then Julian.

20
21 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** A couple of things. The Council has been
22 working on a GIS, so we'll be able to provide you with the
23 information. The problem is that when we've been talking about the
24 areas that are selected, when you put the area and the species
25 together, sometimes it gets blurred, so you don't know exactly
26 what's coming from where. But at least we have all of the areas
27 that were traditionally fished, so we should be able to look at
28 that.

29
30 Martha just sent me that there are a few reports between 2018 and
31 2021 regarding that specific area between the Hind Bank and the
32 Grammanik Bank. Kevin and the SSC mentioned the data mining efforts
33 to make sure that the data are QA/QC (quality assessed and quality
34 controlled) so that we can use all that information, which is
35 extremely important. And then, also data mine the old reports when
36 the nassau grouper was actually reported to be harvested in the
37 area. So, we've done most of the PDFs from the very old reports,
38 so we'll have all that history also available.

39
40 And finally, in terms of involving the fishers in a specific
41 project, I mean, there are ROVs that we can use to go to the areas
42 that used to be nassau grouper aggregation sites, for example, and
43 perhaps do some kind of project with the fishers and scientists on
44 board so that we can document if there are any changes in other
45 aggregations that we didn't know about. But the FMP, the original
46 FMP from 1985 has a couple of places that are marked by hand in
47 that copy of the nautical chart that was used.

1 So, you know, I'm keeping track of all the ideas and what we need
2 to do. At some point, the Council also had a nassau grouper kit
3 for the measurement, so that you could measure and write down and
4 keep track of what was the size of the nassau grouper. So, just a
5 few ideas. Thanks.

6
7 **JULIAN MAGRAS:** So, Grammanik Bank has always been a hot, hot issue
8 for me. And the people that know me in here, know from back in
9 1995, I was one of the fishermen that used to fish directly on the
10 bank during the spawning aggregation period.

11
12 We were involved with the SFA. When we put the seasonal closure.
13 It was an emergency closure first put on the bank and then we were
14 involved with creating the seasonal closure for this area. We were
15 also very instrumental in getting the size of the Grammanik Bank
16 decreased to the present size that is being managed right now due
17 to the fact that it is one small area where these fish come to
18 spawn on that particular bank. It goes from 150 on the North of it
19 and it goes up to 108 right on top one small spot of 90 something
20 feet of water. That's where the fish actually spawn but the whole
21 area around it was protected. Of course, on the South side of the
22 bank it's all the deep water, the shelf, the end of the shelf.

23
24 So, you know, I understand Ruth's concern of the alleyway. But
25 those fish don't only travel through the alleyway. Those fish
26 travel through the entire waters around the Virgin Islands. It's
27 not that they're coming through that alleyway alone to get to the
28 bank. The original nassau grouper spawning aggregation site is
29 inside of the MCD. The same area where the hind's spawn. And 14
30 square miles of closure from 1995, completely no take, I can
31 guarantee you that we have several spawning aggregations within
32 those 14 square miles. Because these fish are all over, from the
33 very shallow waters to all the way out to the shelf. All year long
34 we see these fish.

35
36 We've seen them. They're all over more and more and more. We have
37 seen them. So, you have the nassau group, but that's been fully
38 protected for 17 years and federally protected for 27. What do you
39 expect the outcome of that is going to be? You expect the stock is
40 growing. And I think what's happening is agencies, universities,
41 scientists, whoever is getting the money to study these species,
42 the hind, the yellowfin grouper, the nassau grouper, they need to
43 bring this information to the table.

44
45 I've been saying this for years. We see money given, money given,
46 money given on an annual basis, millions of dollars, but we don't
47 see the reports. So, when we have the scientific and statistical
48 committee meeting, they don't have that data before them to be

1 able to do their job. They have to go and search for it and see if
2 there's any papers out there. That information should be produced
3 to them and produced to this Council.

4
5 So, you have the tools to do your job and the other side of it,
6 the fishermen are not the ones taking the hit. We don't want to
7 see no more closed areas. I think we have done a good job with
8 creating all the seasonal closures. We have the MCD, we got the
9 Grammanik Bank, we got the Coral Reef Monument. We had a
10 presentation on lionfish earlier today. Do you know how many
11 millions of lionfish are in those closed areas? Because they can't
12 be caught. How much damage are they doing in those areas? Where
13 those areas are supposed to protect not only the fish that are
14 spawning, but every species of fish that live within those areas.

15
16 We only talk about the hind, we only talk about grouper unit 4,
17 the Nassau grouper. But all of those other species that we harvest,
18 come from within those areas. So, it's a full protection for every
19 species. We need to-- and I continue saying this at every meeting
20 also. All of these seasonal closures are in place, not only for
21 the groupers, lane snapper, mutton snapper, deep-water snapper,
22 everything for 17 years and not one assessment has been done for
23 us to know how those stocks are doing.

24
25 So, we have closures in place, and we don't know if it's actually
26 working or they're not working. And it's clearly stated in the
27 SFA, not all seasonal closures work. Some of them do more harm to
28 the species than rebuilding it. And where does that come from?
29 Bycatch. So, you got a deep-water snapper, you got the lane
30 snappers, those are fish that when you're releasing them, a lot of
31 times, they don't survive.

32
33 So, all I ask of this Council is that you take the recommendations
34 that the Fisherman Association has put forward by our president
35 and we sit down as a team, and we gather the information and see
36 what we can get out of it. There's a lot of information. How many
37 fishers are actually fish in that area? I know of five, including
38 myself. Do we fish in there all year round? No, because our fish
39 move from place to place throughout different times of the year.
40 So, we move with our fish, but we know those times. That's one of
41 my main areas that I fish for queen triggerfish. So, if I was to
42 take another hit there, my income, and I'm a queen triggerfish
43 targeter, my income is going to be slashed, *big time*.

44
45 So, we must be careful. We have a job to do to protect and conserve
46 for the future generation's ecosystem, but we need to be careful
47 how we do it. Thank you.

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Yeah.

2
3 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mr. Chairman, I believe that the discussion has
4 been very good. Graciela, please take note of your recommendation
5 so we can use it for the IRF funding, which is to look at the areas
6 that we have closed and see what is inside. Some of these areas
7 are Jurassic Park for lionfish.

8
9 So, anyway. I believe that you have a suggestion following all the
10 suggestions by the group from the RA, which is to develop a white
11 paper. For those of you who forget what a white paper is, it's
12 just a compilation of the information that we have, what is needed,
13 what are the gaps. So, you present that to the Council for future
14 actions or whatever.

15
16 The other thing about studying the areas and the affected is that
17 you always carry two sacks. Let's say that the scientists do this
18 and all of a sudden, they say, "well, you need an area three times
19 this area to be closed." That happened in California, by the way.
20 So, the point is that if we follow the white paper suggestions and
21 it is something that is not occurred tomorrow. In order to do that,
22 it takes some time.

23
24 The staff is really up to here with a lot of work. So, we're
25 talking about 2024. Maybe May, or in spring, we can have an update
26 on where we are with the white paper. The outreach and education
27 can start tomorrow. That's something that Alida and I can work on
28 with the local fishers.

29
30 The descending devices is something that we're already working.
31 So, once Dr. Michelle Schärer finishes the video, we can start
32 having the meetings with the fishers in one of the areas. In the
33 case of Saint Thomas/Saint John. We are going to rely on the
34 Association to invite all the fishers. So, we can have those
35 workshops there. I hope that we can do it on the first part of
36 2024, The first quarter we will have that.

37
38 So, what is the pleasure of the Council? Mr. Chairman

39
40 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, we need a member to motion for the
41 development of a white paper by staff. Kreglo? Can you help us
42 out, Jack?

43
44 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the motion could be
45 to direct Council to develop a white paper to address the
46 questions-- I guess I should wait until it comes up there.

47
48 *Direct staff to develop a white paper to address the points made*

1 *in the paper developed by the Saint Thomas Fishermen's Association.*

2
3 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** While prepared the motion. Graciela suggested,
4 that now that we are going to meetings in Saint Thomas in December,
5 we can check whether the video that Dr. Schärer is working on will
6 be ready. So, she said, "yes." We will try to have it ready by
7 December, if not by May. But next year, we can have special
8 meetings with the DAP of Saint Thomas to present that. And also,
9 we can invite Marcos Hanke to give sort of a workshop. A little
10 workshop on how to construct the device. We have the materials and
11 everything and I believe that that would be a step in the right
12 direction, rather quick, for December.

13
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Jack?

15
16 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Just a point of clarification, Mr. Chair. James
17 Kreglo made the motion.

18
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, we need to correct that.

20
21 **JACK MCGOVERN:** But I'll second it.

22
23 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, we put Kreglo as the motion maker and
24 Jack McGovern as the seconder.

25
26 So, the motion is to direct staff to develop a white paper to
27 address the points made in the letter presented by the Saint Thomas
28 Fisherman's Association at the August 2023 meeting. Motion by
29 Kreglo, seconded by Jack McGovern. All in favor say "aye."

30
31 **GROUP:** Aye.

32
33 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any nays? Any abstentions? Hearing none, *motion*
34 *carries.*

35
36 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just one other thought. In
37 this strategic plan are these reserves and I think addressing them
38 is something that, you know, we intend to do as a Council. I was
39 wondering if maybe we could kind of prioritize Grammanik Bank as
40 one of the first in that strategic plan to evaluate.

41
42 **VANCE VICENTE:** I would beef up that statement. I mean, we know,
43 for example, say "In the letter dated May 2023, regarding the
44 expansion of the Grammanik Bank, we the Council, request" put some
45 beef in it, or no?

46
47 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Vance. No, you are killing Robert's rules. That's
48 gone. That's passed. But the record that was developed is enough

1 for the staff to work on it. Don't worry about it.

2
3 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, what were we going to do with what Jack
4 just said about the five-year strategic plan?

5
6 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** One of the suggestions, and this is something
7 that Graciela and I were discussing, we need to look into those
8 reserves to see what is in it. What Jack said is that that was
9 part of the strategic plan that the Council developed, looking at
10 all that. So, that gives us enough support to develop a project,
11 and hopefully it will be approved, to study, because this is
12 something that the West Coast fishers already asked, especially
13 for Tourmaline Bank.

14
15 So, we closed these areas, but nobody knows really what's inside.
16 Something that Julian mentioned, there is a term that they use in
17 the Caribbean, the parachuters. They come to the Caribbean, they
18 study the hell out of these areas, they go back to Minnesota, and
19 you never see the report. Because the idea that they have is just
20 to collect information for PhDs, master's degrees, and all that.
21 I remembered that Kevin McCarthy, some years ago, identified this
22 issue because we have a lot of studies made with NOAA money, but
23 nobody knew where they were. So, he started collecting them. That's
24 why the center has a good database on studies that we have in this
25 area.

26
27 But the point that Jack is bringing is what we need to follow. We
28 don't need a motion for that, but I have to report to you in
29 December, what is it that we have done with the proposed project?
30 One of them could be a priority. On August 22, the Secretary
31 Director will have a meeting with the NOAA people, the Washington
32 people to discuss possible studies that we can make and that will
33 be one of the top priorities that we have, for many reasons.

34
35 The Marine Reserve are impacted by climate change. Not only the
36 fishes, where they go and everything, but also the substrate, the
37 habitat, the plans that Vance mentioned this morning and we can't
38 report back to you in December where we are with this. Then you
39 can make decisions, better informed decision as to where we're
40 going. But I believe that the top priority of the Council, you can
41 have a motion for that, is to accept the status of the species
42 under the management areas that we have closed for different
43 reasons.

44
45 By the way, there's a national effort, "30x30," we mentioned that
46 before. There's a paper that is going to come out of that. One of
47 the authors is sitting over there, Liajay Rivera. The paper will
48 have all the information that has been accumulated around the

1 United States regarding area-based management. The needs for
2 assessing what we have there, etcetera, etcetera. So, rest assure
3 that by the December meeting, Graciela and I will have some,
4 hopefully, good news as to the next steps to study these areas.

5
6 Alida and I will make sure that we start working with the Outreach
7 and Education in coordination with the Saint Thomas Fisherman's
8 Association and the Division of Fish and Wildlife because it's
9 important that we have their cooperation. I already talked to
10 Sennai and Angeli about this same issue, so they are on board with
11 what we need to do.

12
13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. Thank you. So, we're going to move right
14 along-- Oh, Graciela.

15
16 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, it's very important now that we have
17 the marine spatial planning meetings, and I think, Julian, you're
18 going to that one in Saint Croix, to mention all of the areas that
19 are impacted, that have a negative impact on fisheries. For
20 example, I think that shipping lanes are still an issue for you,
21 coming over the shelf, etcetera, the monument areas that have a no
22 fishing regulation associated to them and all of the other areas
23 that are close to all fishing throughout the territory.

24
25 So, these are the things that, you know, the cables, anything that
26 really has an impact on the habitat, that could have changed the
27 habitat and therefore it could have changed the function of that
28 area as you knew it, needs to be brought up during the marine
29 spatial planning meetings.

30
31 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Graciela. So, we need to move on. I
32 need to get through the enforcement report so that I can get
33 Michelle Schärer a chance in other business. So, we're going to
34 start with Puerto Rico DNER.

35
36 **Enforcement Reports**
37 **Puerto Rico DNER**
38

39 **DANIEL MATOS CARABALLO:** Yeah, perfect. I see better from my
40 screen. Sorry. Ricardo López, he is excused today because he is
41 sick, but he worked with Yamiré Pérez on this report. So, let's
42 look at the report.

43
44 In Puerto Rico, we have some rules and laws to work with the
45 features. Law 21, this is to penalize anyone who throws waste in
46 public or private places. Law 147, this is for the protection,
47 conservation, management of coral reefs. Law 278, this is the
48 Puerto Rico's fisheries law. Law 430, this is for Navigation and

1 Safety Act. Regulation 4860, this is the regulation for the use,
2 surveillance, very important to avoid some illegal constructions.
3 Regulation 6979, this is for registration, navigation, and aquatic
4 safety. And one of the most important of this group is the Puerto
5 Rico's fisheries regulation 7949.

6
7 Next slide, please.

8
9 Okay. Well, from top to bottom. The first is the Law 147 for
10 protection and conservation of coral reefs, only one intervention.
11 Law 278, only two interventions. Regulations 7949, this is the
12 fisheries regulations, 31 interventions. And then the others. The
13 biggest, is Law 430, for navigation and safety with 246
14 interventions. The green is for this year, 2023 and the blue is
15 from December '22 to March '23.

16
17 Okay, so, next slide, please. Okay, well, that's it.

18
19 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Daniel. Any questions for Daniel?
20 Nelson?

21
22 **NELSON CRESPO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Nelson Crespo for the
23 record. Daniel I really worry about the situation that we are
24 having with the manatees around Puerto Rico. Last week, another
25 manatee was found dead, and I don't know if federal enforcement
26 and the local enforcement can do something, you know, have a plan
27 to attack this issue because I think this is one of the years where
28 most manatees were found dead, caused by boat impacts around the
29 island. Adding to that is the situation is happening in the
30 protected area with huge amount of boats celebrating parties, foam
31 parties that are affecting the ecosystems. Are you evaluating to
32 develop a strategy to attack these issues?

33
34 **DANIEL MATOS CARABALLO:** Nelson, I'll be glad to take your very
35 important ideas and concerns to the secretary and she will answer
36 that properly. Thank you, Nelson.

37
38 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Nelson. Thank you, Daniel. We'll
39 move forward to DPNR enforcement.

40
41 **U.S.V.I. DPNR**

42
43 **HOWARD FORBES:** Good afternoon. Howard Forbes for the record. We
44 are pleased to announce that we have made several milestone
45 achievements. We have acquired four rapid response jet skis
46 outfitted for law enforcement. Two will be in each district. These
47 skis are already in the territory. All officers have received
48 personal watercraft training through the National Association of

1 Boating Safety Law Administrator and are now certified to operate.

2
3 In keeping with the initiative to expand Marine Patrol inventory,
4 we have also acquired four new vessels, which will have two in
5 each district also. The division will be in receivership of the
6 vessels in late November at the end of the 2023 hurricane season.

7
8 Pending cases. The division is currently investigating two posts
9 on Facebook regarding the sale of nassau grouper in a District of
10 Saint Thomas. Our patrol hours, dockside boarding hours are 155.
11 Our sea patrol hours, 135 hours. Last month, we had the fisher's
12 registration for the 2023 through the 2024 season. A total of 259
13 commercial fishers have been registered and let me break it down
14 in district. Saint Thomas, we had 118 registered commercial fishers
15 with 16 helpers. On Saint Croix, we had 141 commercial registered
16 fishers and also 40 helpers. And that concludes the U.S.V.I.
17 report. Short and sweet.

18 19 **U.S. Coast Guard**

20
21 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Any questions for DPNR Enforcement?
22 I see no hands. The Coast Guard isn't here, so we're going to go
23 to NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement.

24 25 **NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement**

26
27 **MANNY ANTONARAS:** Alright. Good afternoon, everybody. My name is
28 Manny Antonaras. I'm with NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement and
29 with me is Miguel Borges. Miguel is the special agent for those
30 that don't know him, new Council members, that covers Puerto Rico
31 and U.S.V.I. Like I said-- I actually haven't introduced myself,
32 but I'm the Assistant Director for the Southeast Division. So, we
33 cover pretty much the same territory that SERO covers. For Puerto
34 Rico and U.S.V.I., along with Miguel Borges, special agent, we
35 have Alex Torero. He's not present today, but he's stationed in
36 Saint Thomas, U.S.V.I.

37
38 So, for Caribbean updates, I'll start off here. This first thing
39 I have to share here is a offload that we monitored for pelagic
40 long line vessels that pull into the North side of Puerto Rico.
41 Primarily, species we're looking at here are yellowfin tuna and
42 some swordfish and we've conducted several of those over the
43 quarter since the last meeting. No violations detected on those
44 offloads.

45
46 Next slide, please.

47
48 Special Agent Borges also attended a two day Blue Marlin tournament

1 checking for compliance with HMS regulations. He was present on
2 both days of the registration. He was there to answer questions on
3 HMS regulations, and also assisting with some of the permitting
4 and permit application process. He was also there on the second
5 day of the tournament Puerto Rico DNER was also present there to
6 measure any fish that were landed, and no violations detected at
7 that particular tournament.

8
9 Next slide, please.

10
11 Just to emphasize our partnerships, we have, in the Southeast
12 Division now, twenty-nine special agents and officers combined
13 covering all the states on the Eastern seaboard and the Southeast,
14 Gulf of Mexico, Puerto Rico and U.S.V.I. So, we are very limited
15 and rely very much on our state partners, our Coast Guard partners
16 specifically here in the Caribbean, PRDNR, U.S.V.I. DPNR and then
17 CBP, Aaron Marine as well. We've done some work with FDA and also
18 with the National Park Service.

19
20 For those of you that are not aware, we do have a joint enforcement
21 agreement with both Puerto Rico and U.S.V.I. We've got agreements
22 with pretty much all the states in the Southeast Division, with
23 the exception of North Carolina. We recently signed the agreement
24 with U.S.V.I. and are happy to work towards signing the agreement
25 for the next JA cycle as well.

26
27 Next slide, please.

28
29 Trade monitoring. What we're doing here is, the primary focus is
30 to protect our domestic seafood. We're doing inspections at ports
31 for things like shrimp, crab, different fish species. And in doing
32 so, we're looking for proper documentation, collaborating with
33 other agencies at the ports focusing primarily on SIMP, the Seafood
34 Import Monitoring Program.

35
36 And so, for the recent activities-- Actually, next slide, please.
37 I've got an example of one of our inspections that was performed
38 in Puerto Rico. This particular exam was conducted with the CBP
39 trade team and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Inspector. The container
40 that we were looking at was coming from Japan that had reported as
41 imitation crab meat.

42
43 The container was put on hold because of a discrepancy between the
44 master bill of lading and the house bill. The master bill displayed
45 the product was imitation crab while the other indicated the
46 product was shark fins. After a thorough exam of the container it
47 was determined that the product was actually crab meat and was
48 released with no violations.

1
2 Next slide please.

3
4 This is a joint patrol that was conducted with Puerto Rico DNER.
5 It was a night patrol on the Northern Coast in Puerto Rico looking
6 for possible spear fishermen that are fishing at night. Patrol was
7 also conducted at a local boat ramp that's frequented by fishermen.
8 This was really in response to two sea turtle carapaces that were
9 found in the area, and it's believed that the turtles were killed
10 and filleted for meat. No fishers were encountered on that
11 particular patrol, but the investigations are still ongoing in
12 that area.

13
14 Next slide, please.

15
16 Focusing more on U.S.V.I. Our officer Saint Thomas conducted
17 maritime patrol with CBP to detect illegal foreign fishing activity
18 in Puerto Rico and U.S.V.I. AOR. He also responded, this quarter,
19 to a call from CBP in regard to a complaint of a vessel that was
20 allegedly smuggling lobster. The vessel was interdicted in U.S.
21 waters coming from B.V.I. and was in possession of lobster. The
22 boat was directed to the National Park Service where the catch was
23 examined, or the product was examined, and inspection revealed
24 that the crew and vessel had all necessary permits and a couple
25 minor infractions were documented.

26
27 Our officer also participated in a joint patrol with CBP AMO in
28 the Red Hook area, checking vessels arriving at the ferry dock. He
29 also responded to some violations in Sapphire Beach Marina. We
30 have some ongoing investigations in that area as well. We also
31 have some future joint ops planned with U.S.V.I. to conduct
32 enforcement activities.

33
34 I believe last quarter we reported on some Saint Croix patrols in
35 both federal and state waters. And thank you to U.S.V.I. for
36 offering us some of their officers and patrol vessels.

37
38 Next slide, please.

39
40 This is a follow up on an ESA investigation that was initiated by
41 U.S.V.I. DPNR. The defendant that you see listed on the screen
42 pled guilty to two counts and was sentenced to one year probation
43 and a fine of 500,000. We also have a sentencing that's pending
44 for the second defendant, which is scheduled in district court for
45 August 31st in Saint Croix.

46
47 Next slide, please.

1 I'd like to also share with the Council I did pass on a press
2 release a month and a half ago that came out of San Juan, and it
3 was the announcement from the U.S. Attorney's Office, Puerto Rico
4 and in U.S.V.I. and through the Environmental Crimes Group,
5 Department of Justice in Washington, D. C. announcing the formation
6 of Environmental Crimes Task Force in U.S.V.I. and Puerto Rico. I
7 was here in Puerto Rico for that announcement.

8
9 The announcement in the document with DOJ you can see the
10 particular attention underscoring that essentially that each of
11 all the agencies that participated are ongoing commitments to
12 environmental justice, which feeds into some of the stuff that we
13 discussed earlier today. Essentially, a principle that combines
14 the environmental protection by examining whether all people or
15 income are receiving fair treatment and meaningful involvement
16 with respect to development and implementation and enforcement of
17 environmental laws.

18
19 So, that was a very big deal for us. We're happy to announce that
20 back in May. And as part of that task force some of you may have
21 read in the newspapers, with respect to the Jobos Bay matter, a
22 federal grand jury in the district of Puerto Rico returned to
23 indictments charging Luis Enrique Rodríguez Sanchez and Pedro Luis
24 Bonas Torres with a violation of the Clean Water Act and the Rivers
25 and Harbors Act relating to the illegal construction and deposit
26 of material in the wetlands and waters of the Jobos Bay National
27 Estuarine Reserve.

28
29 There were various federal agencies that were involved in that
30 investigation including the EPA, the FBI, U.S. Department of
31 Criminal Investigation, I'm sorry, the Army CID Division,
32 Department of Commerce, Inspector General, our office, along with
33 U.S. Fish and Wildlife. According to the indictment from
34 approximately January of 2020 through October of '22, the two
35 subjects knowingly discharged fill material from excavation of
36 earth moving equipment into the wetlands and waters of the United
37 States in violation of the Clean Water Act and they were also
38 charged with building structures with navigable waterways of the
39 United States without authorization of the Secretary of Army in
40 violation of the Rivers and Harbors Act. And as a follow up to
41 that case Miguel Borges also assisted with the arrests of two
42 subjects involved in that case.

43
44 Next slide, please.

45
46 Just highlighting some of our outreach education, that's a major
47 component of our program. Just one example from this quarter.
48 Miguel met with an importer who previously received an enforcement

1 action for one of those seafood import monitoring violations I
2 mentioned earlier. Importer requested the meeting in order to
3 better understand the SIMP program and the meeting was held at the
4 importer's facility with the in-house customs broker and Miguel
5 provided the broker with the SIMP compliance guide and answered
6 questions that both parties had.

7
8 I'll just touch on priorities. We talked about this at the last
9 meeting. We worked on our national priorities document, and we
10 held meetings with each of the Councils. In the Caribbean, we did
11 hold meetings with all the DAP members as well. That report, we
12 were waiting on NOAA Fisheries strategic plan, which is also being
13 put together for the years for 2022 through 2025. The public
14 comment closed for that and we will link the web story for the '22
15 through '25 priorities along with the annual priorities, and we'll
16 get that out to the Council as well.

17
18 And the final slide I have is for our OLE resources. You can see
19 that we have our priorities annual reports. We've got some IUU
20 information as well. And then we have a link to subscribe to the
21 NOAA Fishery Bulletin. And there's also information on the cases
22 that have been charged by NOAA's Office of General Counsel. Cases
23 that we referred. Some of which are cases that were referred by
24 our state partners.

25
26 And next slide.

27
28 That concludes the report. Any questions?

29
30 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. Any questions for NOAA OLE? Gerson?

31
32 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Verification on the amount
33 of the penalty. I think I heard \$500,000 or \$500?

34
35 **MANNY ANTONARAS:** \$500.

36
37 **GERSON MARTÍNEZ:** Okay. Thank you.

38
39 **Other Business**

40
41 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you. So, that concludes most of our
42 meeting. Kevin, do you want to make a-- SSC.

43
44 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Kevin McCarthy, Southeast
45 Fisheries Science Center. I want to revisit the request that we've
46 got to have an SSC meeting sometime in the next, say, six, eight
47 weeks, so that we can work with the SSC on a couple of issues for
48 SEDAR 80, the Virgin Islands, part of SEDAR 80 that is incomplete,

1 so that we can hopefully finish this up in December or the November
2 December meeting, whenever the SSC meeting is in the early winter.

3
4 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Graciela, please take note of that, so we don't
5 forget. If the meeting is virtual, it's easier, if it's in person,
6 we need to look for the hotel and we have to send the announcement
7 to the Federal Raiser 30 days before.

8
9 **KEVIN MCCARTHY:** Right, virtual is fine for us because we'll be at
10 the end of the year and travel becomes problematic for us. So,
11 virtual is great.

12
13 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, to other business we have Michelle
14 Schärer.

15
16 **MICHELLE SCHÄRER-UMPIERRE:** Good afternoon, my name is Michelle
17 Scherer. Full disclosure, I am part of the SSC of this Council,
18 but today I am here bringing my own personal opinions. The idea of
19 presenting today is a little bit piggybacking on what Ruth and the
20 Saint Thomas Fisherman's Association just brought forward.

21
22 I just wanted to give you an update on the Bajo de Sico which is
23 an area managed by the Council. So, this Council is the de facto
24 manager for various areas in the U.S. Caribbean. What I've done is
25 I've gone through the CFMC record and brought out some important
26 issues that I'd like to remind everybody where we are today.

27
28 So, back in 1996 was first established to protect grouper spanning
29 aggregations. The area of Baja de Sico is 31 Km² and it was
30 originally closed for three months. After that, in 2008, there was
31 a letter by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources because
32 in 2007 they amended the Puerto Rico fisheries regulation to
33 include no bottom tending gear in the territory jurisdiction waters
34 of Bajo de Sico. But after that, there was a letter to the Council
35 where they were looking forward to exploring a joint no take
36 designation or any other means to protect Bajo de Sico and they
37 were requesting ideas during the year of the reframe work.

38
39 I didn't find anything in the record responding to this, but the
40 letter is there for everyone to look over. If we go on to 2010,
41 that's when there was an amendment number three to the reef fish
42 management plan where the closure should only have one E, but it
43 was supposed to be six months. So, that's what we have up to today.

44
45 In 2012 was when we first observed Nassau Grouper aggregating to
46 spawn at Bajo de Sico. And since then, we've been involved in
47 research to better understand the habitat use and abundance
48 suggested at the aggregation was vulnerable to bycatch in April.

1 So, sort of a little bit of what Ruth was bringing to the table,
2 I'm also bringing to the table that, preliminarily, we have fish
3 that are vulnerable to bycatch after the closed season ends.

4
5 Every time we finish a cycle of research or a project, we try to
6 come to this Council and present and are available, and that's
7 also on the record. So, if anybody hasn't seen the research, they
8 can come back into the record, or anybody here that has my e mail
9 can contact me, and we can clarify the results so far. But research
10 publications take time, so we have to wait until those papers come
11 out so that we can present them. But we're happy to clarify any
12 doubts anybody may have.

13
14 So, in 2016, we have the listing of the nassau grouper as a
15 threatened species in our waters. And after that, we had a
16 biological opinion, sort of what we were talking about today,
17 earlier, and in that time, it was cited in this document that there
18 were regulatory mechanisms and law enforcement had not been
19 effective in preventing fishing at the spawning aggregation site.

20
21 So, this is one of the major reasons that it was listed, was lack
22 of compliance during the aggregations. So, this is something that
23 is guiding us towards what we need to do, to effectively protect
24 them when they are most vulnerable. Additionally, according to
25 Farmer, where nassau grouper or specific regulations do exist, law
26 enforcement in many foreign countries is less than adequate. And
27 I'm not sure if he was counting Puerto Rico as a foreign country,
28 but it happens here too because we still see nassau grouper in our
29 restaurants and our fish houses.

30
31 In 2020 at the 172nd Council meeting, the Añasco Fishers Association
32 proposed a 12-month closure to the core area. They argued that
33 nassau grouper did not occur with deep-water snappers. And I
34 remember after that presentation, and it's actually on the record,
35 that a Council member said he did not agree in opening another can
36 of worms. And since then, this action has not been discussed. Or
37 this proposal.

38
39 During this year, we're observing in our shallow areas, just as
40 the fishers predicted, an unprecedented amount of juvenile nassau
41 grouper in our near shore areas. This has been seen in Rincón,
42 Cabo Rojo, Lajas, Guanica, and Guayanilla. So, these little guys
43 are measuring less than 20 centimeters, which indicates they were
44 spawned this year.

45
46 So, thanks to the sacrifices of protecting spawning aggregations
47 like the one South of Saint Thomas, which we have documented
48 increased the spawning stock, this year we may be seeing a

1 settlement event that we've never seen before, thanks to those
2 closures and those increases in nassau groupers spawning off the
3 East Coast of Puerto Rico.

4
5 So, even though we have three different management plans, we're
6 talking about a shared resource. Because it's very plausible that
7 the currents are bringing these larvae to the South and Western
8 Coast from the East Coast. So, I think all the recommendations
9 that were in the letter of the Saint Thomas Fisherman's
10 Association, I would actually propose that we also discuss it for
11 Bajo de Sico.

12
13 And in my conversations with various partners that are at this
14 table and outside of here, I just want to bring five points to
15 your attention that have been discussed previously and that are
16 actually contained in three publications that just came out this
17 month that hopefully we'll have time to discuss with you thoroughly
18 at the next Council meeting.

19
20 Number one, that the aggregation is vulnerable after the closed
21 season ends at Bajo de Sico. Number two, that nassau grouper are
22 residing on the top part of this bank year-round. This is a very
23 particular case because they only use areas shallower than 90
24 meters. Third, fishers requested access to the deeper waters around
25 the core area for 12 months of the year. And I was wondering if
26 maybe with the Science Center we could look at how many fishers
27 are reporting landings from the area of Bajo de Sico, where by the
28 species composition or by the depths that they report, we could
29 actually see what the impact is being during those six months of
30 the closure, based on those catch rates.

31
32 In our conversations with enforcement staff, especially regarding
33 the JEA, it would be simpler if there are black and white straight
34 lines and we addressed that in the proposal of closing the closed
35 area, the core area during 12 months. And finally, one of the
36 limitations that we are encountering in our waters is that NOAA 4-
37 D rule is necessary for law enforcement to be able to pursue an
38 endangered species case in our waters.

39
40 So basically, I just wanted to bring this as a friendly reminder
41 to this Council, as managers of this area, very important area for
42 fisheries on the west coast if it could be added to the white paper
43 request or maybe another one. I think we would be doing a better
44 service to document and also respond to the sacrifice that fishers
45 are making by not using some areas because a threatened species is
46 there. And as we've seen in the Virgin Islands, it can work. Thank
47 you.

1 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Thank you, Michelle. Graciela?

2
3 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** Michelle, I couldn't tell from the
4 nautical chart picture, is that all within the EEZ or is that--
5 So, that's the shallower part of Bajo del Sico. Thanks.

6
7 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, we'll have a public comment period.
8 None. So, the request by Michelle was to include this in the white
9 paper or should we do a separate? Any recommendations? Vanessa?

10
11 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez for the
12 record. I suggest that make this separate, because we already have
13 the FMPs separate for each area. So, if we have to make a paper
14 for Puerto Rico and need a motion, I will-- Please, Jack, if you
15 can help us with the language.

16
17 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** I would like to ask the people who are going to
18 prepare this. María, is it easier-- Yeah, you are the people. Would
19 it be easier to have two or one? So, two would be preferable? Yes.

20
21 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** I think-- I mean, I think what I'm
22 understanding is this is a request for prioritization of certain
23 things, right? So, a priority will be the area of Bajo de Sico,
24 the priority will be the Grammanik Bank in terms of the nassau. I
25 think that's perfectly fine. It falls within the strategic plan.
26 You know, it put us in some agenda to get these things done. You
27 know, there's interest.

28
29 There's a lot of cooperation, so I think we could probably pursue
30 a separate motion to do this so we can divide the work somehow and
31 start planning. So, that will be my recommendation. I wouldn't put
32 them together, although the information will be together, or maybe
33 we can decide when we sit down if this is something that can be
34 together. But the important thing is that under the strategic plan
35 for Puerto Rico, the objective, I think it was on section four,
36 that is the one that talks about evaluating the seasonal closures
37 in the seasonal areas, I mean, that will fall under it. It's under
38 its own FMP, so it needs its own motion.

39
40 **JACK MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with what María says.
41 I think two motions would be good and two separate documents. I
42 think we could get a team of folks working on these and then maybe
43 come back at the December meeting after that and just give kind of
44 a progress report of where we are and where the gaps are and where
45 we need help.

46
47 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay, thank you. So, Vanessa, a motion?
48

1 **JACK MCGOVERN:** If Jack could help me with the language, please.
2
3 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, we can copy the other language and you just
4 change the place.
5
6 Rather than, we can say direct the staff to develop a white paper
7 for Bajo de Sico to assess the status of the nassau grouper fishery
8 and others. Y lo de "similar points" lo puedes quitar porque--
9
10 **GRACIELA GARCÍA-MOLINER:** So, take out "Grammanik Bank" Take that
11 out. Nassau grouper. If we're talking about the specificity of the
12 Nassau grouper then we should concentrate on that. So, take out
13 "and others," please.
14
15 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** No, Graciela, In the case of Puerto Rico, maybe
16 leave "and others" just in case. It doesn't-- If with the white
17 paper they don't find others, then that's it. Nassau grouper will
18 be the priority and if they find another species, that's it.
19
20 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** María.
21
22 **MARÍA LÓPEZ-MERCER:** Just a question for clarification when we are
23 talking about the others. We know that Bajo de Sico was put
24 together for the Red Hind, right? So, it's a Red Hind aggregation
25 area. But in this particular case, we are requesting just to focus
26 on the nassau in the beginning, or you want-- we're just evaluating
27 the whole thing. It's just for clarification. The closure, the
28 area closure.
29
30 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Yeah, for the Council, we make emphasis on nassau
31 grouper, but we want to evaluate the whole thing. That's was a
32 recommendation by the fishers, DAP Puerto Rico, in the summer. And
33 this is a response to the recommendation.
34
35 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Michelle?
36
37 **MICHELLE SCHÄRER-UMPIERRE:** Yeah, I just would say just copy the
38 questions that Ruth presented, because if we're talking about
39 socioeconomic impacts, we're talking about bait fish, we're
40 talking about deep-water snappers all around. So, that's where I
41 would think it's more useful to show everything and then see how
42 it parses out. Thank you.
43
44 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** But in the case of the motion, this is white
45 paper and the white paper copies everything that you want. So, in
46 order to make it quick, so the chairman won't have an attack for
47 the time, staff to develop white paper to address the status of
48 the Nassau grouper and others in Bajo de Sico area. Quitale lo de

1 "similar points."

2
3 But with the record, it is understood that the white paper writers
4 will incorporate Ruth's presentation and Michelle's comments. And
5 don't go away very far because we'll probably knock on your door
6 for the white paper too. ¿Está bien? So, you need a second?

7
8 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Ok, léelo.

9
10 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** The *motion to direct staff to develop a white*
11 *paper to address the issues requested for Nassau grouper (and*
12 *others) in the Bajo del Sico area.*

13
14 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** I need a second.

15
16 **JAMES R. KREGLO:** Second.

17
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** So, the motion is to direct staff to develop a
19 white paper to address issues requested for nassau grouper (and
20 others) in the Bajo del Sico area. Motion by Vanessa Ramírez,
21 seconded by James Kreglo. All in favor say "aye."

22
23 **GROUP:** Aye.

24
25 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Any nays? Any abstentions? Hearing none, *motion*
26 *carries.* Anybody for public comment? Vanessa?

27
28 **Public Comments**

29
30 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vanessa Ramírez for the
31 record. At this time, I will want to present a situation that the
32 fishermen from the West side, especially in the Cabo Rojo area are
33 having. They asked me, as part of the Association of Fishermen in
34 Puerto Real, since we had last March, the incident where, sadly,
35 a federal police officer died, after that, our commercial fishermen
36 have been having a lot of situations with the federal police that
37 was assigned to the area. It's specifically in the case when they
38 stop the fishermen, they are stopping them as if they are already
39 doing something wrong. So, they don't stop them like the regular
40 enforcement of NOAA and Coast Guard that are very respectful, they
41 just stop them and start telling them, in a bad way, to stop the
42 boat, get out of everything, put your hands up with long guns on
43 their face.

44
45 Also, as you know most of our commercial boats are small. Well,
46 they are practically forcing them to put them side by side and the
47 big boat, of course, causes damage to the small boats. They are
48 also asking them to-- they don't even ask them to present their

1 license, they are asking them to throw their bags so that they can
2 search for the information and for everything that they have in
3 their personal bags.

4
5 I think that this situation is out of control right now. I don't
6 know where we have to address this, but it's a situation that is
7 sadly happening, practically, weekly where we have an incident in
8 that area. Especially with the federal agents that are from another
9 area. I think that maybe they don't recognize the stamp of the
10 commercial fishermen and, of course, we know that the situation
11 was a bad issue in federal waters, but we need let them know how
12 they can identify commercial fisherman boat and how to introduce
13 themselves. Because just imagine, you're running to your work and
14 some police stop you and put a gun on your face just because you're
15 driving.

16
17 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** You're talking, you're talking about customs
18 people or the immigration?

19
20 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** They are identified as federal police. They have
21 the jackets as federal police. They don't even want to identify
22 themselves.

23
24 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Well, we had a similar situation one-time, long
25 time ago. Sea Grant and the Council, we put together a workshop,
26 on the West Coast, it actually was in Mayagüez, and we were talking
27 about customs, immigrations, FURA, the Puerto Rico maritime unit,
28 and the National Marine Fisheries Service. By the way, the National
29 Marine Fisheries Service was innocent. It was one guy, and he knew
30 how to behave. Miguel is also here; he knows a lot about it. So,
31 there's very little the Council can do in these cases. Okay? the
32 only thing we can do is put together a similar workshop.

33
34 Very quick. At that workshop, a fisherman was intervened by this
35 agent, customs, in a very bad manner. He was shot at. Another was
36 intervened while he was on the road with the boat. And it became
37 such a situation that we had this workshop. And we had Recursos
38 Naturales, all the federal agencies, even the Coast Guard
39 affiliated patrol was there. It was kind of interesting because
40 the fisherman who wasn't intervened, when the boss of customs in
41 Puerto Rico asked, "Who was that guy? I want to know who the guy
42 was," the fisherman didn't want to say anything because the boss
43 said if that guy was identified that night, he would be fired on
44 the spot and the fisherman was mindful about the job of that guy.
45 He just-- and that's the guy that was shot at in Puerto Rico off
46 of Desecheo.

47
48 So, the point is that the fishermen were not concerned with

1 penalizing anybody. What they wanted to do was to have a time where
2 people could get instructed on how to intervene with the fishers.
3 Let me tell you something else, customs, they are like God. They
4 stop you and they stop you and if you don't stop, they can shoot
5 at you. Migration is the same and we have a situation in the West
6 Coast of Puerto Rico. The coast guard, they are different but it's
7 still, you have the problem. So, if the Council wants to pursue
8 this a little bit further, we'll have to discuss it here because
9 again, heart attack here because of the time. We can put together
10 something between here and December and we can come back and talk
11 to you.

12
13 I will talk to Sea Grant and see if we can do a similar workshop.
14 But a fisherman, for example, was stopped three times during the
15 same day. By three different agents. One of them had a gun to his
16 face. So, Mr. Chairman, we can do that, so.

17
18 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Vanessa and then Miguel.

19
20 **VANESSA RAMÍREZ:** Thank you. Vanessa Ramírez for the record.

21
22 I just want to clarify that these incidents have not been with the
23 enforcement that we usually have in here. I have the opportunity
24 to talk to one of them in the marina and most of them are coming
25 from the Gulf or the South Atlantic divisions. So, it's not people
26 that is usually in this area. They just were assigned just because
27 of the situation. They are still around sometimes, but it's only
28 to address it the way that they are supposed to and be more
29 respectful with our commercial fishermen. Not all of them are in
30 drugs or, you know. Thanks.

31
32 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Miguel.

33
34 **MIGUEL BORGES:** Vanessa, I understand what you're saying. So,
35 trying to get to a common ground, I could volunteer to make a
36 meeting with you and the supervisors of the unit that you're
37 talking about. I know them, so we could sit down and talk it over.
38 I think it's something that has to be addressed. So, I could
39 volunteer to set up that meeting with those units, and then we
40 could talk it over.

41
42 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** That good. Do you include the Coast Guard and
43 all those people?

44
45 **MIGUEL BORGES:** It could be with the Coast Guard, but the ones
46 you're saying, it's not the Coast Guard. So, I think we could start
47 first with the units there, because it's also, if we wait for
48 everybody to be there, it'll take forever and nothing's going to

1 get done. So, I propose first to meet with the units there in Cabo
2 Rojo. The ones she's talking about and then with Vanessa also.
3 I'll be there too and then we could, you know, start talking.

4
5 **MIGUEL A. ROLÓN:** Mr. Chairman, thank you. Because that's better.
6 So, we will wait until this happens and then we don't do anything
7 until that happens. And the Coast Guard also asked me, anyway.

8
9 The Coast Guard stopped a fishing man in Vieques because he was
10 fishing a strawberry grouper. They confiscated his catch, the boat
11 and everything. He asked for one call, and he called me. He said,
12 "Miguel, --" he used Spanish flourish words to tell me, "They
13 stopped me, and they had this." So, I had to talk to the Coast
14 Guard who was there, and I said, "Sir, we don't have strawberry
15 groupers. It's red hind. You have to go to Florida to get
16 strawberry groupers." But that guy then asked the Coast Guard big
17 Chief, to start workshops identifying fish and we've had that since
18 that time. The Coast Guard that often-- I used to go, but now
19 Graciela and Marco sometimes they go. So, step in the right
20 direction. We will wait for you.

21
22 **CARLOS FARCHETTE:** Okay. So, the next Council meeting will be
23 December 5th and 6th on Saint Thomas, 2023. I want to give a special
24 thank you to Señor Cordero in the back for his excellent job with
25 the translation.

26
27 It's 5:17. The CFMC 182nd meeting is adjourned. Everybody, have a
28 good trip back.

29
30 (Whereupon the meeting adjourned on August 16, 2023.)