

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
(NOAA)

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NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS)

ATLANTIC HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY PANEL

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PUBLIC MEETING

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TUESDAY
MAY 14, 2024

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The Panel met at the DoubleTree by Hilton Silver Spring, 8777 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland, at 9:30 a.m., Bennett Brooks, facilitating.

MEMBERS PRESENT

JASON ADRIANCE, Louisiana Department of
Natural Resources*

DAVID APPOLONIA, F/V Blitzen*

KESLEY BANKS, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
Council

CAROLYN BELCHER, Georgia Department of Natural
Resources*

RICK BELLAVANCE, New England Fishery Management
Council

SPENCER BODE, F/V Titan, Seafreeze Ltd.

JOHN BOHORQUEZ, The Ocean Foundation

PETER CHAIBONGSAI, The Billfish Foundation

DANIEL COFFEY, Harte Research Institute for
Gulf of Mexico Studies

MATT DAVIS, Maine Department of Marine Resources*

JOHN DEPERSENAIRE, Viking Yacht Company*
AMY DUKES, South Carolina Department of Natural
Resources
RAIMUNDO ESPINOZA, Conservacion ConCiencia Inc.*
YAMITZA RODRIGUEZ FERRER, Puerto Rico DNER,
Recreational and Sport Fisheries Division*
STEVEN GETTO, American Bluefin Tuna
Association*
WILLY GOLDSMITH, Pelagic Strategies
WALT GOLET, University of Maine School
of Marine Sciences, Gulf of Maine Research
Institute
MARTHA GUYAS, ASA Fishing
GREG HINKS, New Jersey Department of
Environmental Protection
JAMES HULL, Hull Seafood
BOB HUMPHREY, Sport-Ventures Charters and Casco
Bay Bluefin Bonanza
MATT HUTH, Fresh Catch Seafood
CHRISTINE KITTLE, Florida Fish and Wildlife
Department*
JEFF KNEEBONE, New England Aquarium*
SCOTT LENOX, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management
Council
NADYA MAMOOZADEH, Michigan State University
JACKSON MARTINEZ, Environmental Defense Fund
AL MERCIER
ROBERT "FLY" NAVARRO, Fly Zone Fishing
SANDY NGUYEN, F/V St. Joseph & Peter
MICHAEL PIERDINOCK, Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat
Association
BRUCE POHLOT, IGFA*
MARTIN T. SCANLON, Blue Water Fisherman's
Association
DAVID SCHALIT, American Bluefin Tuna
Association
GREGORY SKOMAL, Massachusetts Division of Marine
Fisheries*
CAITLIN STARKS, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission*
PERRY TRIAL, Texas Parks and Wildlife
Department*

SCOTT VAETH, Miss Shell Seafood, Inc., Grey Ghost
Fishing
ABBY VAUGHN, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant
- State Representative for Alabama
RICK WEBER, South Jersey Marina
ALAN WEISS, Blue Water Fishing Tackle Co.
CHARLES WITEK
ESTHER WOZNIAK, The Pew Charitable Trusts
ROBERT ZALES, Southeast Fisheries Association

*participating by webinar

NOAA NMFS STAFF PRESENT

RANDY BLANKINSHIP, Division Chief, Atlantic
Highly Migratory Species Management
Division
KARYL BREWSTER-GEISZ, HQ Fish Branch Chief,
Atlantic Highly Migratory Species
Management Division
PETE COOPER, Branch Chief, Atlantic Highly
Migratory Species Management Division
LISA CRAWFORD, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
JENNIFER CUDNEY, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
BECKY CURTIS, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
GUY DUBECK, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
STEVE DURKEE, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
ELSA GUTIERREZ, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
ERIANNA HAMMOND, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
BECKY JAUCH, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
BRAD MCHALE, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
SARAH MCLAUGHLIN, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
DELISSE ORTIZ, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division

ANNA QUINTRELL, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
LARRY REDD, JR., Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
GEORGE SILVA, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
CARRIE SOLTANOFF, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
ANN WILLIAMSON, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division
JACKIE WILSON, Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division

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Adjourn

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (9:30 a.m.)

3 MR. BROOKS: All right. Well, we got
4 you talking so now we're going to shut down, so
5 let's start up here.

6 Good morning everybody, welcome. It
7 is great to see everybody here and have such a
8 nice, full room, and thanks to folks online.

9 And I'm going to just hand it over to
10 Randy to give you a quick welcome and see if we
11 can fix this feedback, Randy.

12 MR. BLANKINSHIP: I'll try to keep it
13 a little further away, maybe that will help.

14 Good morning everybody, it's great to see you.
15 My name is Randy Blankinship, I'm the Chief of
16 the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management
17 Division.

18 And I am really happy to welcome you
19 all to our HMS Advisory Panel meeting, both those
20 of you that are in the room with us and those
21 that are online with us as well.

22 We are excited that you're here, we're

1 really glad that you've made the time to be with
2 us and to share your thoughts. And we'll have
3 some more discussion about that in a moment.

4 But first, I want to take a chance to
5 introduce Kelly Denit, who is sitting to my left
6 and to y'all's right in the room. Kelly is the
7 Director of the Office of Sustainable Fisheries
8 in the National Marine Fisheries Services here in
9 Silver Spring.

10 And you might, so those of you that
11 know, the Office of Sustainable Fisheries
12 wouldn't wonder this, but some of you may wonder
13 what is the Office of Sustainable Fisheries.

14 And just real quickly, that is an
15 office that has several different divisions in
16 it, HMS Management Division is one of them.
17 Also, Domestic Fisheries Division, a division
18 that is centered on operations and regulatory
19 services.

20 So that group does a lot of the behind
21 the scenes operations of making regulatory
22 processes happen. And then also the

1 National Seafood Inspection Laboratory which is
2 located in Pascagoula, Mississippi, that goes by
3 the acronym, NSIL.

4 And so they are responsible for of
5 course, doing and tracking seafood safety issues
6 and has been operating there in that lab for
7 quite some time. So without any, I may have
8 stolen some of Kelly's thunder, I don't know.
9 But I will turn it right over to Kelly for
10 opening comments.

11 MS. DENIT: Great. Thank you, Randy.
12 Good morning, everybody. You did not steal any
13 of my thunder. Welcome, it's lovely to see all
14 of you. As Randy mentioned, thanks so much for
15 taking time out of your day and out of your
16 normal day job to be here and provide your input,
17 we really appreciate it.

18 Also wanted to express a hearty
19 welcome to all of our new members. I know we're
20 going to go around the room and do some quick
21 intros, but wanted to express our gratitude to
22 those of you who have accepted the challenge of

1 becoming an AP member and providing your thoughts
2 as part of our conversations and discussions over
3 the next three days.

4 And also just wanted to acknowledge,
5 because this is our first AP meeting since the
6 passing of Charlie Bergmann. And Randy's going
7 to touch on this a little bit more, but I wanted
8 to make sure and acknowledge that right up front.
9 I knew Charlie from when I started working in the
10 Agency back in 2005, and I know that he is missed
11 by many of us.

12 So I know we also have a very full
13 agenda. If you haven't met Bennett before, he is
14 a taskmaster. He will keep us on track and help
15 traffic cop to make sure that everybody has an
16 opportunity to provide their input, and we really
17 encourage everyone to do so. This is your forum
18 in which to provide your input.

19 You were selected to participate
20 because of the diverse perspectives that you
21 bring. So we look forward to hearing all of
22 that.

1 I also want to make sure and right up
2 front, acknowledge Amendment 15, the final
3 Environmental Impact Statement is out. A huge,
4 massive, I can't say loud enough to Steve Durkee
5 and Larry. How hard they and the rest of the
6 team worked to get that amendment through, and I
7 want to include Karyl in that as well.

8 I know there were others, but those
9 are the three main ones that I want to make sure
10 and acknowledge. I'm really looking forward to
11 the conversation tomorrow morning on Amendment 15
12 and what all is entailed in that. So that's a
13 huge milestone in our management for highly
14 migratory species. I'm looking forward to
15 hearing the thoughts.

16 I'm going to breeze through just a
17 couple additional points that are kind of the
18 general context setting for the rest of your
19 conversations.

20 The first is around our budget. So
21 for FY24, Congress did in fact pass a budget,
22 which is very exciting because for a while there

1 it was not clear that that was actually going to
2 happen.

3 And in general, the National Fisheries
4 Service did okay. If you were tracking it, the
5 increases that we did get are generally
6 associated with offshore wind, which I know has
7 been a significant topic of conversation amongst
8 this group as well as our Fishery Surveys.

9 There were other components that got
10 some minor plus-ups. But, you know, as I think
11 you all know from reading the news, even
12 maintaining your budget is a positive in the
13 current environment. And while that presents
14 challenges for us because of inflationary costs,
15 which you all are also dealing with in your
16 businesses, that's better than facing reductions.

17 I will also touch on the FY25
18 President's budget is also out and being
19 discussed on the Hill now. That also includes
20 increases for the National Marine Fisheries
21 Service. They are again generally focused on
22 offshore wind and a couple other areas.

1 The offshore wind increase does
2 include some funding for survey mitigation, so
3 trying to address the fishery-independent surveys
4 that the Agency runs, taking into account where
5 offshore wind facilities might be. And again,
6 I'm just highlighting that because I know that's
7 been a topic of conversation with the AP in the
8 past.

9 And I will wrap my comments up because
10 I'm sure your coffee is finally kicking in and
11 now you are psyched for Randy's presentation, an
12 overview with a total no-brainer, but it's an
13 election year.

14 So I just highlight that, because it
15 often means that the Agency is grappling with a
16 number of challenging topics, including trying to
17 get certain actions completed as well as just
18 generally a lot of focus and pressure on anything
19 that's controversial.

20 So that's just a data point for all of
21 you to keep in mind, no action needed. But just
22 a general reminder, just in case you had

1 forgotten that it is in fact, going to be a very
2 challenging year as we are making progress on a
3 whole host of priorities across the Agency.

4 And with that, I will stop. I'm happy
5 to answer any questions if there are any.
6 Otherwise, I will kick it back over to you
7 Bennett.

8 MR. BROOKS: I think we'll go to
9 Randy, but were there any questions?

10 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yes, so I appreciate
11 all of Kelly's comments. And also, I really
12 appreciate her mentioning Amendment 15 and what a
13 large amount of effort that went into that
14 measure. And we're giving that a couple of
15 comments here at the beginning, because it really
16 represents a significant change in Atlantic HMS
17 Management.

18 With that, and we're going to spend
19 more time talking about this tomorrow morning,
20 but just briefly, with the work towards
21 facilitating a systematic approach to access to
22 static closed areas that have been closed for 20

1 years.

2 And facilitating the ability to
3 collect data from within those areas, which then
4 in turn provides an opportunity for them to be
5 analyzed from a scientific standpoint, and
6 scientific data to support future decision
7 making, that that represents a very important
8 step that we didn't have before.

9 And that's what we're looking forward
10 to finalizing with the final rule. So I just
11 wanted to build off of her comments there to kind
12 of mention that. Tomorrow we will carry forward
13 with further discussion about Amendment 15.

14 I do want to take a moment here,
15 though, to also follow up on Kelly's comments
16 about the passing of Charlie Bergmann. Charlie
17 was a friend of Atlantic HMS for sure.

18 Charlie was a retired employee of the
19 National Marine Fisheries Service and the
20 Southeast Fishery Science Center. Charlie was,
21 before that, was a commercial fisherman.

22 And he drew off of his experiences in

1 commercial fishing, and also with scientific
2 research, to really be a significant contributor
3 to a lot of the work that was done by the Harvest
4 Systems' branch there in Pascagoula at the
5 Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

6 He was integral to a lot of the gear
7 research that occurred, and then after he
8 retired, of course, he continued to be involved
9 in fisheries issues at the council level and then
10 also with Atlantic HMS and was an HMS Advisory
11 Panel member.

12 In all my conversations with Charlie
13 over the years, I can say that he always
14 fishermen's interests at heart. And he was also
15 very, you know, truly dedicated to management of
16 Atlantic HMS.

17 And so with his passing, we're sad
18 that he won't be with us, he passed away in
19 December of last year. And I just want to take a
20 few seconds of silence to remember Charlie, if
21 you would.

22 Thank you very much. I will turn it

1 back over to Bennett.

2 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Randy. Excuse
3 me, I'm still clearing a cold. Yes, Bob?

4 MR. ZALES: Bob Zales the second. I
5 appreciate your comments about Charlie. As you
6 know, Charlie and I were great friends. I've
7 known Charlie, I guess since the early 2000s.
8 And we became great friends early on, Kaye
9 Bergmann, who he married was a council member at
10 the time. Dr. Hogarth actually married them, I
11 was at that wedding.

12 And Charlie, and I'm going to pass,
13 when I get back home, I'm going to pass all this
14 all on to Kaye, I'm sure she's going to
15 appreciate it. But Charlie was a great guy, he
16 really was where you talk about all the work that
17 he did when it came to turtle stuff, I mean, he
18 was instrumental in doing a whole lot there.

19 He was a great friend of the
20 fishermen, a tremendous guy, and I'm really
21 honored, I guess I'm sitting in his seat until
22 the end of the term.

1 I'm honored to be doing that and
2 appreciate your comments about Charlie. Like I
3 say, I will pass it on to the people down there
4 that knew him, but thank you very much.

5 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Excuse me. Again,
6 my name is Bennett Brooks. I'm with the
7 Consensus Building Institute. And it's been my
8 honor to be able to facilitate the Advisory Panel
9 for a number of years now. And it's great to see
10 longtime faces and a whole bunch of new faces
11 around the table as well and online.

12 So as always, just thank you all for
13 making the time. You have lots to do in your
14 lives and we really appreciate how much time you
15 put into this and energy and focus. So on behalf
16 of everyone, thank you for that.

17 As always, we've got a really nice mix
18 of folks around the table and online, all the
19 different sectors that are here, so we've got
20 commercial and rec fishing industry,
21 environmental interests, regional fishing
22 management organizations, states, academics,

1 obviously the full HMS staff is here as well, and
2 all the support that they do.

3 We will send around names of folks who
4 are in the room and online later this morning or
5 early afternoon. I know folks always want to
6 know sort of, who is in the mix. And so Pete and
7 team will pull that together and get some of the
8 rounds as opposed to just sort of stating
9 everyone by name, so just stay tuned for that.

10 But we do have some new members today,
11 and we want to give them a chance to introduce
12 themselves and to say a quick hello and sort of
13 what organization perspective they are
14 representing around the table.

15 So I'm just going to call folks out as
16 they are on my sheet here, and just invite you to
17 say a word. We will start with you, Spencer?
18 Sorry and let me just, I should tell you how you
19 --

20 MR. BODE: Good morning everyone, my
21 name is Spencer Bode, I'm from Rhode Island. I
22 own a mobile gear vessel charter boat that

1 participates in HMS fisheries. Half -- about
2 half of the year for the last decade, I've worked
3 for Seafreeze as a vessel engineer.

4 In the last eight months, I've been as
5 far south on the Continental Shelf as Norfolk,
6 and as far to the east as the Hague line.

7 MR. BROOKS: Thank you. And then you
8 turn it off when you are done, so okay. Bob?

9 MR. ZALES: Bob Zales the second. I'm
10 currently Executive Director of Southeastern
11 Fisheries Association. I have been, me and my
12 family, we're in the charter fishing business and
13 commercial fishing for 58 years. We started in
14 '65, both my parents I lost this past year. I
15 retired from the charter and commercial part and
16 took this job with Southeastern Fisheries.

17 I've been actively involved in fishery
18 management as an advisor and trying to help with
19 all the fishery management stuff, I guess, since
20 the late 80s. I first got involved in the king
21 mackerel fishery years ago in the Gulf of Mexico.

22 The job that I do now is representing

1 fishermen, pretty much everybody, shrimpers all
2 the way to mullet, to anything in between, reef
3 fish, HMS, all kinds of stuff, and looking
4 forward to the job that I have.

5 I've served only HMS, I'm back on here
6 now, I've kind of served on here back I guess,
7 when HMS started in the early 2000s, somewhere
8 around in there. I was on the AP for quite a
9 while, so this is kind of not new to me but then
10 again it is, so that's me.

11 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Go to Charles in
12 the corner?

13 MR. WITEK: Yeah, Charles Witek,
14 recreational fisherman, South Shore, Long Island,
15 New York. I've been an active participant in the
16 shark and tuna fishery since the late 1970s and
17 occasional participant in the white marlin
18 fishery since the same time.

19 Also a writer who specializes in
20 fishery management issues, a semi-retired
21 attorney who again specializes in statutory and
22 regulatory issues related to marine fisheries.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thank you, and
3 then just next to you, Nadia?

4 MS. MAMOOZADEH: Hi everyone, I'm
5 Nadia Mamoozadeh. I'm a research scientist at
6 Michigan State University. For the last ten or
7 so years, I've, you know, I'm a geneticist and I
8 do genetics work to help improve fisheries
9 management, including HMS species, billfish,
10 tuna, sharks. So really excited to be here and
11 meet with you all and participate in AP.

12 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thank you.
13 Esther, let's throw it to you.

14 MS. WOZNIAK: Hi everyone, Esther
15 Wozniak. I'm with the Pew Trusts, I'm originally
16 from a family of commercial albacore fishermen,
17 but that's on the West Coast, I'm now on the
18 East, based out of D.C.

19 Working at Pew, I lead a lot of our
20 efforts for outreach and coordination at ICCAT
21 and IATTC, that's the Inter-American Tropical
22 Tuna Commission working on things like harvest

1 strategies, electronic monitoring, and ending
2 illegal fishing. Thanks.

3 MR. BROOKS: Welcome. And then,
4 Scott, over to you.

5 MR. LENOX: Good morning everybody.
6 My name is Scott Lenox, I'm from Ocean City,
7 Maryland. I'm with a company that does marketing
8 for inshore and offshore charter and party boats.
9 We also represent a lot of offshore tournaments
10 in our area.

11 I'm currently on the Mid-Atlantic
12 Council, so I'm the Mid-Atlantic Council liaison
13 for HMS and looking forward to learning a lot of
14 new things here and working with you folks.
15 Thanks much.

16 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. John
17 DePersenaire is also a new member, you've seen
18 him as an alternate before, but he is now a full
19 member. I don't see him online yet.

20 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Right. And he had
21 reached out to Pete and me and let me know that
22 he actually had a personal thing he had to take

1 care of this morning, but he would be back on
2 right after that is over.

3 MR. BROOKS: Great. We have a couple
4 of proxies sitting in, we have Sandy Nguyen
5 sitting in for Chinh Nguyen. Maybe just raise
6 your hand over there, yep. And then we have Abby
7 Vaughn for Marcus, welcome.

8 And then I would be remiss if I didn't
9 note that we have a newish, oh longtime member,
10 so Marty Scanlon is back at the table and as a
11 full-time AP member so welcome back Marty. And
12 is there anyone new that I missed?

13 MR. VAETH: I'm new but I'm not new.

14 MR. BROOKS: You can say a word, since
15 you're semi-new.

16 MR. VAETH: Hi, my name is Scott
17 Vaeth. I'm a commercial shark fisherman in South
18 Florida. I've been commercial sharking fishing
19 since the early 90s, and I've been an AP member
20 here, I don't know, back eight or nine years ago.
21 Thank you.

22 MR. BROOKS: Great, thank you. And I

1 don't think there's anyone online who is new as
2 an AP member, but if there is just throw
3 something in the chat and we'll bring you in.
4 But and let me just note also, we have nobody
5 leaving the panel this meeting.

6 As you know, we are, as they say,
7 there's a cycling on and off, and nobody is
8 cycling off at this meeting. At the fall
9 meeting, we will probably have some changes that
10 will, as we like to create an opportunity to give
11 those folks a chance to say a few words. So we
12 can look to that for the fall.

13 So as for today and tomorrow and
14 Thursday, lots to cover as always. I really feel
15 like we've got an agenda that's built in time for
16 good conversations on all of these topics, so I
17 think hopefully we won't feel too squeezed as we
18 walk through the next two and a half days. Today
19 will be a mix of discussions, we will start as
20 always with a HMS activities overview.

21 We'll hear about the ICCAT meeting
22 results, Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Management updates

1 and trends. We'll get an update on rulemaking.

2 And then we'll hear from HMS staff on
3 the Essential Fish Habitat final five-year
4 review. Tomorrow again, another mix of
5 discussions. We'll have plenty of time to talk
6 about the A15 rule, which Kelly has already
7 mentioned. Obviously a lot of interest here
8 around the table on that, and we'll see what's in
9 the final FEIS there and walk through the final
10 alternatives.

11 We'll hear about the DWH restoration
12 update. We'll hear from enforcement and then
13 we'll have update from Atlantic Shark Fisheries
14 management and trends. And then on our final day
15 we will have a conversation around Atlantic HMS
16 fishing gear considerations, sort of a potpourri
17 of potential gear mods and changes that have been
18 kicked around and talked about. We'll hear from
19 leadership on Thursday.

20 And then we'll have a conversation
21 around a logical model description for exploring
22 fishery issues, kind of a different topic and I

1 think an intriguing one.

2 Just a note, we will have breaks in
3 the morning and in the afternoon. Lunch will be
4 at 11:30 today and 12 o'clock on Wednesday,
5 that's 90 minutes for folks that are new.

6 It's a really good time to deal with
7 phone calls, emails, whatever it is you need to
8 do to keep your other life going so you can be
9 really focused on the conversation when you are
10 here around the table. For members of the public
11 that are here or online, thank you, as always for
12 making the time to be here.

13 We take public comment at the end of
14 each day, today that will be at 4:30. And then
15 it's just, as far as today's program, more
16 specifically, break will be at 10:45, again lunch
17 11:30 to 1:00, break at 2:15, public comment 4:30
18 and we'll adjourn at 5 o'clock. And there will
19 be a no-host social hour downstairs in the first
20 floor restaurant area.

21 For again, new folks, it's a really
22 nice chance to get to know folks around the

1 table. Those informal conversations are
2 incredibly valuable to get to understand folks.
3 It's really hard to have that back and forth
4 around this table, and that's the place where you
5 can do that.

6 Ground rules, how we try to structure
7 the conversation so we have good, effective
8 conversations around the table, the usual rules
9 that I throw at you still apply, right.

10 Contribute so we can hear from you,
11 share time so we can hear from everyone, you
12 know, we're 40 people or so, so really be mindful
13 of being succinct. Integrate what you are
14 hearing, the more, this is not a consensus
15 seeking group.

16 However, the more the HMS staff is
17 able to understand where there is sort of
18 alignment and where there's not, it's really
19 helpful for them in sort of putting forward
20 approaches that will make sense around the table.
21 Ask questions of each other, as well.

22 If someone's saying something that you

1 don't understand, ask a question, let's learn
2 together. Just a couple of specific asks that we
3 ask, reminders, these conversations are sometimes
4 pretty intense, there is, people feel
5 passionately, and that's why you're here. But
6 recognize that people come to this table with
7 lots of different perspectives.

8 So just be focused in your comments,
9 be respectful in your comments, be respectful in
10 your questions. I think this group does a
11 fantastic job of doing that, so just keep it
12 going. Focus on bringing the best available data
13 to the table, so that we're learning from each
14 other, again, and make clear of what's the data
15 your bringing, where's it coming from, again,
16 characterize the data.

17 The folks around the table, the folks
18 around the virtual table, the AP members, that's
19 where the conversation is centered. If there are
20 other folks in the room, other experts, et
21 cetera, I will look to Randy and his team to let
22 me know when it makes sense to bring in a non-AP

1 voice. But other than that, we'll stick with AP
2 members.

3 Just a couple of points around hybrid
4 rules, and then I'm going to get out of the way
5 and hand it off to Randy. One, I think we do a
6 really good job of sort of balancing the online
7 and in the room.

8 But a couple of things you all can do
9 to help. One is if you're here in person, just
10 recognize there's folks out there. And so when
11 I'm not calling on you, it's because we're
12 bringing in folks online, so just create space
13 for that. Avoid side conversations because that
14 can really make things hard on folks online to
15 hear.

16 When you want to get in the queue in
17 the room, just raise your card and put it on its
18 side, and then I will know who wants to get in.
19 If you are joining online, AP members, if you can
20 keep your cameras on it's nice because we can see
21 you, recognize it's a long time, please at least
22 turn it on when you are talking, it would be

1 appreciated.

2 We will mute you so you don't have to
3 worry about muting yourself, so please stay on
4 mute. When you want to get online, please raise
5 a virtual hand, you will see that on the bottom
6 of your screen. If that doesn't work, just throw
7 something in the chat. Ditto if for any reason
8 you're not hearing us, we're losing connectivity,
9 let us know right away, we do not want you to
10 miss the conversation.

11 I think we've got a dedicated Internet
12 line this meeting so it should be clearer,
13 hopefully we won't cut in and out at all.

14 Finally, attendees do have a chat to use. My
15 general advice on using the chat, is to use it
16 sparingly. If somebody said something that you
17 agree with, say "Ditto, I really like what Willy
18 just said," and slap it in the chat.

19 I generally recommend avoiding long
20 commentary in there for two reasons, one, if we
21 have a chat going on, people are not paying
22 attention. More importantly many people around

1 the table will not see it. But I really ask you
2 to use it sparingly and smartly.

3 The chat is only for the AP members,
4 members of the public, when it comes time for
5 public comment, if you would like to make a
6 comment, but don't want to make it verbally, you
7 can throw it in the chat.

8 Lastly, again, I'm going to, running
9 this queue, I will, I try to sort of on the one
10 hand take cards in the order that they come up,
11 on the other hand, I'm going to balance between
12 the room and online.

13 I'm also going to balance between the
14 sectors, and I'm going to balance between the
15 people who often have a lot to say, and the
16 people who I want to try to draw into the
17 conversation.

18 So I invite you to, ask you to give me
19 that space to try to make sure that, again, we're
20 hearing from the breadth of perspectives. And
21 before you speak, please just say your name and
22 your affiliation.

1 We have someone who is taking notes
2 throughout, thank you for that, and it will help
3 him to make sure that he's characterizing who is
4 speaking. If there are any tech issues, please
5 chat or email Pete.

6 And we will be recording this meeting,
7 it helps for taking notes and making sure we're
8 hearing all of your good thoughts. Pete, I don't
9 think you asked me to say this, but I will say it
10 anyway.

11 It's important to get in your travel
12 requests on time, it's always appreciated.
13 That's it. Stay comfortable, stay focused.
14 Questions, anybody, anything? Game plan, ground
15 rules? All right. If not, then I am going to
16 hand it off to Randy to do the update.

17 I have a hand online, okay. Yes,
18 David Appolonia, please come in.

19 MR. APPOLONIA: I'm out of Point
20 Judith, Rhode Island. And I'm on the panel to
21 represent commercial bluefin tuna fishermen. And
22 the reason I got involved with this panel is

1 basically every day there is to fish for giant
2 bluefin, I deal with them. I know lots of
3 bluefin tuna based in Rhode Island and
4 Massachusetts and New York. And just really I
5 just wanted to introduce myself and provide my
6 input so you know who I am, so thank you.

7 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, David. My
8 apologies for missing you and thank you for
9 raising your hand, appreciate it.

10 Okay. Anything else that -- I don't
11 think I see anybody online. Okay. Randy, over
12 to you.

13 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Thank you, Bennett.
14 And I'll echo, thank you David Appolonia for
15 speaking up there, appreciate that.

16 All right. So we're going to
17 transition into the first presentation on our
18 agenda, and that's the overview presentation.
19 And this is the -- the usual presentation that we
20 do that this time of each AP meeting to kind of
21 touch base on a few things that have happened
22 since the last AP meeting, give you some updates

1 on a few things, both that are happening within
2 HMS Management Division, but also outside of the
3 HMS Management Division.

4 And the topics that we'll cover in
5 this presentation are those items we want kind of
6 give those updates on, but it's not the things
7 that we have dedicated agenda items for. Those
8 will be covered at later times in the agenda over
9 the next two-and-a-half days.

10 So we'll touch on staff changes, we'll
11 give an update on a few other things here, like
12 that petition for rulemaking in just a moment,
13 and other things that are in the list here on the
14 left side of this slide.

15 So related to staff changes, we've had
16 a few since our last meeting. And you'll see
17 that the new faces that we have here listed are
18 some new folks that we've brought onboard.

19 And all of them are within the
20 Fisheries Reporting and Monitoring branch of our
21 HMS Management Division. That's within the
22 branch that is led by Brad McHale, he's the

1 branch chief over this group. And some of these
2 folks are here, well, one of them, I think. The
3 others are all either online or yet to come
4 onboard, they're almost here.

5 So Dan Daye is one of them. We're
6 excited to have him, and he's online. Jodie York
7 also online and Becky Jauch, who is here in the
8 room. And Becky is against the wall over there,
9 please wave your hand, Becky, glad to have you
10 here, Becky. And then Rob Kuvinka, who is
11 actually starting on Monday, this next Monday, so
12 we're looking forward to that. These are
13 positions that we're actually backfilling folks
14 that moved onto other positions.

15 We're just really glad to be able to
16 bring, you know, this branch back up to capacity.
17 And so also, same face but new team, is Lisa
18 Crawford, I saw Lisa, and there she is, sorry.
19 All right, Lisa was a Knauss Fellow last year,
20 and now is on the Products and Services Branch,
21 that's Pete Cooper's team, and so we're glad to
22 have her.

1 And then I also realized that not on
2 this list, is our current Knauss Fellow, Anna
3 Quintrell, who is back here, raise your hand
4 high, so we're glad to have Anna this year and
5 excited for her work.

6 Moving along, I want to touch on the
7 petition for rulemaking that we spent some time
8 talking about briefly last fall and that we've
9 received quite a bit of public comment on during
10 a public comment period back in the fall AP
11 meeting.

12 This was a petition that we received
13 in September of 2023 specifically requesting the
14 banning of harpooning at night, harpooning, these
15 are bluefin, harpooning bluefin within 100 yards
16 of mobile-gear fishing vessels, harpooning using
17 bait to lure fish to the surface in the
18 harpoon-only category.

19 And more specifically, banning of
20 harpooning from a half an hour, no harpooning
21 from half an hour after sunset to half an hour
22 before sunrise, and no harpooning near

1 mobile-gear vessels, or using the gurry stream or
2 bycatch as attractant for harpooning. We had a
3 similar petition on this issue in 2021 that we
4 denied at that time.

5 In this particular case, in addition
6 to the AP meeting last fall where we touched on
7 this, we also had in March of this year, a
8 listening session, which was open to the public
9 where we heard points of view on this issue.

10 And the points of view were on various
11 sides of the issue. And then we just recently
12 announced that we have denied this petition for
13 rulemaking as well. And there's some reasons,
14 primarily related to not demonstrating a need for
15 the regulations to be made at this time. This is
16 an ongoing issue, and some of you are familiar
17 with the harpoon category.

18 And we will be continuing to monitor
19 that fishery as we always do. And we will be
20 talking a little bit more about that during
21 Brad's presentation on the bluefin fishery in a
22 moment.

1 And then moving along, for a touch on
2 our Climate Vulnerability Assessment, or CVA, for
3 HMS. This is something that we've been working
4 on for quite some time now.

5 The Climate Vulnerability Assessments
6 have been conducted by, primarily led by the
7 science centers within the Agency; and have had
8 involvement of a lot of folks, both inside the
9 Agency and outside the Agency from a scientific
10 standpoint.

11 The HMS CVA for the Atlantic is led by
12 the HMS Management Division, and our folks have
13 been leading that with involvement once again,
14 from folks inside and outside of the Agency.
15 That CVA is currently in internal review.

16 Our team has been working on a
17 manuscript that will be released, hopefully later
18 this year, that describes the methods and results
19 and highlights the trends. It includes species
20 narratives with species-specific information in
21 there.

22 It was, NOAA review of that, was

1 presented at the World Fisheries Conference and
2 then other presentations we planned for other
3 workshops, for FishSCORE and for AFS meeting in
4 Honolulu, just to name a couple of them.

5 Since the last meeting, we've been
6 doing a lot of operations, and this is a summary
7 of some of the statistics associated with those
8 operations. They include the issuance of
9 Exempted Fishing Permits and Scientific Research
10 Permits and Letters of Acknowledgement, we've had
11 24 of those.

12 Also Shark Fishery Research Permits,
13 there've been three of those issued. We've
14 registered 94 tournaments. We've conducted seven
15 Shark Identification and Protected Species
16 workshops.

17 And our Atlantic HMS News subscriber
18 list is growing up to about 20,000 at this point.
19 And then we have the issuance of Open Access
20 Permits, which we do throughout the year. And
21 that number, at least at this point in this year,
22 is at a little over 13,000.

1 And then for Angling and
2 Charter/Headboat Permits, the Recreational Shark
3 Endorsement that accompanies that in order to be
4 able to fish for and harbor sharks, a little over
5 half of those permits have that shark endorsement
6 just as an indicator for how popular those
7 fisheries are.

8 And then, for the Charter/Headboat
9 Permit, it also can be a commercial permit if a
10 commercial endorsement is held on that permit,
11 and so there's about 44 percent of the
12 Charter/Headboat Permits that have that
13 commercial endorsement.

14 Also, we have our usual slide with
15 links to the summaries of HMS Landings and
16 tournament registrations. So if you're following
17 online and looking at the PDF, there should be a
18 hotlink there that you can follow if you're
19 interested in taking a look at the information
20 provided in these Landings updates and the
21 tournament webpage as well.

22 And then I wanted to touch on HMS

1 Catch Reporting options. This is the information
2 that we regularly put out through our compliance
3 guides and on website and through other outlets,
4 but we also find that we need to continually kind
5 of remind folks about this, so this is an
6 opportunity to do this.

7 So for landings and dead discards of
8 bluefin tuna and landings of billfish and
9 swordfish, those must be reported within 24 hours
10 of a conclusion of a trip. And it can be done
11 through several different ways.

12 Some of them include the Atlantic HMS
13 Permit Shop website, which is where permits can
14 be acquired, but reporting can also occur there.
15 Also through the HMS Catch Reporting smartphone
16 app that can be downloaded onto a smartphone.

17 And then also through the SAFIS eTrips
18 mobile and online application that's available,
19 for Open Access Permit holders it submits state
20 or federal vessel trip reports via eTrips.

21 And then also for the States of North
22 Carolina and Maryland, their Catch Card programs

1 meet this need as well. And I'll highlight, some
2 of you are aware that Maryland and North Carolina
3 are considering transitioning to electronic
4 reporting and moving away from paper Catch Cards.
5 More information may be coming about that later
6 this year or next year as the states lead that
7 charge.

8 And then also, a little bit of
9 information that currently the commonly used
10 GARFO FishOnline and the BlueFin Data, LLC or
11 VESL reporting platforms don't collect all of the
12 data that are necessary to satisfy the HMS
13 reporting requirements.

14 But those applications are working to
15 incorporate those features to their -- to their
16 applications. So we are working with them on
17 that and hope that that will take place soon.

18 And then finally, it is the case for
19 HMC Commercial Logbooks, that those must be
20 continue to be submitted via paper at this time.
21 That is not the long-term goal for those, but at
22 least because of some system difficulties, that

1 is what has to happen for now.

2 Now shifting to outside of HMS
3 Management Division, there's a lot that's
4 happening. Some reminders about some of those.
5 One is the Hudson Canyon Sanctuary process that
6 is managed through the National Ocean Service and
7 National Marine Sanctuaries program.

8 The Sanctuary Advisory Council has
9 been formed and has been meeting on this.
10 There's been presentations about this to this
11 Advisory Panel. And we did that last in
12 September 2022, I believe, and then, also at the
13 Sanctuaries program's request provided input
14 about whether additional fishing regulations were
15 necessary for such a proposed sanctuary.

16 And the HMS Management Division
17 responded and said that we do not believe that
18 additional fisheries regulations are necessary,
19 that the existing HMS Management suite of
20 regulations is sufficient for managing within the
21 sanctuary.

22 Participation on a Sanctuary Advisory

1 Council is ongoing. Some of you on this table, I
2 think, serve on that body, and we have HMS
3 representation as well.

4 Continuing on with things happening
5 outside of the Division, so -- and within the
6 Division I should say. Ecosystem-Based Fishery
7 Management Initiative is ongoing.

8 So this is not a new process, going
9 back to the original Ecosystem-Based Fishery
10 Management or EBFM, roadmap on policy that were
11 developed and intended to go through 2022, was
12 something that we spoke to you all today, about
13 back when that was formed.

14 But the policy has been revised in
15 January of this year. And our Division staff are
16 working to develop the new roadmap to implement
17 that policy.

18 And the HMS EBFM Implementation Policy
19 has continued to implement the first version of
20 that Implementation Plan in the interim. So this
21 is a process that's ongoing and we will keep you
22 informed about this as things develop, probably

1 at future AP meetings.

2 But related to implementation of this,
3 we're missing a slide. Well, there was a slide
4 in here that highlighted last week's activities
5 that our team did down in Puerto Rico.

6 It's what, keep going, I messed up the
7 order of things? Oh, it's on the EEJ topic, I'm
8 sorry about that.

9 My apologies, I'm going to skip order
10 here and I'm going to talk about an outreach that
11 took place associated with implementation of the
12 EEJ plan. My apologies for that mental lapse.

13 This was a really great outreach trip
14 that occurred last week, where we had a team of
15 folks that went down and did quite a bit of
16 engagement with fishermen and stakeholders in
17 Puerto Rico, holding meetings throughout that
18 area.

19 We had great participation, about a
20 hundred participants and did a lot of engagement
21 work to help folks get signed up for and get
22 issued Atlantic HMS fishing permits. And

1 additional outreach for this will be planned
2 later on.

3 And as I continue to change my order,
4 I'm going to backwards in time to talk about
5 equity and environmental adjustment, justice
6 rather. The Agency released the National EEJ
7 Strategy in May of last year.

8 This is a priority for trying to
9 address equity related to environmental resources
10 that involves access to those resources, equity
11 in bearing the burden associated with those
12 resources, and access to process and equity with
13 that as well.

14 And the justice side of this, of
15 course, is with trying to address past inequities
16 that may have occurred related to environmental
17 resource access. And then also work to avoid
18 future injustice associated with that as well.
19 So the regional and program offices for our
20 office, it's the same, both fisheries have been
21 working with developing an implementation plan,
22 and we anticipate that that will be released in

1 June.

2 The plans are designed to be living
3 documents, and will be updated over time. And we
4 will, this is something that we intend to work
5 on, you know, as time goes on, and continue to
6 update this as well.

7 I think that one of the things that
8 will be very valuable that we have already
9 benefitted from, is the engagement and ideas that
10 you all have around the table on this topic. And
11 we will look forward to your continued engagement
12 and ideas on this as well.

13 So I'm going to move back to touching
14 on Northeast Canyons Monument. This is something
15 that has been worked on for quite some time by
16 the Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries
17 in the development of a monument management plan.
18 And codifying the commercial fishing prohibition
19 that's associated with this monument.

20 In the regulations that implement the
21 Magnuson-Stevens Act, that's 600 regulations, as
22 opposed to the regional regulations. And the

1 Agency is looking to maintain all fishing permit
2 authorizations that we currently have and have
3 those continue within the monument boundary as
4 well. And this is ongoing work that we will work
5 towards keeping you updated on as time goes on.

6 On an update on recreational fishing
7 data, and this is something we've had agenda
8 items on in the past, and we don't for this
9 particular meeting, but wanted to give you kind
10 of an update on this.

11 So for the Large Pelagic Survey, which
12 covers Maine through North Carolina, and is
13 designed primarily to collect data on rare event
14 type fisheries, like HMS Fisheries, that the
15 pilot testing for the LPS redesign was completed
16 in 2023.

17 And the folks in S&T, and contractors
18 working with them, have been working on analyzing
19 that data in order to submit that new design for
20 certification under the Marine Recreational
21 Information Program or MRIP. And then following
22 certification, next step will be to develop a

1 calibration for that LPS time series going back
2 in time.

3 And then that will be evaluated by our
4 scientists at the Southeast Fishery Science
5 Center before any new estimates are developed.
6 And those might be -- that might be incorporated
7 into our management processes domestically and
8 for submitting to ICCAT to update information
9 there.

10 The historic Large Pelagic Survey
11 design will be conducted this year in 2024 in
12 order to facilitate consistent information,
13 particularly for bluefin tuna and a management
14 strategy evaluation process at ICCAT.

15 And then following this year, the plan
16 is for the new design to be implemented in 2025
17 or 2026, pending that MRIP certification in the
18 Southeast Fishery Science Center review of that
19 new design.

20 Moving along to kind of touching on
21 our wrap-up, and I'm not going to spend a lot of
22 time on this, because Bennett does do a great job

1 of covering some of these things.

2 But of course, with our engagement
3 with you all, our goal is for us to have great
4 communication with you and for you to have good
5 communication with us.

6 We always have had a goal of trying to
7 avoid surprises where we can, to keep you all
8 informed. And then as you reach out to your
9 stakeholders that you represent and then funnel
10 the information back from them to us, that goal
11 can be accomplished. Through all of this, of
12 course, we try to keep a, you know, an air of
13 respect in all of our engagements.

14 A quick touch on logistics for travel.
15 This is your first reminder that receipts from
16 your travel will be due May 23rd, so be prepared
17 for that in order to facilitate timely
18 reimbursement of travel. And there are some
19 links here for the travel voucher form and for
20 the email receipts that would be sent to Pete
21 Cooper.

22 And in conclusion, we're looking

1 forward to a very productive engagement on this
2 and other agenda items through the rest of this
3 meeting. With that, I will conclude my
4 presentation.

5 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Randy. So let's
6 see if there are any questions or comments on
7 anything Randy just shared. And again, folks
8 online just raise a virtual hand and in the room,
9 as David has done, just raise your card and I'm
10 going to ask keep it up until I have chosen you.
11 Some of you put it down after you have raised it,
12 David Schalit, I'm looking at you. And so, yeah,
13 often you put it down, and then I forget. So
14 just keep it up until I get to you. David,
15 you're up.

16 MR. SCHALIT: Randy, thanks very much
17 for that comprehensive presentation. A couple of
18 comments, questions. Regarding, what was the
19 slide number here, Page 6, it mentions that the
20 Atlantic HMS new subscribers is approximately
21 20,000, that's impressive, that's jumped up quite
22 a bit, that's terrific.

1 I wonder if next time, we could have
2 a breakdown of what percentage, the number of
3 permit of longline recreational commercial hand
4 gear permit holders are represented there? That
5 could help us to improve outreach in general.

6 And let's see, there was a couple of
7 other items here. Oh, yes. Regarding EBFM, has
8 that been ratified by Congress?

9 MR. BLANKINSHIP: I don't think I know
10 the answer to that question and would have to
11 punt that to somebody that might know. I don't
12 know the nature of the ratification process for
13 EBFM. I'm looking at Kelly Denit right now,
14 actually because I'm like, that one's outside of
15 my wheelhouse.

16 MR. BROOKS: Yeah, if you could get
17 the mic, thanks Kelly.

18 MS. DENIT: Thanks, Janet. Good
19 morning everyone. So in general, David, the
20 Agency considers EBFM to be incorporated under
21 our existing authorities under the
22 Magnuson-Stevens Act.

1 So I'm not exactly sure what you're
2 getting at, the ratification of EBFM, but
3 certainly the Agency has issued our
4 Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management Policy,
5 we've issued our roadmap, we're in the process of
6 issuing an updated roadmap and updated policy.

7 Councils have taken action to
8 incorporate Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management
9 into their management processes as have we with
10 Atlantic HMS, so I think that is grounded already
11 in our existing statutory authorities. And as
12 far as I'm aware, there is not any other pending
13 legislation related to EBFM at this point.

14 MR. SCHALIT: Just to follow up, I
15 was, I'm thinking, I mean I understand it is
16 definitely NOAA policy and I have no problem with
17 that. It's just that I would assume, I was
18 assuming, but perhaps appreciate your confirming
19 that this would be incorporated in an up --
20 changes to, any changes to Magnuson-Stevens and
21 that would require Congress approval?

22 MS. DENIT: So various versions of a

1 re-authorized Magnuson-Stevens Act have been
2 offered, most recently by Representative Huffman
3 on the House side. Those have included proposed
4 statutory changes that highlight Ecosystem-Based
5 Fisheries Management, climate, a host of other
6 policy related actions. But to date, Congress
7 has not taken any action on the Magnuson
8 reauthorization bill.

9 MR. BLANKINSHIP: And quick response
10 to your other suggestion there about breaking
11 down of these membership to the email listserv
12 for lack of a better term, for HMS News Gov
13 Delivery. So that sign-up does not collect
14 information currently about different stakeholder
15 representation. So that's not something actually
16 we can do right now. But we can keep that idea
17 in mind as we discuss what future, you know,
18 options might be available for that database.

19 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, David. Any other
20 questions in the room or online? Again, if in
21 the room, just raise up -- please, Bob?

22 MR. ZALES: Yeah, a couple of

1 questions. And I don't -- I don't remember when
2 the shark endorsement was first required for HMS
3 permit.

4 MR. BROOKS: Can you move a touch
5 closer to your microphone?

6 MR. ZALES: I said I don't remember
7 when the shark endorsement was first required for
8 the permits. But since it was first required, do
9 you have any information on how much it's
10 increased since it was first required?

11 And the reason for this question is
12 because of an absolute abundance of sharks that
13 are out there that people, in order to fish for
14 them, have to have that endorsement. So I wonder
15 if there's a number there somewhere?

16 MR. BLANKINSHIP: We could probably
17 look in past information and see if we can find
18 that for you and report back on that. It is my
19 recollection off the top of my head is that it's
20 maintained about its current percentage for like
21 the last several years. So that's a quick
22 reaction, but we can look into that.

1 MR. BROOKS: Do you have anything else
2 Bob?

3 MR. ZALES: On Slide 7, where you've
4 got on here, daily bluefin tuna landings update
5 and you go to HMS permits, NOAA. I went there
6 and I can't find any. I may be looking in the
7 wrong place but where would I look for landings
8 information?

9 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Well, the last time
10 I went to look at it, it was there. We'll look
11 and see if it's there and get back with you on
12 that as well.

13 MR. ZALES: A final question is when
14 it comes to the recreational data part of this
15 and you are looking at doing some stuff with the
16 Large Pelagic Survey, are you all looking at
17 incorporating, hopefully not any of the FES
18 system into changing any of that?

19 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yeah, correct. It's
20 a different issue on that between LPS and the
21 MRIP system and the FES issue that you're talking
22 about with the change in estimating fishing

1 effort. And we had some presentations related to
2 that at the last AP meeting. And those issues
3 that are affecting MRIP more broadly are not
4 affecting the Large Pelagic Survey.

5 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Bob. Let's go
6 over to Willy.

7 MR. GOLDSMITH: Thanks, Bennett and
8 thanks, Randy for the presentation. And just a
9 follow-up on David's question about new
10 subscribers. I was looking at this presentation
11 you gave this time last year and the number of
12 subscribers was at 8,800 and now it's at 20,000
13 because obviously you have a huge increase.

14 And I'm, I mean, first off,
15 congratulations, that's wonderful news. I'm just
16 wondering is there anything in particular you
17 guys can point to that increase? I know we had
18 talked about little changes like when folks sign
19 up for permits, they can opt out as opposed to
20 opt in to the newsletter.

21 I'm just curious kind of, what the
22 Agency has done to have that kind of dramatic

1 increase the past year? Thanks.

2 MR. BLANKINSHIP: We noticed the
3 increase as well. And we also are curious about
4 what may have contributed to that. We've had
5 some, a lot of interest in some rulemaking
6 activity over the course of the last year, and so
7 that often times can contribute to that.

8 There also can be some outreach
9 efforts through different stakeholder groups to
10 highlight the need, you know if somebody's
11 interested in this, sign up, that can get some
12 attention sometimes. And so we don't control all
13 of those outlets.

14 So the answer -- quick answer to that
15 is, we're not sure, but we noticed the increase
16 too. And that's a -- it's a good thing, the more
17 news that we can get out to stakeholders and
18 distributed widely.

19 MR. GOLDSMITH: Yes, so this is a
20 follow up to that. Is the impression that a lot
21 of those folks are not permit holders, or is that
22 information captured, sort of what David was

1 saying? Or is it kind of members of the general
2 public that are getting that information?

3 MR. BLANKINSHIP: I thought Pete's
4 reaction would be that, and I said do you have
5 any idea and he said, no. And that's right, so
6 we don't have an idea about that.

7 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Just a quick
8 note in the chat from Dianne Stephan. For
9 bluefin tuna landing updates, please look under
10 the item "News." So if you look under "News" you
11 should be able to find it there. Walt, thank
12 you, you had your card up?

13 MR. GOLET: Yeah, I was just going to
14 follow up. Go to hmspermits.noaa.gov home, right
15 above the four tiled pictures it says "Bluefin
16 Tuna Landing Updates," that'll take to you to the
17 main page, so it's still there.

18 MR. BROOKS: Thank you, Walt. Other
19 questions or comments around the table or online?
20 I don't think I'm seeing anyone online, I'm just
21 going to pause for a second and then I will come
22 back into the room. Okay, David, come back in.

1 MR. SCHALIT: Quick question regarding
2 staff. There was a fellow named Nick who had a
3 last name that sounded like a renaissance Dutch
4 painter, has he been -- has someone else taken
5 over his job in GARFO?

6 MR. BROOKS: Nick Van Gogh, you mean?

7 MR. BLANKINSHIP: I think you are
8 talking about Nick Velseboer. And yeah, he moved
9 on to another position elsewhere. And he was a
10 contractor and his contract position has been --
11 has been backfilled with another person.

12 MR. BROOKS: But they are hunting for
13 a pointillist, so you know, stay tuned, it's
14 coming soon. Any other questions, comments?
15 Yes, please?

16 MR. HUTH: Thank you, yeah. I guess
17 this would go along with Slide 17, you know. I
18 think it's important especially for us, you know,
19 I'm representing the commercial sector, is the
20 consumer, you know, for this. And well, all of
21 us, we need to take into account the consumer in
22 the United States when we're making decisions.

1 MR. BROOKS: Thank you. And I've been
2 remiss in reminding folks to please start with
3 your name, again for our reporter here just to be
4 able to have any hope, and I will try to say your
5 names too.

6 But again, anybody online want to jump
7 in? And anybody in the room, any other questions
8 or comments for Randy?

9 Okay. If not, I want to note that we
10 do have a new member who has joined online. I
11 mentioned John DePersenaire, who has been an
12 alternate, is now a full member. John, welcome
13 and if you are at your computer at this moment,
14 we gave new AP members an opportunity just to
15 briefly introduce themselves and let folks know
16 who you are.

17 So if you're there, John, we will take
18 you off mute. And online folks, when you do come
19 in, if you just take a quick two-count before you
20 talk, that just gives our system in the room time
21 to pick up so we don't lose anything you're
22 saying. So John, if you are there, let you come

1 in, you are off mute.

2 MR. DEPERSENAIRE: Go again. Can you
3 hear me?

4 MR. BROOKS: John, we are hearing you
5 so please, you can start.

6 MR. DEPERSENAIRE: Good morning. I
7 apologize for not being able to make it in person
8 this week.

9 Anyways, my name is John DePersenaire,
10 I work at the Viking Marine Group, that's roughly
11 many different brands from boat building to
12 fabrication to service that are, you know,
13 intricately involved with the HMS Fisheries. We
14 also run and operate a sailfish tournament in
15 South Florida.

16 So I appreciate having the opportunity
17 to, you know, be a part of this process.

18 Obviously from our standpoint from our employee
19 standpoint and our customers, management of the
20 HMS species is critically important so this is a
21 great venue to be at for us.

22 So I appreciate it, looking forward to

1 seeing everyone in person, hopefully at the
2 September meeting. Again, apologize I can't be
3 there in person. Thank you.

4 MR. BROOKS: Great, thanks John,
5 welcome. Again, last sweep around the room or
6 online, anybody question or comment for Randy and
7 team?

8 Okay. In that case, I'm going to
9 encourage you all to have more coffee during the
10 break, so we have more questions after the break.
11 But we're going to go break early, it is, we're
12 about 10, 15 minutes ahead of schedule, so we
13 will take a longer break.

14 Do you want to reconvene or drop
15 early? What's your pleasure, Randy? At ten of?
16 Yeah, why don't we come back to the table at 10
17 of 11, and Walt, we will come to you. So 10 of
18 11, so about a little under 20 minutes. Thanks
19 everybody.

20 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
21 went off the record at 10:32 a.m. and resumed at
22 10:51 a.m.)

1 MR. BROOKS: While Pete and Walt are
2 teeing up their presentation, all right. Just a
3 quick answer to a question we had before,
4 regarding shark endorsements, shark endorsements
5 was effected in 2018, and were obtained by 53
6 percent of Open Access Permit holders.

7 The greatest number of permit holders
8 obtained the endorsement in 2021, that was 59
9 percent. And the percentage has ranged between
10 55 and 57 percent for the last three years.

11 So that answer is in the chat as well,
12 so thanks for running that down. And with that,
13 I'm going to hand it off to Walt Golet to give us
14 an update on the 2023 ICCAT meeting. Walt, it's
15 all yours.

16 MR. GOLET: Great, thanks Bennett.
17 All right. So what I'm going to do over the next
18 hopefully 15 or 20 minutes, is just kind of give
19 you an overview of what occurred at the 2023
20 ICCAT Annual Meeting.

21 And I know we have some new folks at
22 the table, so before I get into the talk itself,

1 I'll do a real quick, brief introduction, and
2 then I'll also sort of set the stage for what the
3 ICCAT Advisory Committee is and so forth.

4 So my name is Walt Golet. I'm an
5 assistant professor in the School of Marine
6 Sciences at the University of Maine. And I'm
7 also currently the Chair of the U.S. ICCAT
8 Advisory Committee.

9 So just to kind of brief you on that,
10 we have the NOAA HMS AP, and then we have the
11 U.S. ICCAT Advisory Committee. Those are two
12 different panels, some of the folks that are in
13 this room are also on that panel.

14 But some of the species that we work
15 with are more exclusive to ICCAT on the IAC. And
16 most of the work that we do is on the
17 international level. So it includes things like
18 participating in intersessional meetings which
19 occur throughout the year on specific species, it
20 also includes participation in the Annual Meeting
21 which is what I'm going to go over today.

22 So real quick, again, I'm not sure how

1 much folks know about how highly migratory
2 species are managed around the world. But
3 basically we divide the ocean up into different
4 convention areas. And we manage them through
5 what we call Regional Fishery Management
6 Organizations.

7 So there are five Regional Fishery
8 Management Organizations, or what we call RFMOs,
9 that are distributed around the globe and the
10 ocean basins, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific
11 Ocean, the Atlantic, and then the Southern Ocean,
12 and then we have a couple that are in the
13 Pacific.

14 The one, the convention area that we
15 are interested in, and of course, has the species
16 that we are most interested is ICCAT, so ICCAT's
17 the International Commission for the Conservation
18 of Atlantic Tunas, and the convention area is
19 basically the entirety of the Atlantic Ocean,
20 although they don't really deal with southern
21 bluefin tuna.

22 So conservation and management

1 recommendations are made for tunas, billfish, and
2 swordfish as well as bycatch species, so some of
3 the pelagic sharks are involved in this, I'll
4 talk specifically about those. As well as things
5 that you would not associate necessarily with
6 target catch, at least hopefully we're not
7 targeting sea turtles and so forth.

8 But when you put a hook in the water,
9 you never know what you're going to get, so
10 sometimes we do have to deal with bycatch. So
11 ICCAT also includes things like sea turtles, sea
12 birds, marine mammals, and things of that nature.
13 So just to kind of give you or bring you up to
14 speed on the language at ICCAT, it's a little bit
15 confusing.

16 Recommendations at ICCAT are
17 considered binding, in other words, that advice
18 is adopted and has to be followed, or it's
19 supposed to be followed, whereas recommendation,
20 or excuse me, whereas resolutions are things that
21 are not necessarily binding.

22 So as I go through, you're going to

1 see things that say "REC" for recommendation or
2 "RES" for resolution. And it's important to know
3 that they have different meanings, okay.

4 Again, a recommendation is a binding
5 agreement by the ICCAT contracting parties. And
6 a resolution is, you should try to follow that
7 advice, but you're not obligated to do it.

8 ICCAT's pretty big, and it's really
9 complicated. ICCAT has a variety of both
10 developing and developed states. We have a
11 variety of gear types, purse seines, harpoons,
12 handlines, pelagic longlines, bait boats, and
13 everything in between as well as a lot of
14 different fisheries that fish for those, and
15 fisheries that overlap in terms of the target
16 species that they catch by each one of those
17 gears.

18 So it makes it really complicated in
19 terms of international negotiations. And again,
20 commercial fishing, rec fishing, and artisanal
21 fishing are all part of that, so it makes it
22 really, really challenging.

1 So again, membership and fisheries are
2 very diverse, and it oftentimes complicates this.
3 It's important to note that in the second bullet
4 point, it says, recommendations and resolutions
5 are adopted by consensus.

6 So ICCAT works basically in what we
7 would term, agreement. So we all have to agree
8 if a resolution or a recommendation is brought to
9 the table. So it's sort of like me saying, hey,
10 I'd like to propose that we go out for, you know,
11 I don't know, sushi for lunch and I have to get
12 all of you to agree to that type of a thing.

13 So in order to move things forward at
14 ICCAT, we generally operate on what's called
15 consensus, where we ask all of the parties to
16 agree. And if a single party abstains or doesn't
17 agree to that, then they can block the progress
18 on that. There is voting in ICCAT, but it's very
19 seldom adopted, we usually don't vote, everything
20 is generally by consensus.

21 Okay. So at the 2023 Annual Meeting,
22 kudos goes out to some of the NOAA staff that is

1 here as well as our Federal Commissioner, Kelly
2 Kryc, our Recreational Commissioner, who at the
3 time was Ray Bogan and also Leigh Habegger, who
4 was our Commercial Commissioner.

5 This meeting was held in the Fall of
6 2023, and as you know, things in the Middle East
7 sort of got turned upside down right around the
8 time that we were trying to do this meeting.

9 So we had the best intentions to have
10 a fairly large delegation go, that included
11 members of the ICCAT Advisory Committee, myself
12 and a couple of folks around this table as well
13 as some folks that are not here at this meeting
14 but are on the IAC.

15 And at the last second, we had to
16 pivot, because it wasn't feasible to allow the
17 delegation in its entirety to go. So we actually
18 had some folks in New Cairo, we had some folks in
19 Brussels, so Sarah and who else was it, was it
20 Carrie, I can't remember who it was.

21 Within like two days, I think, we
22 secured a room in a hotel in Brussels and got

1 half of our delegation to Europe to try to stay
2 on the same time zone. So thank you to you folks
3 for doing that.

4 And I had to be on the naughty list at
5 my university but that's okay, we got it done.
6 And so all of the things that come down to ICCAT
7 are then implemented domestically here. So a lot
8 of the things that Randy has spoken about and
9 will speak about.

10 We had some wins, I would say, at the
11 2023 Meeting, but it was definitely, it was
12 definitely a meeting where we didn't get as much
13 pushed through or I would say, accomplished, as
14 we were hoping, and I will touch on some of those
15 things. And again, we have very, very large
16 representation here at the meeting.

17 All right. So Panel 1, Panel 1 is
18 going to be inclusive of tropical tuna, so these
19 are going to be bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack.
20 Currently, Panel 1 is probably the most difficult
21 panel at ICCAT.

22 Normally, as John Graves would say,

1 you know bluefin is because it sucks the wind out
2 of every room it's discussed. But ironically,
3 bluefin's in a little bit more of a stable state.
4 And what we're now grappling with is some of the
5 issues related to tropical tunas.

6 So for bigeye and yellowfin tunas, we
7 had a one-year rollover recommendation, which
8 basically kept in place, this was Recommendation
9 23-01, and so that extends the current management
10 measures from Recommendation 22-01 through 2024.

11 And what that does, is it basically
12 puts in place management measures to keep the
13 bigeye TAC at 62,000 metric tons, which is the
14 same TAC that I believe was passed at the 2019
15 Annual Meeting.

16 So this kind of gives you an idea of
17 how long and how difficult some of the
18 negotiations have been in terms of setting these
19 -- setting these quotas or these TACs, rather.
20 Maintains the current catch allocation structure,
21 including CPCs, and CPCs are contracting parties,
22 so those are the part one -- one or more of the

1 52 countries that I talked about.

2 With recent average catch of less than
3 a thousand tons, on current to maintain that
4 catch, an effort at recent, sorry, excuse me,
5 recent levels which applies to the United States.
6 We are a very minor harvester with a soft cap at
7 1,575 metric tons.

8 No progress by the Commission on what
9 we call MSE. So I will touch on this a little
10 bit with bluefin. MSE stands for Management
11 Strategy Evaluation, it's a new management in
12 sort of a first assessment framework that's been
13 implemented for a couple of ICCAT species so far,
14 Northern albacore and most recently Atlantic
15 bluefin.

16 The hope is that we would have a
17 multispecies MSE and the work going into that in
18 the years to come. But that work is going to be
19 ongoing, and based on the fact that the bluefin
20 MSE started in 2011 and was adopted in 2022, I
21 say it's probably going to be some time before we
22 see considerable movement on that. But

1 noneththeless, they are pushing forward on that.

2 Okay. So moving forward, sorry, I
3 just want to get my bearings here. Okay.

4 Some key meetings coming up, we do
5 have a yellowfin tuna stock assessment in 2024,
6 some of the earlier meetings have already taken
7 place. We have an intersessional meeting for
8 Panel 1 May 22 to 24th, and then a third
9 intersessional meeting on November 9th to
10 November 10th.

11 In the 2024 Annual Meeting, the goal
12 will be to adopt a comprehensive tropical tuna
13 management measure. We hope to get Western
14 skipjack Management Strategy Evaluation across
15 the finish line this year. Last year, the hope
16 was, I think, that that would be implemented, and
17 it didn't make it across.

18 And then of course, advance work on
19 what we call a multi-stock or multi-species MSE,
20 and that's going to be inclusive of bigeye,
21 yellowfin, and skipjack. So that work, as I
22 said, is going to be ongoing, it will take quite

1 some time to probably get that pushed through.

2 Okay. So now we'll go with Panel 2,
3 so these are going to be our temperate tunas. So
4 as I mentioned before, bluefin -- or ICCAT
5 adopted Management Strategy Evaluation for
6 bluefin in 2022.

7 And this is a completely different way
8 of sort of assessing and more importantly,
9 managing, the species. One of the things that
10 they still had to iron out are what's called
11 exceptional circumstances. So things that happen
12 that you're not expecting that might change the
13 way the management procedure is implemented.

14 And so for the 2023 meeting, ICCAT was
15 able to complete a management plan and adoption
16 of exceptional circumstances protocol. Basically
17 what this says is, in the event of these things
18 happening, this is what we, you know, this is the
19 guidance that we need to follow.

20 So that includes actions to be taken
21 by ICCAT's scientific body that will determine
22 exceptional circumstances and preclude the

1 application of what we call an MP, or management
2 procedure, and which would make it unadvisable at
3 the time.

4 The completion of the MP follows a lot
5 of years' preparation by ICCAT scientists and
6 managers to be able to manage the stocks more
7 effectively. And as I said, the MSE process for
8 bluefin was a pretty big lift, and it took a lot
9 of countries and a lot of folks to be able to do
10 it.

11 We have an amendment on Eastern
12 Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna. ICCAT
13 had several decisions to make related to Eastern
14 bluefin tuna management. And one of those
15 included an amendment on the provisions regarding
16 farm transfers and capacity provisions.

17 And at the same time, maintaining the
18 requirements for the contracting parties to
19 demonstrate their farming management plans that
20 the total input capacity and total farming
21 capacity are commensurate with the amount of
22 bluefin that they're allocated.

1 And then finally, for North Atlantic
2 albacore, the TAC was set at 47,251 tons, again,
3 following the application of the management
4 procedure that was established in 2021.

5 Albacore was the first species, I
6 believe, that had the MSE framework adopted. And
7 so this represents a 25 percent increase to the
8 quota for other CPCs on the allocation table, and
9 includes a quota limit of 889.4 metric tons for
10 the United States.

11 Okay. So Panel 4, couple of things
12 with Panel 4 that, again, we thought we're going
13 to go through. It was anticipated that Northern
14 swordfish would adopt the Management Strategy
15 Evaluation at the Commission meeting, or excuse
16 me, a management procedure, and unfortunately,
17 that didn't happen.

18 It came to light that there was a
19 delay in receiving some of the scientific
20 information, and so that put a hold on that until
21 it could be completely further evaluated by
22 ICCAT's Science and Statistical Committee.

1 So as a result of that, and the fact
2 that we couldn't really make any forward
3 progress, let's see, Canada, the EU, Japan, and
4 the U.S. all proposed a rollover of the existing
5 measure, and that was adopted.

6 So that recommendation includes
7 guidance for the SCRS on further work, which
8 hopefully at the 2024 meeting, they will adopt a
9 management procedure for swordfish. So we
10 maintain our quota of 3,907 metric tons, and
11 again, specific scientific work will be completed
12 in 2024 on MSE.

13 And hopefully a management procedure
14 will be decided on and we can move forward with
15 that. Oops, I'm sorry. I didn't have that up on
16 the screen. Okay. So hold on, I will go over
17 that real quick. So again, a one-year rollover
18 on recommendations because we didn't adopt a
19 management procedure for swordfish.

20 What? It was on one side but not the
21 other, and that was my fault, I didn't queue it,
22 so you were, we were both right.

1 And then again, our quota is
2 maintained at 3,907 and work will continue for
3 the MSE. So we have a minimum TAC change value
4 of 200 metric tons that was accepted, so that's
5 basically the fluctuation. We have a three-year
6 management cycle that was adopted.

7 And in the MSE, you basically have
8 four parameters that you're looking at. You're
9 looking at safety, status, yield, and stability,
10 and so those were four things where there was
11 some progress made on, for -- oh, and there was
12 some, there was some movement. For example,
13 status, the Panel agreed to remove what's called
14 the 51 percent PGK, that PGK stands for
15 probability of green Kobe.

16 It just means that -- it's like a
17 stoplight. PGK is like a stoplight, red is bad,
18 yellow is caution, and green is good. So
19 basically what they're saying by adopting that is
20 that they are just saying that we should strive
21 to be more conservative to make sure that the
22 swordfish stock is in good standing.

1 Things were put forward for optimizing
2 maximum yield, and then stability is still to be
3 determined on some of the model types.

4 There was some movement -- there was
5 some movement for bycatch. So we had
6 Recommendation 23-14, which prohibits the
7 retention of mobulid rays, so the family
8 Mobulidae.

9 And then that is, so that process is
10 going to be pending further SCRS advice. And if
11 you're not familiar with the SCRS, SCRS is the
12 scientific branch of ICCAT. And once that's put
13 forward and it is proved by the Commission in
14 2024, those rules would go into effect for 2025.

15 There was also a resolution, remember
16 we have recommendations and resolutions, there
17 was a resolution put forward, 23-15, which
18 encourages countries to prohibit vessels from
19 purse seine nets when cetaceans are sighted. So
20 again, that's hopefully to avoid wrapping up,
21 wrapping up any cetaceans.

22 And then sharks, so North Atlantic

1 blue sharks, Recommendation 23-10. The stock was
2 assessed in 2023, the stock's status appears to
3 be healthy.

4 The total allowable catch was reduced
5 from 39,100 to 30,000 in line with what the
6 scientific advice was. So basically the SCRS
7 came back and said the stock is healthy however
8 we advise that based on the outcomes, the TAC
9 should be reduced to this amount, and so the
10 Commission went along with that.

11 And then for the United States
12 purposes, we shall endeavor to maintain our
13 catches below their level of highest annual
14 catches over the last ten years. We don't have a
15 really big blue shark fishery, except for in our
16 recreational fisheries with, I'm assuming, very
17 little retention.

18 Recommendation 23-12 was a prohibition
19 on retention of whale sharks. Again, similar to
20 mobulid rays, this is going to be pending further
21 SCRS advice and approval by the Commission in
22 2024. And if that's approved, it will go into

1 effect January 2025.

2 Fins naturally attached has been
3 something that the United States and many other
4 parties have been advocating for a very long
5 time. The proposal this year had 26 co-sponsors
6 when it was introduced. A lot of concern that
7 the recommendation, that Recommendation 04-10 had
8 a lot of loopholes in it, it wasn't quite as
9 tight as it should be.

10 It might have allowed for shark
11 carcasses to be discarded at sea in the
12 convention area and so forth. And despite the
13 fact that there was widespread support, in the
14 end it was ultimately blocked. Remember we work
15 on consensus, so that measure was ultimately
16 blocked. So the fins attached did not -- did not
17 move forward.

18 Okay. Upcoming for billfish, we have
19 a blue marlin stock assessment that's coming up
20 in 2024, that's going to be an important one. We
21 have some key intersessional meetings, Focus on
22 North Atlantic Swordfish MSE, the SCRS Swordfish

1 Species Working Group already occurred, it was on
2 May 6th to 9th.

3 We will have hopefully at least one,
4 maybe two stakeholder meetings, that is ability
5 for the public to provide input into the MSE
6 process for swordfish. We're looking at either
7 maybe June 10th, June 12, or if I just checked my
8 email five minutes ago, maybe June 13th.

9 So keep those dates in mind if you
10 have any interest in participating in stakeholder
11 engagement for North Atlantic swords. And then
12 Panel 4 meeting on June 25th and 26th.

13 We have had some pretty promising, at
14 least I think it's pretty promising, movement on
15 bycatch, especially for sea turtles. So there
16 has been a year's long effort, mostly led by the
17 United States.

18 And then in 2022, ICCAT adopted its
19 first measure on gear and bait modifications to
20 mitigate the impacts of fishing interactions on
21 sea turtles, and that was Recommendation 22-12.

22 So that in a sense requires

1 science-based mitigation measures such as the use
2 of circle hooks in shallow-set longline
3 fisheries, in the Atlantic Ocean or different
4 types of bait configurations.

5 And the hope is that by using circle
6 hooks and not J-hooks, you will reduce bycatch
7 and you'll reduce, or excuse me, you will
8 increase post-release survival. Lots of studies
9 have identified circle hooks is a better means
10 for bycatch protection and long-term
11 conservation.

12 One of the key points I wanted to sort
13 of point out here is that, you know, the United
14 States has had a circle hook mandate for some
15 time. I don't want to put anybody on the spot,
16 but it's been a while.

17 And a lot of the other ICCAT fisheries
18 or ICCAT countries don't have that requirement.
19 So we feel as though that this is a measure that,
20 you know, helps to kind of level the playing
21 field a little bit. It will have a delayed
22 implementation in the Mediterranean Sea.

1 There are some deep-set longline
2 provisions and other fisheries. There's a lot of
3 work to be done on hook size and other provisions
4 of the measure.

5 Believe it or not, there's no uniform
6 guidance on what a circle hook, 16/0 or certain
7 sizes are, it's very, very variable. So did you
8 get the three verys in there, very, very,
9 variable.

10 So there's still not solid guidance on
11 what dictates this size hook versus that and so
12 forth. And then there's offset issues and a
13 whole host of things. But anyway, there has been
14 some progress which is good.

15 And then in 2023, ICCAT adopted Rec.
16 23-13, which describes the southern boundary of
17 sea turtles for which the measure applies. So
18 some good work, I think on sea turtles.

19 We do have Recommendation 22-12 that
20 was put into place, and that requires specific
21 reporting on the mitigation measures, so how,
22 basically, how effective are they. That entered

1 into force in June 2023, so it was only a partial
2 year for that.

3 And then at the Annual Meeting, the
4 Secretariat presented a document summarizing how
5 each CPC is doing implementing those reporting
6 requirements. Let's just say the response is
7 varied quite a bit. The United States noted
8 concerns in the Compliance Committee.

9 We have some folks in the room who
10 worked very closely and intimately in Compliance
11 and can identify those things. 2024 will be the
12 first in which the measure is completely
13 enforced. So we'll look forward to see what the
14 -- what the reporting is at that time.

15 Okay. So Compliance Committee, there
16 was some positive movement for the Compliance
17 Committee in PWG. We have our first year of
18 applying agreed schedule of compliance issues and
19 corresponding actions. ICCAT, the Chair will
20 send out 33 letters to CPCs, basically
21 identifying, let's call them irregularities. And
22 then compliance tables are endorsed with several

1 payback plans.

2 So believe it or not, from
3 time-to-time, quotas are, or TACs can be
4 exceeded, and if that is the case and it comes to
5 the attention of the Commission then there has to
6 be a payback plan.

7 So basically if you were allocated
8 2,000 tons and you took 2,400 metric tons, how
9 are you going to pay that back. So there are
10 some payback plans that were proposed, and that
11 were subsequently adopted in the Annual Meeting.

12 Okay. I'm almost done. And then PWG,
13 which is the Permanent Working Group. So we have
14 a few things here that are of note. We have some
15 minimum standards for electronic monitoring.

16 So the EU, the European Union,
17 proposed a proposal adopted with strong support
18 from United States, Canada, the UK. And what it
19 does is it ensures robust standards for
20 contracting parties that choose to use electronic
21 monitoring that meet ICCAT requirements (like
22 scientific data reporting).

1 We had some advancements on labor
2 standards, it's a non-binding set of principles
3 for safety and health of fishing crews in ICCAT
4 fisheries. I can tell you that the conditions
5 for observers, for example, on U.S. vessels
6 versus other vessels in the world are very, very
7 different and safety is a high concern.

8 We have High Seas Boarding and
9 Inspection, this didn't this didn't exactly go
10 as I think some folks had hoped. In 2022, I
11 think we were a lot closer in our negotiations
12 than we were in 2023. And we actually maybe had
13 a little bit of a slide back in progress on the
14 issue in 2023. So there's a lot more work to be
15 done on that.

16 And with that, I will wrap it up, and
17 if anybody has any questions. But before I
18 transition to the questions, I do want to
19 acknowledge, not only the folks in the room from
20 the ICCAT Advisory Committee, but you have a lot
21 of folks in this room also from NOAA, especially
22 our Federal Commissioner Kelly, and a lot of

1 staff in international affairs, who, if you're
2 not familiar with how this process works,
3 absolutely go to bat and work extraordinarily
4 hard on behalf of the United States.

5 Just to give you a flavor of how these
6 Annual Meetings work, you have the meeting that
7 occurs during the day. And then afterwards,
8 there's generally a meeting for us to kind of get
9 together and debrief. And then after that, up
10 until 1 or 2, Rick, 3 a.m., 4 a.m., others 5
11 a.m.?

12 There are proposals being circulated
13 by various countries, multiple proposals coming
14 in all at the same time. And our folks are
15 constantly updating where those proposals are,
16 what they include, and so forth. So basically
17 it's about nine days of no sleep, more or less.

18 So I just wanted to acknowledge the
19 folks, some of the folks who are in the room,
20 Larry and Sarah and Randy and others. So on
21 behalf of myself and the ICCAT Advisory
22 Committee, thank you for your service to U.S.

1 Fisheries, because it is a very big lift. And
2 thanks for going to Cairo, I didn't get to go.
3 All right. I will take any questions.

4 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Walt. That was
5 great. Let's go around the room and then again
6 let's see -- I've got a hand up online, so I'm
7 going to start online since we haven't heard from
8 folks there yet. David Appolonia, why don't you
9 come on in, and just again, we'll open you up,
10 and then have you fold in.

11 MR. APPOLONIA: On ICCAT on the
12 bluefin, you talk about the five regions, and I
13 don't, I'm not familiar with it --

14 MR. BROOKS: You know, David, you cut
15 out when you just started, so I'm going to let
16 you repeat that, and for some reason it's also
17 picking up on our mics. Hang on, one second,
18 David, we need to swap in a microphone here.

19 MR. APPOLONIA: Let me know when you
20 are ready.

21 MS. CRAWFORD: Go ahead.

22 MR. APPOLONIA: Okay. My question

1 was, I will just repeat myself. Going back to
2 Panel 2 on bluefin tuna, could you just please
3 comment on what the U.S. quota is in percentage
4 terms compared to the international quota? And
5 maybe give us some idea of whether the bluefin
6 tuna quota has increased in the U.S. given the
7 improvement in the fishery.

8 MR. GOLET: Okay. Great. Thanks for
9 the question. So I'm going to take the second
10 question first, and then I'll probably hand it
11 over to Randy for the first part of the question.
12 The answer to your second question is yes, in
13 2022, I believe, and Randy or Sarah, please
14 correct me, but I think it was 2022.

15 The U.S. quota, actually the Western
16 Atlantic quota went up as a whole, and as a -- as
17 a fishing party of the Western Atlantic, there's
18 really three primary fishing countries, Japan,
19 Canada, and the U.S.

20 Yes, we did see an increase in our
21 bluefin allocation, which was last year, this
22 year, and if nothing changes, I believe should be

1 next year as well.

2 And I will hand it over to Randy,
3 because he might have better numbers than I can
4 recollect offhand in terms of what percentage of
5 the Atlantic-wide quota the U.S. has for bluefin.

6 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yes, so with Western
7 bluefin, so there's a distinction here, there's
8 two different stocks in TACs that are established
9 for, separately for the Eastern bluefin stock and
10 the Western bluefin stock.

11 And the U.S. fishes and has quota
12 allocation on the Western stock. And what Walt
13 said was exactly right about the recent increase
14 in the overall TAC and quota allocations to
15 different member countries.

16 But without getting into too much
17 depth, the quota table, for lack of a better
18 term, for the Western recommendation is complex
19 and changes in the percentage for different
20 countries depending on the TAC level.

21 And so when there was an increase most
22 recently in the TAC, in the quotas, there was a

1 provision in there that changes the percentage
2 from the U.S. having, I think it was 51 percent
3 or so prior to the increase.

4 Once the increase occurred, some of
5 the additional allocation, Japan actually gets a
6 larger amount of that increase than the other
7 countries because of a historical agreement that
8 went back several years ago where they took a
9 bigger cut a long time ago.

10 And so they then, once the quota
11 reaches a certain level or TAC reaches a certain
12 level, they get some of that back. And
13 therefore, the percentage, while it looks like
14 the U.S. went down in percentage, which we did,
15 there's a rationale there, that was agreed to a
16 long time ago and so that took place. But
17 nevertheless, the U.S. quota did go up, even
18 though the percentage went down slightly.

19 MR. GOLET: I would add one thing just
20 to Randy's comments, there are vastly different
21 allocations between the East and the West stock
22 and that is because of the magnitude and the

1 abundance of the two stocks.

2 So the Eastern stock is always going
3 to get more than the Western stock because its
4 total population biomass is estimated to be at
5 least a magnitude, an order of magnitude larger
6 than the Western, so I hope that answers your
7 questions, if not, I can offer some clarification
8 maybe later.

9 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks so much.
10 Let's come back into the room, I will bring in
11 two folks I haven't heard from yet. Oh, Dave,
12 I'm sorry, please continue.

13 MR. APPOLONIA: I was going to say, it
14 really didn't answer my question. I was just
15 saying for 2024, does the quota go up for Western
16 Atlantic tuna, did we get more quota? Is it up 5
17 percent, 10 percent, is there some number?

18 MR. GOLET: No, the increase occurred
19 in 2022, and that will carry forward for I
20 believe, Randy, three years, three?

21 MR. BLANKINSHIP: I see Sarah nodding
22 her head so yes.

1 MR. GOLET: Yeah, three years. So the
2 allocation of 1341, and I'm pretty sure I nailed
3 that number, that 1341 went into effect in 20 --
4 for 2023, it will be in effect for 2024, and it
5 will be in effect for 2025, as well.

6 So to answer your question, no, the
7 quota is not going to go up between last year and
8 this year. And it shouldn't go anywhere between
9 this year, 2024 and 2025.

10 MR. APPOLONIA: My question again, was
11 on a percentage basis of global quota, what does
12 the U.S. get?

13 MR. BROOKS: Well, yeah, out of a
14 global, but it would sort of be Western, I think
15 would be the sort of comparable piece, right.

16 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Right. My response
17 to that part, David, was pointing out that the
18 percentage of the quota allocation that the U.S.
19 gets is on the Western bluefin, it's not a global
20 quota.

21 And if you're looking for the percent
22 of like U.S. landings of bluefin, that's a

1 different question and we'd have to look up that
2 information. So I hope that gets at it, and if
3 we need to dig into it further, we could
4 potentially take that offline, I think.

5 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. I want to bring
6 us back into the room and David, if you have
7 other questions, please, you know, throw it in
8 the chat or throw it to somebody and we'll follow
9 up offline on that. I've got, bring in two folks
10 we haven't heard from yet, so let's go to Greg,
11 and then over to Mike Pierdinock, and then we'll
12 close out with David and Bob and then get you to
13 lunch. So Greg?

14 MR. HINKS: Thanks. Greg Hinks, New
15 Jersey DEP. Could you elaborate regarding the
16 bluefin exceptional circumstance protocol? What
17 degree of an event are we looking at to be
18 considered exceptional?

19 MR. GOLET: So I'll try, but Sarah
20 might be able to participate in this as well. I
21 think one example I can give for you is, and
22 Sarah, please let me know if this is appropriate.

1 But there is an ongoing, what we call close-kin
2 mark recapture project for bluefin, it falls in
3 line with efforts that have been done for
4 Southern bluefin tuna.

5 And if you're not familiar with this,
6 basically it's a way of using genetics to do what
7 is in essence a mark-recapture project for
8 bluefin in the Atlantic, right, in the Western
9 Atlantic.

10 So one thing that comes to mind is if
11 that estimate was to come out prior to the next
12 reconditioning of the MSE, and it was wildly
13 different than the standard assessment, I think
14 that might trigger, but I will defer to Sarah on
15 that, maybe or if she wants?

16 MR. BROOKS: Come up to the mic,
17 Sarah.

18 MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Can we talk after?
19 I'm going to show him the recommendation.

20 MR. BROOKS: Sure, okay. Mike?

21 MR. PIERDINOCK: Good morning, Mike
22 Pierdinock, President of Stellwagen Bank Charter

1 Boat Association. Walt, thank you for your
2 presentation. My comments have to do with
3 bluefin, so I'm glad that slide is up there.

4 The continued bluefin farming in the
5 Mediterranean continues to negatively impact our
6 markets here in the United States to those in
7 which we sell our fish internationally, so I hope
8 we keep an eye on those operations.

9 And, you know, they're not exactly,
10 you know, comparable to the U.S. where they have
11 cheaper labor, they may have other practices to
12 fatten them up that could include growth hormones
13 or things of that type, that are concerning.

14 But I'm also concerned about this new
15 Cantabrian Sea pilot, I don't know if I
16 pronounced that correctly. It's the Egyptian
17 project, because that is different than fattening
18 them up.

19 And I hope we properly evaluate that
20 approach and that type of operation to make sure
21 it's not to the detriment of bluefin in the wild,
22 or increasing the production that then has

1 another impact on our U.S. commercial market.

2 So anything we can do to see that
3 these other activities don't impact our U.S.
4 market and ability to sell bluefin, I would hope
5 we would take that in consideration. Thank you.

6 MR. GOLET: Great, thanks Mike. Yeah,
7 we have quite a few folks with their finger on
8 the pulse, I think on that subject.

9 MR. BROOKS: All right. Let's go to
10 David and then Bob, and then we'll close out with
11 you, Spencer.

12 MR. SCHALIT: Okay. Well, thanks for
13 the presentation. It was mentioned in the
14 presentation that the U.S. loaned Morocco 200
15 metric tons of swordfish. And as you know, the
16 Moroccan traps is the single, most important data
17 point for West Atlantic bluefin tuna in the East
18 Atlantic Mediterranean Fishery, they migrate to
19 those traps.

20 And if it should come to pass, that
21 the Moroccans want a do-over for the next year or
22 whatever, want to borrow 200 tons again, and if

1 the fisherman are agreeable to lending that 200
2 tons, it might be an idea to look with a view
3 toward asking the Moroccans to do something in
4 exchange for this, which could be, for example,
5 doing genotype sampling of the fish that they
6 catch.

7 They're already doing otolith
8 sampling, but genotype sampling, even the fact
9 that we have, that there are years in which it's
10 highly variable. There are years in which 90
11 percent of the fish caught are indicated to be
12 Atlantic, not Mediterranean spawners. That would
13 be terrific data to have, just a thought.

14 Now the other thing I wanted to ask
15 about is the Ambassador meeting, are we talking
16 about a classic ICCAT Ambassador meeting which
17 will take place in Madrid or wherever, and the --
18 and some of us would be allowed to attend
19 virtually, I assume, is that the idea?

20 MR. GOLET: No, I think -- I think
21 what we've been talking about is, well, I will
22 double-check and circle back with you. But I,

1 it's not going to be restricted that I know of,
2 is that what you are asking? Like are you going
3 to have to be on a list in order to participate,
4 this is supposed to be more of an open forum
5 where anybody could comment.

6 MR. SCHALIT: Okay. So I don't know,
7 I was thinking, is it a local issue with
8 basically one of the Miami scientists, or is this
9 the Madrid Ambassador meeting, and I could --

10 MR. GOLET: No, this would be more
11 local, yes. So Michael would hopefully have some
12 guidance for us on where the current state of the
13 sword science is, yep.

14 MR. BROOKS: Randy?

15 MR. BLANKINSHIP: I was just going to
16 point out that, David, when you were talking
17 about the Morocco transfer of swordfish quota,
18 that's a transfer not a loan, just for
19 clarification.

20 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Bob?

21 MR. ZALES: Yeah, and to swordfish, I
22 mean, is the U.S. quota for swordfish, is it

1 being met or is it not, and what percentage if
2 it's not, is being landed?

3 MR. GOLET: To my knowledge, it has
4 not been met in quite some time and I can't give
5 you the exact percentage. I maybe can defer to
6 Randy on what percent of the allocation, but I
7 don't know if he has the allocation. I know it
8 has not been met in a long time.

9 MR. BLANKINSHIP: I'm getting signals
10 from the gallery that it's 20 percent max
11 amounts, 20 percent being met.

12 MR. ZALES: So 80 percent of it's
13 being left in the water? So and I would assume
14 that's because of the fleet size, the fleet's
15 just aren't large enough to catch them. Because
16 of everything you read and see and hear,
17 swordfish are everywhere, so and I know that
18 there was dramatic fleet reductions years ago
19 when I was sitting on this panel, so --

20 MR. BLANKINSHIP: So that subject
21 about underharvest and swordfish quota and
22 reasons why has been talked about for years

1 around this panel and continues. The issues are
2 complex, regulatory aspects are a factor, also
3 market is a factor as well, and there are other
4 things at play. So if you are on this panel for
5 a while, we'll have more discussions about that
6 over time.

7 MR. ZALES: Okay. Thank you. And
8 then on the blue shark, they've reduced the TAC
9 on blue shark, right. And all we hear is all
10 this great abundance of sharks everywhere. And
11 I'm wondering why they would have, when the blue
12 shark is considered healthy, why you would reduce
13 the TAC and not allow you to catch what could be
14 caught?

15 MR. GOLET: So do you want to take the
16 question offline or what's best, Carrie? Yeah.
17 So the stock is healthy but to my knowledge, that
18 doesn't mean that you can increase the quota,
19 there's scientific guidance that says, yeah, the
20 stock's healthy but so long as you keep it at
21 these levels. But Carrie can look up the
22 specific language for you and we can share that

1 with you.

2 Mr. ZALES: And this is on the
3 billfish part, sailfish, and I'm fairly certain
4 there hasn't been an assessment here in a while.
5 But when it comes to sailfish now, and any kind
6 of future stock assessment, because of the
7 abundance of the sharks and the fact that you
8 can't get a sailfish to the boat anymore to
9 release it, because it's getting eaten up.

10 How are regulatory discards and the
11 fact that these sharks are eating these fish up?
12 How is that going to apply, because the billfish
13 fishery, from when I served on this panel years
14 ago to now was essentially moved to almost
15 complete total and release.

16 Everybody does what they can do to
17 release it. But now when you were trying to
18 release the sailfish, it's dead, the sharks eat
19 it. So how does that discard mortality going to
20 play into future assessments?

21 MR. BLANKINSHIP: That's a good
22 question, and one that I think a lot of our

1 scientists are going to be batting around as time
2 goes on. The post-release mortality is a
3 significant factor in sailfish, whether it's
4 commercial or recreational fisheries.

5 And that is, I think, part of a
6 conversation we would need to have with some of
7 our scientists that are members of the delegation
8 to those stock assessments with the SCRS.

9 MR. BROOKS: Bob, we've got to push on
10 a little bit, you've got one last bite at it. I
11 just need to push forward, but you've got one
12 last thing?

13 MR. ZALES: Yeah, I've got two more
14 real quick. One is on hook size, right, hooks
15 were being discussed when I was on this panel
16 years ago, circle hooks, there's no, like you
17 said there's no standard for hook size.

18 So we've been 20 years, so
19 manufacturers, nobody's been able to convince
20 these manufacturers to come up with a standard
21 16/0 versus 10/0? It's still not there, and
22 apparently ain't going to happen?

1 MR. GOLET: This is a basin-wide
2 discussion, not just within the Atlantic, but a
3 lot of other ocean basins, too. Yeah, there's to
4 my knowledge it's still, it still hasn't been
5 resolved.

6 MR. BROOKS: I need you to be on mic
7 so folks can hear you.

8 MR. SCANLON: There are upcoming new
9 hook regulations being implemented due to the
10 political and take reduction plan, there are new
11 hook, you know, new hook regulations being put in
12 when I --

13 MR. BROOKS: That's U.S. Pelagic.

14 MR. SCANLON: What's that?

15 MR. BROOKS: That's just for U.S.
16 Pelagic, not --

17 MR. SCANLON: Oh, okay.

18 MR. ZALES: And one last thing, in the
19 Gulf of Mexico, and I'm sure there's not an
20 assessment out there, but for bluefin, the Gulf
21 is considered an estuary for spawning, right.
22 And bluefin, from what I'm seeing and hearing,

1 are taking over, over the past couple of years,
2 just going crazy with bluefin catches.

3 Is there any way to try to see where
4 we are with the number of bluefin in the Gulf as
5 compared to the overall TAC and everything that's
6 being worked for people to be able to capture
7 some of these fish?

8 MR. GOLET: It's a, you can't direct
9 on a spawning grown, so that's an ISC, that's
10 part of it.

11 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yeah, so this topic
12 about research on life history of bluefin tuna
13 has been -- has received a lot of discussion at
14 the ICCAT Advisory Committee Species Working
15 Groups, which is a process set up to, you know,
16 try to facilitate and provide advice from the ISC
17 on that.

18 That happened just within the last few
19 weeks. The, you know, as it was alluded to
20 earlier, there's been a lot of work on close-kin
21 mark recapture, which will provide a lot of
22 insight on stock structure.

1 And a lot of other information that
2 will be very beneficial, particularly on
3 answering some of the questions that surround the
4 size and extent and proportions of the Western
5 bluefin stock and the Eastern bluefin stock.

6 And so Bob, there's a lot of work
7 happening on that topic. The answer is, I think,
8 I don't know how you phrased your question, but
9 the answer is yes, there is a lot of work
10 happening on that and progress should be made
11 with success with that program.

12 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. I've got two
13 folks left to get in and we are eating into our
14 lunchtime, so I want to try to be succinct with
15 this. So Spencer, why don't you jump in?

16 MR. BODE: I want to thank you very
17 much for the presentation. I feel like it's a
18 good time to interject as we were talking about
19 the swordfish quota. Domestically as we fish
20 swordfish annually but below our allocated TAC,
21 especially as our longline fleet continues to
22 diminish in size, is the HMS Management and ICCAT

1 Advisory Committee open to liberalizing the
2 swordfish possession limit for mobile gear
3 vessels participating in squid fisheries along
4 the Continental Shelf?

5 And potentially allowing for a
6 directed mobile gear fishery with the goal of
7 capturing our allocated U.S. TAC?

8 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Well, I thought you
9 raised that as a question. I'm going to take
10 that rather than a question, a suggestion. And I
11 will say thank you for your suggestion.

12 MR. BROOKS: Marty, you get the last
13 word.

14 MR. SCANLON: With the 200 metric --
15 with the 200 tons transfer, are they required to
16 harvest that 200 ton with the same -- at the same
17 sustainable levels that a domestic fleet fishes
18 under?

19 MR. BLANKINSHIP: There were no
20 stipulations on the transfer. The transfer is of
21 the amount, 200 metric tons. One of the, I would
22 say benefits of that transfer taking place is it

1 did and has provided an opportunity for increased
2 dialogue with Morocco over management measures
3 and other things.

4 MR. SCANLON: So in other words, we
5 are transferring that at a conservation loss.

6 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Thanks for that
7 comment.

8 MR. GOLET: Okay. Just real -- Bob
9 just real quick, you're, as far as I remember,
10 there's an ICCAT recommendation, and I don't know
11 exactly which one, that prohibits fishing on the
12 Western Atlantic spawning which is inclusive of
13 the Gulf of Mexico, so, yeah, so that's in place,
14 that's a prohibition, yeah.

15 MR. BROOKS: Bob, I need you to be on
16 mic and then we should probably pick this up
17 after we break for lunch.

18 MR. ZALES: Apparently the stock is
19 blooming, right, I mean, it's increasing, which
20 to me would be a good sign. And is there some
21 way to document that, the research or whatever,
22 then hopefully that would work to increase quotas

1 for the bluefin that could be harvested
2 elsewhere.

3 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Walt, thank you.
4 Obviously a lot of interest here, and thanks for
5 the, I thought the presentation was great and
6 very helpful for folks who maybe are just
7 touching this for the first time.

8 We are 20 of, we will clip 10 minutes
9 from lunch, so we will reconvene at 1 o'clock.
10 And we will be talking about the Bluefin Tuna
11 Fishery Update, both management and recent
12 trends, so see you at 1 o'clock. Thanks
13 everybody.

14 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
15 went off the record at 11:40 a.m. and resumed at
16 1:01 p.m.)

17 MR. BROOKS: All right, well let's
18 come on back to the table. In case folks were
19 feeling like they desperately needed a pen and
20 pad and you didn't see it at the table, it is
21 over by the water station. So if you need a pad
22 or a pen, feel free to walk over there and grab

1 it.

2 So just as we're coming back from
3 lunch, just a reminder this afternoon, we're
4 going to jump into the Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fish
5 update here in a moment with Brad and Larry once
6 he gets back. Then after break, we'll talk about
7 -- we'll have an update on rulemaking -- various
8 rulemakings. And then we'll get an update on the
9 Essential Fish Habitat final five year review.
10 Public comment for public in the room are online
11 will be at 4:30. And then we'll wrap up at
12 around quarter to 5:00 and get you out no later
13 than 5 o'clock. And again, there will be a no
14 host social hour downstairs in the lobby at the
15 -- at the close.

16 I think that's all I have. Any
17 questions from the morning that we should bring
18 up before we shift to Bluefin Tuna? Okay. If
19 not, then I will hand it off to Brad McHale who
20 will be joined by Larry Redd. So we know Larry
21 brings the comedy portion of the presentation, so
22 sit tight. He'll be here. Brad.

1 MR. MCHALE: All right. Good
2 afternoon, everyone. It's just as Randy had
3 mentioned, it's good to see you all, new faces
4 and familiar faces alike. Thank Walt for the
5 ICCAT presentations, so we'll kind of take some
6 of those Bluefin Tuna comments and bring it back
7 home domestically.

8 We'll take a look back at how 2023
9 treated us, as well as look at 2024 to date and
10 kind of look into the future a little bit of what
11 we might anticipate as it relates to our Bluefin
12 Tuna fisheries. So I'll be touching a little bit
13 regarding some of quota management across all the
14 various categories. And then I'll get into a
15 little bit more of the specifics as it relates to
16 the recreational fishery, the commercial handgear
17 fisheries, and then in turn the Longline fishery,
18 and then open it up for discussion.

19 So for those that are Veterans around
20 the table, as well as those newcomers, this
21 presentation tends to be an excellent resource
22 for those that are interested in Bluefin Tuna. I

1 know this table in particular is one that has
2 requested that breaks down what our ICCAT
3 allocation for Bluefin Tuna is then divvied up
4 here on the domestic front. And so here we have,
5 not only the tonnage, but the percentage amounts,
6 and then that more refined breakdown, whether it
7 be from a temporal component as it relates to the
8 general category, the commercial handgear
9 fishery, or some of the size and area
10 designations in our recreational fishery.

11 But you know, Walt had it right that
12 right now our domestic allocation is standing at
13 about 1341 and that will be in place for the next
14 few years. So reflecting back on how that played
15 out in regards to production in our domestic
16 fisheries last year. So here you'll see the
17 categories and then we have a number of different
18 metrics, whether it be the number of fish, the
19 tonnage those fish equated to, whether we had
20 base quotas, or whether we had adjusted those
21 quotas to supplement fishing opportunities, and
22 then the percentages of harvest across both at

1 base quota, as well as our adjusted quota.

2 Overall if you look at the last few
3 lines of the table there, you know, we're doing a
4 decent job of harvesting our U.S. Bluefin Tuna
5 quota. Is there always room for improvement?

6 Yes. You know, we strive to hit 100 percent, but
7 I think we also around this table acknowledge the
8 variability that exists in this fishery, both
9 either on the commercial or the recreational
10 side. That sometimes even us policy wonks and
11 managers can't get dialed in even after decades
12 of trying to get those numbers refined.

13 And so we'll get into some of these
14 numbers in the respective categories to show a
15 little bit more light there. But you'll see,
16 depending on whether you're looking at the
17 tonnage or the percentages, you'll see some large
18 numbers or some small numbers. And obviously
19 that comes into play when you look at the overall
20 quantity of quota that's available there. So
21 case and point, towards the bottom of that table
22 if you look at some of the Angling category and

1 the Trophy categories, you know, we're seeing 162
2 percent. But then you realize that's only 9.2
3 metrics tons, you know, so very difficult to dial
4 that in. And I'll speak to that in a little bit
5 more detail in just a moment.

6 In addition to those quotas that I
7 just shared, there's an additional provision that
8 is provided by ICCAT that essentially allows any
9 participating country if they happen to
10 underharvest in a particular calendar year, they
11 can carry forward 10 percent of their base quota
12 to the subsequent year. And so this is something
13 that we've done for the last number of years.

14 So when I share percentages that were,
15 you know, 95 percent or 97 percent of our base
16 quotas, well essentially we're not at 100. So
17 we've been able to take advantage of this
18 provision and carry forward about 135 metric tons
19 from 2023 to 2024. This actually requires an
20 action that the Agency take. And the time of
21 that action is when we finally get it finalized
22 it is usually kind of late Summer/early Fall of

1 2024. So that exercise will occur again this
2 year where we anticipate we'll probably have
3 access to that full carry forward provision. But
4 stay tuned, that action will be coming through
5 and we'll supplement the numbers I just shared.

6 Transition over to some of our
7 recreational fishery data. For those of you that
8 are tracking some of our Trophy fishery to be
9 reminded that we used to have three geographic
10 areas; essentially the Northeast, the
11 Mid-Atlantic, as well as in the Gulf of Mexico.
12 But as a result of a lot of dialogue around this
13 table, as well as input from the public, we
14 created a fourth area. So we really kind of
15 isolated the Gulf of Maine into its own Trophy
16 area, as well as at Southern New England, and
17 then kind of the Mid-Atlantic and then the South
18 Atlantic. And for those that are relatively new,
19 these Trophy fisheries are for like the giant
20 Bluefin Tuna that are caught recreationally and
21 then are not allowed to be sold and retained for
22 personal use.

1 So looking at some of the production
2 on those Trophy fisheries. Here you'll see the
3 geographic areas across the top, the years that
4 they were enacted on the lefthand column, and the
5 lower lines are kind of the previous management
6 model. So one thing to kind of make a point here
7 is that, you know, regardless of these geographic
8 areas, recreational fisherman are encountering
9 giant Bluefin Tuna. And in some cases, it
10 becomes very challenging from a manager's
11 perspective and a data geek's perspective to keep
12 our thumb on the pulse of this. In fact, we just
13 experienced a rather significant bite off of New
14 Jersey just over the last month or so where in a
15 weekend, you can kind of see here in that
16 Southern New England for 2024 that the quota is
17 2.3 metric tons, so not a significant amount of
18 weight, but then when you look at that, if it
19 takes a few days to kind of get those reports, it
20 doesn't take a lot of time for 30 fish to come to
21 the dock. And then all the sudden, you've landed
22 250 percent of your quota.

1 So this will be an ongoing challenge,
2 although it's dancing on the head of a pin of how
3 to try to, you know, stay on top of those numbers
4 and get closures in place given the regulatory
5 process and what have you, to try to stay true to
6 those allocations. So even though that
7 exceedances in percentage aren't significant from
8 a tonnage perspective and we do want to treat all
9 of our Bluefin Tuna interested parties equitably
10 and consistently.

11 Just another kind of way to kind of
12 demonstrate some of the trends that we're seeing
13 here. So here you'll see years across it and
14 then contributions to our recreational catch.
15 Each different color band is kind of representing
16 a size class or length of fish. And you'll see
17 kind of on the lower access, which as soon as we
18 watched that a little bit here in the screenings
19 -- All right. I guess with that, you know, my
20 walking music there is we have seen kind of some
21 changes in the catch of our school of Bluefin
22 Tuna over the last couple of years where last

1 year, we didn't see a whole lot of school size
2 class fish being interacted with. But yet, some
3 of those larger size classes really were
4 dominating landscaping. As those fish get
5 larger, it takes fewer of them to fill our
6 quotas.

7 So something we're going to continue
8 to be mindful of as we regulate this fishery, not
9 only with our private vessel owners in the
10 Angling category, but also in our for higher
11 fleet whether they be our six pack charter boats,
12 as well as our head boats. Something that I
13 wouldn't necessarily say is concerning, but
14 something that we'll be again paying attention
15 to.

16 We know that the access to these fish
17 and the size classes can vary from one year to
18 the next, so we don't want to have knew jerk
19 reactions to certain data points. But also want
20 to keep tabs on those if they tend to kind of
21 stretch out in time. And then we start to
22 collaborate with our Science Center folks and see

1 what the stock assessments are showing. So we
2 factor all this into the greater process of the
3 health of the fishery.

4 What also influences those catches are
5 the allowable retention limits. And so we have a
6 default retention limit that starts off in
7 January 1 of each calendar year. And then
8 usually right about this time of year, we look at
9 how the harvest over the last couple of years
10 went and then establish a more liberal retention
11 limit for the three different modes of our
12 recreational fishery. That being the privately
13 owned vessels, those that are the charter
14 vessels, the six pack boats, and then in turn,
15 those larger, more inspected vessels or head boat
16 vessels.

17 And so we try to keep these retention
18 limits as consistent as possible. One, to ease
19 the communications with the regulated community.
20 And we've taken approach of kind of set it and
21 forget it. So we don't have a lot of fluctuation
22 throughout the season that can sometimes cause

1 confusion. And so we probably envision something
2 similar to this as we head into 2024. And stand
3 by, those will be announced sometime here in the
4 near future.

5 The one area that we're looking at
6 slightly different this year than maybe prior
7 years stems from some of the dialogue around this
8 table is looking at that head boat component of
9 our for-hire fleet. And so these are our larger
10 inspected vessels taking multiple passengers out.
11 And we're recognizing that there are very few of
12 those vessels participating in the fishery
13 currently that access to HMS fisheries under some
14 of our EEJ. That is the conduit to have folks
15 get exposed to fisheries. And whether or not
16 there are opportunities to liberalize maybe that
17 head boat limitation, at least as it relates to
18 school size Bluefin Tuna knowing that the risk is
19 small of exceeding its -- or impact on the
20 resource. But yet, still provide equity across
21 the recreational fishery.

22 Transitioning to some of our

1 commercial handgear fishery updates and starting
2 off with our harpoon category. So for those that
3 are relatively new to these fisheries, these are
4 a fleet that's about 40 vessels long and they
5 exclusively use harpoon gear to take Bluefin
6 Tuna. A reflection last year that the first six
7 weeks of the fishery that we had about a 10 fish
8 limit per day. Then about mid-July, we noticed
9 that the harvest rates were increasing. And as a
10 result of Amendment 13 to the HMS fishery
11 management plan, we provide ourselves authority
12 with all of your input, to be able to reduce that
13 retention limit down to five fish. And we
14 actually executed that authority last year for
15 the first time. Again, trying to extend fishing
16 opportunities.

17 What we also did for this fishery is
18 provided an additional 10.8 metric tons to kind
19 of supplement those opportunities. And then
20 ultimately we had a closure in place at the end
21 of July. So we had kind of reached our adjusted
22 quota at that point.

1 So one thing that I know that we've
2 continued to receive feedback from some
3 individuals in that harpoon category is whether
4 or not to execute that authority earlier in the
5 season, again trying to distribute fishing
6 opportunities throughout the range of where those
7 harpoon vessels operate, which is dominating the
8 New England area, whether south side of Cape Cod
9 or in the Gulf of Maine. So that's something
10 that's still on our radar to debate and act or
11 not before kind of the season commences come June
12 1st.

13 When it comes to teasing apart the
14 landings of that harpoon category, pretty much a
15 positive result here that a significant number of
16 the landings are in that giant category, which
17 are 81 inches curved fork length or greater.
18 That's by design. That is the size class of fish
19 that, that gear type should be targeting. There
20 is a tolerance limit for those fish that are
21 slightly less than that. Those fish that are 73
22 less than 81 inches. You can see that about 9

1 percent of the harvest last year came into that.
2 So these are the kind of numbers that we like to
3 see, that the vast majority of the catch, as well
4 as effort is going on in those larger size
5 classes. Therefore mitigating some of the
6 post-release mortality of the fish that might be
7 less than 73 inches.

8 And what is also noted here is then
9 the success of those trips. So for all those
10 vessels that took trips and at least landed one
11 fish, we then break out those numbers and are
12 then tracking how many vessels are landing one
13 fish per trip, two, three, greater than four.
14 We're kind of tracking that on seeing how the
15 distribution of landings are amongst that small a
16 fleet. And that's something we'll just continue
17 to keep track of and share with you all whether
18 or not the landings are kind of distributed are
19 kind of distributed across, you know, multiple
20 trips or are they really just a handful of trips
21 that are harvesting all that quota.

22 As I start to transition from the

1 harpoon category to our general commercial
2 fishery, which is handgears, rod and reel,
3 harpoon use is allowed as well, as well as
4 handline. Sometimes there's been debate around
5 this table of whether gear should be authorized
6 or not in certain categories. And really here's
7 just a table demonstrating the realization of
8 that gear type in those categories. And you can
9 see that the vast majority of individuals that
10 elect to use harpoon gear are in the harpoon
11 category.

12 There is some diversification early in
13 the season where general category participants
14 elect to use harpoon because of the behaviors of
15 the fish make it amenable. But when you start to
16 look at overall contributions of the catch, it's
17 a drop in the bucket. And that ultimately
18 informs some of the decisions we have made over
19 the last number of years regarding retention
20 limits in that general category that I know
21 sometimes don't necessarily land very well or are
22 well accepted in the regulated community, but it

1 comes back to we're actually following the data
2 and managing to the data where we're able to
3 provide opportunities and mitigate risk of
4 exceedances of quota or rapid filling of quotas
5 based upon the gears that the fish are coming in
6 on, the amount of efforts that's being expended,
7 and then ultimately the impact on potential
8 closures.

9 So with the general category, here's
10 kind of the annual laundry list of actions that
11 we have taken. It's pretty consistent from one
12 year to the next over the last -- recent history
13 where we try to supplement fishing opportunities
14 in the winter fishery by robbing Peter to pay
15 Paul. Essentially taking quota that's allocated
16 to at the end of the calendar year and bumping
17 that up to the January through March timeframe.
18 And then as the year continues, we're able to
19 kind of backfill that quota that we front loaded.

20 And so the winter fishery made it
21 through til mid-February of this go around to
22 make sure fisherman were actually home at the

1 docks to celebrate Valentine's Day. And whether
2 they elected to do so or not is in their own self
3 interest. But then we altered the retention
4 limits for the June fishery. And so essentially
5 here we for the last number of years have
6 liberalized the retention limits for the month of
7 June and increased the retention limit from one
8 fish per vessel per day up to three. The cause
9 is because of some of the data I just mentioned,
10 but also the amount of landings that are
11 associated with that liberalized retention limit
12 are de minimis. So we've been able to provide
13 that opportunity.

14 Come July 1st however, is when we've
15 enacted a number of restricted fishing days. So
16 these are days where there can be no commercial
17 Bluefin Tuna effort on the water. And we
18 reversed that retention limit back to one fish.
19 And the primary causation of both of those effort
20 controls is that's around the timeframe over the
21 last number of years where we see the rod and
22 reel bite really start to take off. And the

1 number of vessels that are using that gear type
2 versus the number of vessels using a harpoon,
3 it's night and day difference. And so that's
4 where we really start to see landings really pick
5 up pace, hence why the June 1st implementation.

6 And you'll see here how far we've made
7 it into, you know, the June through August time
8 period. We made it through mid-August before we
9 had to close that fishery. We re-opened in
10 September. We supplemented some of the tonnage
11 there. And then we made it through about
12 mid-September and then consistent in years past,
13 the further we get into the calendar year, late
14 Summer/early Fall, the catch rates just explode.
15 And some of that is weather dependent, some of
16 that is geographic location of the fish. Are
17 they in-shore, are they off-shore? And as some
18 of those variables start to align, you have a
19 significant amount of landings that really
20 concentrate timeframe regardless of those effort
21 controls of blocking out dates or limiting
22 retention limits on a daily basis.

1 And I realize that one other data
2 points that probably isn't reflected in this
3 table here, now that I'm realizing it, is in the
4 December fishery, we were able to again restore
5 allocation and we made it about a week long in
6 December. Again, the fish were available, not
7 just off the mid-Atlantic, but off say New York
8 as well, in New England as well. And so that
9 December fishery, even though it had about 48
10 metric tons -- 49 metric tons available to it,
11 six days and we were done with that fishery.

12 And so that's some of the same
13 information I just provided. It's provided here
14 in the table as well. Just a few additional
15 metrics. How many days was the fishery open?
16 How many days equating to opportunities at those
17 different limits? So it's really just another
18 way to slice and dice up that information to help
19 inform the dialogue that we all have, the
20 dialogue that we have with the regulated
21 community, but also then helping to formulate
22 what management decisions we take throughout the

1 season.

2 And here's just maybe another table
3 kind of getting at that liberalization of the
4 retention limit because I know we hear it. I
5 don't know if you hear it all from your
6 constituents of like how dare the Agency provide
7 three fish in the month of June when we only get
8 seven days in September or eight days in October.
9 But really the math doesn't work out. When you
10 start to look at the landings, the number of
11 trips that are successful landing three fish or
12 two fish for that matter, there is direct
13 causation that day of fishing in June at a
14 liberal limit equates to the same amount of time
15 in say September or October timeframe.

16 You can get about a whole month of
17 fishing in June at a liberal limit that might be
18 a half a day in October. Hence, why we've
19 continued to do this even though some folks just
20 don't like the optics of it, the data still
21 hasn't shifted, at least not as of yet. Maybe
22 this is the year to move us off of managing in

1 this fashion.

2 Some information here just on price
3 points. Something that we don't necessarily use
4 to influence our management directly, but we know
5 it's a topic around the table. We know it's
6 highly important to not only the commercial
7 fishermen, but also the dealers of when fishing
8 opportunities are provided, impacts that large
9 volumes of landings coming across the dock have
10 in a concentrated time period. So we're not
11 daft. We don't ignore this information. We just
12 don't hinge our management decisions upon it. I
13 think Bennett is chuckling there because, you
14 know, maybe some of us are a little daft.

15 MR. BROOKS: Excellent use of the word
16 "daft". I got you. Word of the day.

17 MR. MCHALE: Word of the day. Well,
18 let's see if I can trump that. And so here we've
19 just got to share this information. Because as I
20 said, it is something that we digest in the
21 context of all the other variables that we are
22 obligated to entertain when we do any sort of

1 management actions. And again, while this isn't
2 one that we weigh heavily, we do pay attention to
3 it because it is part of the daily dialogue.

4 Also a component that influences those
5 price points is whether or not these fish remain
6 domestic or whether or not, they're exported. It
7 is interesting when you talk to folks, whether at
8 a cocktail party, family gathering, or what have
9 you that are still of the minds that all of these
10 giant Bluefin Tuna are then shipped off to Japan
11 and they're getting the \$20 price points that
12 certain television programs continue to promote
13 inaccurately. Well, that is actually no longer
14 the case.

15 For a number of years now, the vast
16 majority of our domestic production has remained
17 domestic and that in turn provides challenges. I
18 think I overheard during lunch break, marketing
19 U.S. product is a challenge of how do you then
20 show that we as U.S. fishermen in the U.S.
21 Government have this valuable product that can be
22 consumed, but isn't warranting the money at this

1 stage, whether it be exchange rates with the yen
2 to dollar, whether it be fuel prices, whatever
3 global supply that it's no longer economical to
4 send some of these fish abroad.

5 And so how do you then kind of deal
6 with some of the challenges that are felt as a
7 result of that? And whether fuel price is going
8 up or trying to find more lucrative domestic
9 markets, heighten the profile. But here's just
10 another resource to tap into that really sheds
11 light on where our domestic production is going.
12 And it's actually staying here.

13 One thing that we also continue to
14 contend with and report out on is the number of
15 fish that are caught in that commercial category
16 that go unsold. And they can go unsold for a
17 litany of different reasons. One is
18 unfortunately I have capitalization one on one
19 conversations with fishermen that dealers are not
20 obligated to buy your catch. If you let it sit
21 in the sun and the only ice you have is for your
22 cocktails on boat, well if you bring in crap,

1 nobody is obligated to buy your crap, but you're
2 still obligated to report it. And it still gets
3 deducted off of our allocations.

4 And obviously there's a spike there
5 during kind of the COVID year where there really
6 was no marketing taking place. But we still see
7 this. It's still mortality that we're obligated
8 to track and document and report to ICCAT. It's
9 still something that we struggle with of trying
10 to figure out the dynamics of it. Is essentially
11 somebody getting a commercial permit, but is a
12 glorified recreational fishermen that's retained
13 for personal use? As it was because there was no
14 outlet for it. And what were the dynamics that
15 might have influenced that? Was it market klutz?
16 Was it condition of the fish, et cetera?

17 And then always, just because we're
18 obligated to be suspect, are these fish kind of
19 entering the marketplace through illegal means?
20 Are there backdoor sales that we need to work
21 with our Office of Law Enforcement on? So
22 something that we continue to monitor and track

1 for all those litany of reasons.

2 And then as I just mentioned, there's
3 reporting components to all this. And so this is
4 something we ground truth on an annual basis, as
5 well as work with our Office of Law Enforcement
6 to ensure compliance or promote compliance. And
7 that's looking at the vessel reporting versus
8 dealer reports and doing comparisons to see what
9 level of compliance they're in. We seem to have
10 plateaued at about 74 or 75 percent there.

11 Again, always room for improvement, but that's
12 also relatively decent compliance when you look
13 at the volume of vessels and the different
14 variability of expertise and experience within
15 that fishery.

16 But something we always strive for
17 higher numbers and will continue to collaborate
18 not only with fishery representatives like
19 yourselves, but also the Office of Law
20 Enforcement to kind of get the word out that with
21 this information, it's very powerful, not only
22 here domestically for compliance purposes, but we

1 also have access to fisheries here in the United
2 States that other countries don't. Canada,
3 Japan, they're not necessarily interacting with
4 smaller fish. So as that information gets folded
5 up into stock assessment and indices data,
6 extremely powerful tool. And I think fishermen
7 are getting that more and more, especially as
8 wind is entering the equation and geographic
9 location is entering the equation. So we'll
10 continue to strive to get these numbers improved.

11 One other pet project I've taken on
12 over the last, I'll say year or so, is working
13 with all the different states up and down the
14 Atlantic seaboard throughout the Gulf of Mexico,
15 as well as the Caribbean. Given some of the
16 dynamics that came out of 2020 and COVID of
17 individuals trying to figure out marketing of
18 their catch and being innovative given some of
19 the challenges there. And so what was one method
20 of folks diversifying their own portfolios was
21 getting their own Dealer permits, selling their
22 own catch directly to the consumer. You know,

1 essentially farm to table, but doing that
2 directly.

3 Well unfortunately, that may work for
4 Cod fish or Snapper or lobsters or crabs, what
5 have you, but when it comes to scombridaes and
6 your Tunas, enter stage right, Scombridae
7 poisoning. So if Tunas are improperly handled,
8 they build histamines and therefore can trigger
9 some food borne illnesses that stem from
10 improperly cared for catch. And as a
11 prerequisite to an individual acquiring their
12 Federal Atlantic Tunas Dealer permit, they must
13 show that they have a wholesale permit from the
14 state that they're conducting their business in.
15 Essentially it's at the state level is where the
16 conduit is to dealing with the food safety FDA
17 regulations HACCP regulations.

18 And it had come to light that, that
19 needed a little bit more attention paid onto it
20 at the Federal level. And so very interesting
21 conversations up and down the seaboard when you
22 start to talk HACCP and Scombridaes because a lot

1 of state officials like no, it's a shellfish
2 issue. Well no, it's actually a Tuna issue as
3 well. And making sure the right parties are
4 coordinating and contacting with folks. And so
5 we established a database of all the different
6 permitting requirements up and down the seaboard
7 so now we can communicate with those applicants.
8 Hey, if you're trying to get a permit in
9 Delaware, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Florida,
10 Texas, here's the folks that you need to contact
11 to get the paperwork so we can make sure that
12 you're doing it not only in accordance with our
13 own regulations, but also those regulations that
14 are coming from the FDA regarding the food-borne
15 illness.

16 And so we're dealing with some
17 learning curves there of folks that might have
18 stood up a business model of catch fish, put fish
19 in back of truck, take fish to back of
20 restaurant. That business model isn't
21 necessarily going to be allowed in the future
22 because of some of those HACCP regulations and

1 trying to work with them to figure out different
2 models that will work. So that's a little
3 sidebar, something that's been new over the last
4 year.

5 So I want to shift gears from kind of
6 some of those handgear fisheries to some of our
7 pelagic longline fishery information. Here,
8 we're looking at the number of vessels that had
9 landed Bluefin Tuna. So this isn't a reflection
10 on the number of vessels active in the fishery.
11 These are just interacting with Bluefin Tuna and
12 then in turn, landing them. If folks will
13 recall, we now have that individual Bluefin Quota
14 program in place where each vessel qualifies for
15 Bluefin allocation based upon the effort they've
16 expended in the prior 36 months. Therefore,
17 trying to strive to get Bluefin Tuna allocation
18 into the hands of those that are getting lines
19 wet inconsistently to account for those
20 interactions that are happening with Bluefin
21 Tuna. So here, you will note that, you know, the
22 numbers are fluctuating and 2024 is just to date.

1 We'll see if those numbers increase as the
2 calendar year moves on.

3 When it comes to discard information
4 associated with this fishery, the methodology
5 here is still kind of looking at observer reports
6 supplemented by log book information to
7 essentially come up with an estimate. Our
8 Southeast Fishery Science Center folks are still
9 currently working on refining the estimate for
10 last year, but preliminarily it looks to be about
11 20 metric ton threshold. And that's a number
12 that we'll report back out to ICCAT, including
13 all of our numbers. But that's something that we
14 always touch on year and year out because there
15 were a number of years prior to that individual
16 accountability that these numbers were sky high
17 as demonstrated in this graph here.

18 And so the end result is some of the
19 management actions, whether it had been Amendment
20 7 or Amendment 13 to the fishery management plan
21 that, you know, either looked at introducing
22 individual accountability for a vessel's actions

1 and interaction rates. And then ultimately
2 refining it based upon dialogue around this room,
3 as well as in other public hearings to try to get
4 the interactions. And therefore either landings
5 or discards underneath the overall quota and
6 manage the fishery accordingly.

7 And as you'll see here, just another
8 way of demonstrating that information. It's what
9 we were dealing with in '12, '13, '14, even going
10 back to '11. It was unsustainable and so, you
11 know, some of the impacts that we've had,
12 although recognizing the challenges on the
13 Longline fishery, when it comes to the lens of
14 reigning in, whether it be behaviors or
15 interaction rates or what have you, that those
16 amendments were very successful putting fish back
17 over the side for no either economic or social
18 gain.

19 When it comes to that individual
20 Bluefin quota, I know one of the stressors has
21 been access. You know, can I find quota to lease
22 from other fishery participants? So here's

1 essentially a chart that we demonstrated that.
2 You'll kind of notice here that we have, you
3 know, the grey bar that kind of is across the top
4 there. That was our purse seine fishery. And if
5 you all recall, we sun-setted that fishery in the
6 Amendment 13 because essentially they were no
7 longer actively fishing. They were armchair
8 captains that had stake historically in the
9 fishery and essentially they were a pass-through.
10 And so we did some quota redistribution as a
11 result of Amendment 13 to eliminate that dynamic
12 where you had one historical user group
13 essentially at the purse strings of an active
14 fishery. And then having folks needing to engage
15 in those business discussions to attain quota
16 versus eliminating them entirely. And then
17 having those discussions take place within the
18 Longline fishery itself.

19 And then some of the information as
20 far as price points, as well as kind of where
21 some of the allocation leases are taking place.
22 For folks just as a reminder that currently

1 there's quota that's dedicated for utilization in
2 the Atlantic. So essentially Key West East. And
3 then as noted earlier, the Gulf of Mexico is
4 designated as a spawning area. No directed
5 effort. But there is bycatch that does occur or
6 interactions that do occur with Bluefin, so we
7 have those as far as our allocation for our
8 Longline fisheries. And then some of the
9 dynamics that come into play and then those
10 leasing points. So again, a resource here just
11 to kind of keep track.

12 And as I mentioned earlier, you know,
13 as a result of that Amendment 13, we tried to
14 introduce a more dynamic allocation process. So
15 we're doing this on an annual basis now. We're
16 reassessing the prior 36 months of effort across
17 the entire fleet and then generating an
18 allocation for each individual vessel. And then
19 as a result of that, enter stage right, there's
20 an appeals process. You know, if the Agency were
21 to get something wrong or if we don't have the
22 proper information available so that the Agency's

1 decisions aren't just that is the final decision.

2 You know, there's this escape valve.

3 We spent a lot of time discussing this
4 in our first year around this table. But based
5 upon the findings of that initial year and the
6 pains that were incurred, both on the fleet side,
7 as well as on the Agency side, we refined some of
8 our processes. And thankfully, there really were
9 only three appeals that had come in this year
10 versus about 25 last year. But these
11 unfortunately are not flipped and resolved in
12 real time. So there were direct impacts that we
13 all observed on various vessels around the
14 fishery to get that resolved last year. So we're
15 grateful that our process has eliminated the need
16 for a significant portion of the fleet to have to
17 appeal.

18 And a lot of that was the data sources
19 that we're using; log books versus VMS and how
20 they were weighted. And so currently we're
21 looking at logbook information that has been
22 finalized and using more of our vessel monitoring

1 system reports for the most recent 12 months to
2 generate that effort profile for each individual
3 vessel. As well as then kind of reminding
4 individuals in the fleet in the Fall timeframe,
5 you might want to get your books in order if they
6 aren't already there because these are the data
7 sources we're using. And if unfortunately they
8 don't align, then you might have to be one of
9 those three unfortunate souls that has to appeal
10 and then incur some of those time lags that are
11 associated with that process. So thankfully we've
12 got it dialed in. Hopefully we'll continue to do
13 so.

14 And when it comes to what it looks
15 like for 2024 in regards to that allocation,
16 you'll see that about 75 or 76 percent of that is
17 dedicated to the Atlantic. About a quarter of
18 it's to the Gulf of Mexico. Overall, we had 243
19 letters that went out. Of those 243, eighty-five
20 had qualified to receive individual Bluefin
21 quota. That meant that they were active to some
22 degree in the prior 36 months. But yet, there's

1 still just a significant portion of the permits
2 that are out there that are just sitting idle
3 that aren't actively participating in the fishery
4 for a litany of reasons.

5 And Randy had kind of mentioned some
6 of that earlier today in regards to Swordfish,
7 whether it be market conditions, whether it be
8 ability to get crew, whether it's operating
9 costs. There's a whole litany there. So
10 something that we'll continue to look at and
11 strive to do a better job, not just from a
12 Bluefin perspective, but from a U.S. fishery
13 perspective as well.

14 So that is kind of a broad brush
15 approach with a lot of information, hence why
16 it's a good resource to tee up any additional
17 dialogue we're going to have regarding Bluefin
18 Tuna. Thank you.

19 MR. BROOKS: Thanks very much, Brad.
20 We've got about a half hour for discussion, maybe
21 a touch more. Let's work our way around the
22 room. I know these often trigger a lot of

1 questions. So if folks have a stack of
2 questions, I'll invite you just to maybe ask one
3 or two first and then I'll keep working my way
4 around the queue and then come back, just so
5 everyone gets a bite of this. I don't see anyone
6 yet online with a question. So let's start here
7 and Willy, I think your card was up first so jump
8 on in.

9 MR. GOLDSMITH: Thank you, Brad, for
10 a comprehensive presentation as always on Bluefin
11 and what's going on. Just a quick question back
12 to Slide 6 where you talking about the Angling
13 category and the Trophy fishery. Great. So
14 looking at Southern New England, I was looking at
15 that 30 number there. And you mentioned this is
16 a bite off New Jersey that just went on this
17 Spring. And obviously that's outside of the
18 large pelagic survey frame that starts in June,
19 so I'm just wondering is that number of fish, 30,
20 is that based purely on self-reported catch or
21 are there other data sources that you guys need
22 to assess that?

1 MR. MCHALE: So currently that number
2 is based upon self-reported catch for individuals
3 that like to self-report on social media that
4 then need compliance assistance to do official
5 reporting. And so it's essentially a combination
6 of both. You're absolutely right. The large
7 pelagic survey is not conducted this early in the
8 calendar year, which normally we'd try to capture
9 some of these recreational things.

10 But simultaneously to that survey
11 methodology, we had the mandated reporting of
12 Bluefin Tuna catch within 24 hours. And so
13 that's where these numbers are generated from, as
14 well as information that was brought before us or
15 information we found ourselves of catch events
16 that weren't reported that needed additional
17 following.

18 So you might want to consider this
19 number preliminary. Perhaps there will be a few
20 additional as a result of those compliance
21 assistant events. But those are the -- the
22 avenues of information.

1 MR. BROOKS: Great, thanks. Let's go
2 to Mike Pierdinock and then to Bob Humphrey and
3 then we'll go online.

4 MR. PIERDINOCK: Thank you. Thank
5 you, Brad. You know, just to expand upon that
6 with the LPS Survey, it's supposed to be
7 conducted from June through October. We continue
8 to come to the table and discuss how there's been
9 shifting stocks and fish are arriving sooner and
10 leaving later and local waters, we're fishing in
11 New England way into December. At what point
12 will the LPS Survey be expanded to make sure we
13 capture those fish that presently are not subject
14 to the survey? That's question one -- number
15 one.

16 I'm happy to see that with the head
17 boat category for Bluefin Tuna that, you know, I
18 just said for a long time now, we're looking for
19 equity and environmental justice for those that
20 can't economically afford to go on other boats.
21 And the head boats are mechanism to do that. And
22 I'm glad to see that's being considered as far as

1 their seasons and bag limits.

2 And one last thing, just more of a
3 comment, I think many around the table know that
4 there's potential pending Right Whale ten knot
5 speed limits. And I know up in New England where
6 we're concerned about that and when that falls
7 during the Bluefin Tuna season commercially or
8 recreationally. And that depending upon where
9 those fish may be located, ten knots, many boats
10 cannot even leave the docks. So that could
11 result in complications to the management of the
12 stock. So that's my three things. And I'd be
13 happy to hear what you have to say. Thanks.

14 MR. MCHALE: Thanks, Mike. Regarding
15 the large pelagic survey execution, I'll actually
16 defer to the Office of Science and Technology
17 because they actually have the lead role in
18 conducting those surveys. Now granted, there's
19 extensive collaboration that we have with them as
20 well. These are ongoing dialogues that we have
21 of what we're observing as far as whether
22 temporally or geographically where fish are

1 showing up, when they're showing up. And then
2 the implications that has on the surveys because
3 it's not necessarily easy to just pivot with some
4 of those surveys and just say oh, no. We're
5 going to bump it up an entire month. Some of
6 those are fiscally driven challenges, but some of
7 those are the success rates of the intercepts and
8 consistency of those changes that we are
9 observing with the implications that has then on
10 a programmatic level of doing those shifts.

11 And so unfortunately Cliff is -- Cliff
12 Hutt who is also one of our recreational
13 coordinators and our in-house expert on all
14 things large pelagic survey happens to be in the
15 field doing some recreational outreach in St.
16 Croix I believe right now. So we walk the circle
17 back and provide you more succinct answers on
18 what the trigger points would be for actually
19 those changes. But I want to let you know that
20 dialogue is happening and has been happening for
21 a number of years of, you know, the shifts that
22 we're seeing in HMS and then how do you curtail

1 our various data collection programs to get at
2 that information? Whether it be that
3 self-reporting or the survey methodology to
4 ensure our confidence in those numbers.

5 As it relates to the Right Whale
6 speed, we're cognizant of that. You know, we've
7 been engaged with the Office of Protective
8 Resources there. We understand the implications
9 it has not only on the recreational, but our
10 commercial fleets. But that's something I also
11 would have to defer to the Office of Protective
12 Resources. We're aware that potential challenges
13 that could be imposed on a fleet falls into some
14 of those speed restrictions overlap of where our
15 fishery is taking place. We'll have to kind of
16 see whether or not any of that stuff comes to
17 fruition. So thanks, Mike.

18 MR. BROOKS: Let's go over to Bob
19 Humphrey.

20 MR. HUMPHREY: Thanks, Brad for that.
21 Two quick questions and a comment. First is
22 looking at the recreational Trophy fishery, you

1 showed some numbers of the south and Southern New
2 England exceeding by 200 percent plus. Is there
3 a possibility if that happens again that the
4 Northern -- the Gulf of Maine fishery could be
5 closed prematurely or would that not apply?

6 MR. BROOKS: Just check your
7 microphone.

8 MR. MCHALE: Check check.

9 MR. BROOKS: You've got to turn yours
10 up.

11 MR. MCHALE: There we go. So no,
12 we're managing each of these geographic areas
13 independently. And so the activity in one area
14 doesn't necessarily curtail fishing opportunities
15 in another geographic area unless we're dealing
16 with gross exceedances and have to look at the
17 U.S. fishery as a whole. So that isn't
18 necessarily at play.

19 And the challenges that we have,
20 especially if landings take place over a weekend,
21 by the time we're finding out that information,
22 the regulatory process kicks in while fishing

1 still occurs. Yet to be seen kind of how that
2 Gulf of Maine fisheries can take place. But
3 currently as things stand, there are 2.3 metric
4 tons that are anxiously awaiting a recreational
5 effort for once those fish enter the Gulf.

6 MR. HUMPHREY: All right, thanks. And
7 second question. I saw this a couple years ago
8 and I see possible potential for it to happen
9 this year. If we start seeing an early rod and
10 reel bite in June, how quickly realistically can
11 you react to drop that to one?

12 MR. MCHALE: So we have the ability to
13 react within days. There's a couple of different
14 variables that come into play. It's how much
15 notice do we provide the fishery? We're not
16 obligated to provide three days, but we try to
17 give that courtesy. If we really saw a problem,
18 we could drop the hammer within 24 hours. Now
19 Karyl might question that because there's a
20 regulatory process behind it, but technically we
21 could do so.

22 So we try to strike that balance of

1 knowing that there's a 24 hour lag in the
2 information we're seeing given the reporting
3 requirements. So we're always a day behind. And
4 that's on the assumption that everyone is
5 complying with that 24 hour requirement. So
6 that's one data source. But thankfully we have
7 an excellent rapport with the fishery that if all
8 the sudden a bite is taking place, even before
9 we'll see the data, usually the phone's ringing.
10 Hey, by the way, something just happened off of,
11 you know, Portsmouth. You know, be prepared that
12 landings are coming in. And whether that's
13 information we'll get from fishermen or dealers
14 or what have you. So normally we have those
15 indicators that have us get on high alert.

16 But to answer your question, usually
17 within a couple days of a high catch event,
18 assuming it's not just an anomaly, but we're
19 seeing it that the bite is starting to ramp up.
20 We can ratchet that down usually within, you
21 know, 48 to 72 hours, depending on the urgency.

22 MR. HUMPHREY: Great. And lastly, I

1 just want to acknowledge the reduction in dead
2 discards by the pelagic longline fishery. And
3 just say good job, well done.

4 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Bob. Let's go to
5 Rick Bellavance and then we'll go online.

6 MR. BELLAVANCE: Hi. Thanks, Brad.
7 Two quick questions. The first one is do you
8 have a timeline on the adjusted recreational
9 Angling category retention limits?

10 MR. MCHALE: Never been closer.

11 MR. BELLAVANCE: And my second
12 question was in regards to the compliance
13 percentage that you had on your slide, that 75
14 percent. Is that based on compliance with a 24
15 hour reporting period or just reporting overall?
16 I'm just trying to figure out where the outreach
17 would be best put. Are folks reporting three
18 days later and you're considering that
19 noncompliant or --

20 MR. MCHALE: So this -- That's an
21 excellent question, Rick, because I think in
22 years past, we provided some of those slides to

1 show what percentage is coming in within the 24
2 hour requirement. What's coming in, in 48 hours,
3 which is okay, good. They're still reporting,
4 but not quite on time. I believe this graph here
5 is compliance in totality. You know, so I would
6 have to go back with some of our staff to refine
7 exactly the metrics of what is the compliance
8 with the 24 hour requirement? How many reports
9 are we seeing in 48, 72, and so on and so forth?
10 And I know those are metrics that we actively use
11 because when we start to engage the Office of Law
12 Enforcement and acknowledging their limited
13 resources that they can't go after every single
14 vessel that isn't reporting within 24 hours.
15 It's just unfortunately unrealistic.

16 And so what we'll use is some of those
17 metrics to find out what are the more egregious
18 noncompliance events? And really kind of focus
19 our attention on getting their attention. And
20 the implications and the importance of the data
21 threads. So that's something we could follow
22 back up with to kind of share some of that

1 information, so stand by.

2 MR. BELLAVANCE: Thanks for that.
3 That would be great. Just helpful around the
4 dock compliance. You know, we can do our part
5 too. We try to anyway a little bit. So having a
6 way to figure out what to talk about would be
7 helpful. Thanks.

8 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks, Rick.
9 Let's go online and then we'll come back in the
10 room. Going to open up Jeff Kneebone's line in a
11 second, but first I'll start with a question from
12 Raimundo. It says, "Thank you, Brad. You
13 mentioned the Caribbean being part of what you
14 looked at, but where did you obtain the data for
15 the Caribbean? And was it USVI or PR, or
16 US-based?" Want that again?

17 MR. MCHALE: Yes, only because I
18 didn't provide any data for the Caribbean.

19 MR. BROOKS: It says, "Thank you,
20 Brad." Raimundo, you want to come off -- Why
21 don't we bring Raimundo off mute and Raimundo,
22 you can ask the question.

1 MALE PARTICIPANT: It's around Slide
2 18 or 19 he's saying.

3 MR. ESPINOZA: Yeah. Hi, thanks.
4 Yeah. So when I heard -- I'm sorry -- when I
5 heard you mention it, you mentioned it around
6 Slide 18 or 19. You were mentioning that you had
7 some information on the Caribbean. And I was
8 just wondering if that information that you had,
9 was it from the U.S. Caribbean like from Puerto
10 Rico or USVI-based from the data that they're
11 reporting or was it from some of the vessels that
12 are fishing in the U.S. and EEZ? If you have any
13 thoughts. It's kind of hard to sift through this,
14 I understand as well.

15 MR. MCHALE: Thank you. Just so we
16 all know, Jackie Wilson is truly the Brain trust
17 of the fishery reporting. So Raimundo, I think
18 you were -- what you were keying off of was some
19 of the efforts we were taking in working with the
20 various states and territories as it relates to
21 the dealer permits and various whole sale permits
22 that either are or are not required. And so we

1 did collaborate and continue to collaborate with
2 folks with Puerto Rico, as well as the U.S.
3 Virgin Islands to assess whether or not those
4 permits are acquired at that particular level.
5 That's a prerequisite for the federal related to
6 the dealer permit.

7 My current understanding is that USVI,
8 as well as Puerto Rico does not have a
9 requirement for a wholesale permit that is then
10 the conduit to the FDA requirements for HACCP.
11 And so -- And that's derived from conversations
12 with the FDA folks themselves and again, this is
13 the local territories, whether it be the
14 Departments of Health or the Departments of
15 Fisheries because depending on the state and
16 territory, some of the responsibilities are
17 different. But that's the dialogue I was
18 referring to.

19 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Jeff Kneebone,
20 we're going to open up your line. Just wait a
21 second or two and you can jump in. I'll let you
22 know when the line is open. Okay. Jeff, it

1 should be open now.

2 MR. KNEEBONE: All right, thanks. Do
3 you have me?

4 MS. CRAWFORD: Yes.

5 MR. BROOKS: Yes is the answer.

6 MR. KNEEBONE: You got me? Sorry.

7 MR. BROOKS: Yes again.

8 MR. KNEEBONE: Okay, thanks. Yeah,
9 Jeff Kneebone. Sorry I can't be there in person.
10 Thanks Brad for the presentation. I have one
11 comment and one, I guess, series of questions.
12 The first comment is I'm unable to access the
13 presentation in the link on the AP web page. I'm
14 sorry if this has already been said. I missed
15 it. But I just wanted to make that point.

16 And then the questions. Brad, you
17 talked about the compliance rate in the
18 commercial handgear fishery and response to
19 Rick's question. But I'm wondering if you have
20 any insight into what that may be for the Angling
21 category. And even digging a little bit further,
22 if it's different between the states

1 acknowledging. I think that Maryland and North
2 Carolina have a little different reporting than
3 the rest of the states. So yeah, I'll stop
4 there.

5 MR. MCHALE: Thanks, Jeff. We'll look
6 into that link and we'll get that corrected in
7 short order.

8 Regarding the compliance rates, when
9 it comes to our commercial fisheries, you
10 essentially have two data streams you can
11 validate up against, whether it be the vessel
12 reporting and then in turn the individuals that
13 are selling their catch to the dealers. You can
14 do that apple to apple comparison. And so that's
15 what's reflected here in the slide that's
16 currently up.

17 Unfortunately when it comes to the
18 recreational fisheries, you don't have those same
19 equivalent data streams to validate up against.
20 So we have the mandated self-reporting and there
21 are the recreational surveys that are in play.
22 So we just discussed the large pelagic survey.

1 And you're right, Jeff, in the --
2 there is the state of Maryland and then the state
3 of North Carolina that have their own respective
4 Catch Card census programs. But some of the
5 challenges are that if they report through those
6 census programs, they're exempt from the
7 individual vessel reporting. And so when you
8 start to have all these various layers, it
9 becomes extremely challenging to figure out what
10 data streams can you actually validate up against
11 where some of them are census, but some of them
12 are truly dependent upon whether or not an
13 individual is intercepted at the dock side.

14 I know going back over the years,
15 we've done some comparisons looking at the
16 Maryland information. We're trying to compare
17 some of the large pelagic survey information with
18 the vessel. But the sample sizes to try to get
19 those direct hits to compare against each other
20 just provides immense challenge to validate the
21 compliance rates in the Angling category. And
22 those challenges still persist.

1 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. And just for
2 Jeff or anyone else who might be having trouble
3 accessing the slides, I know folks in this room
4 are able to see it. The link was just added to
5 the chat. If you're having trouble, I'd
6 recommend closing your web browser, trying it
7 again. And if that really doesn't work, maybe
8 open up an incognito window. Sometimes it gets
9 that history stuck in its head.

10 Let's come back into the room. Let's
11 go over to John and then over to Bob Zales.

12 MR. BOHORQUEZ: Thanks. Hi, everyone.
13 John Bohorquez here from Stony Brook University.
14 Thanks for the presentation, Brad. I wanted to
15 just ask a couple of clarifying questions on that
16 point related to the dynamics of declining
17 exports and the effect on market prices and the
18 mention of the need to investigate alternative
19 domestic market opportunities.

20 Just two part clarifying question.
21 Wondering if you could divulge a little bit on
22 the state of knowledge of what those alternative

1 domestic market opportunities might be. Are
2 there some clear potential pathways or is that
3 still a question to be answered? And the second
4 part is just to clarify what the state of
5 engagement of the Office is in directly
6 addressing that question. Is there something
7 that's just being, you know, anywhere from being
8 investigated on a surface level to deeper
9 involvement and the potential support and
10 development of some of those alternative market
11 pathways? Thanks.

12 MR. MCHALE: So thank you.

13 Unfortunately I'd have to defer as far as the
14 overall Agency engagement when it comes to
15 marketing U.S. products and seafood because that
16 essentially transcends the mission of the HMS
17 Management Division. But it's more a reflection
18 that, you know, we as managers, we're cognizant
19 of things that even fall outside our direct
20 purview. And so we don't necessarily just put
21 the blinders on and don't recognize some of those
22 challenges.

1 So what really my commentary there is
2 building off of not only just the information we
3 do collect, exports have gone down exponentially.
4 But then do further deeper dive of the why. You
5 know, again what are the things that are beyond
6 our direct purview; exchange rates, fuel costs,
7 overall global production, things along those
8 lines because we recognize those then have
9 implications on the regulated industries, even
10 though we may not have direct influence over
11 them.

12 So we're cognizant of that.

13 We're also then cognizant of the
14 dialogue in the room of okay, what does that then
15 look like now? I know it's sometimes been
16 discussed well, is that an inherently Agency
17 action that we promote U.S. seafood and take a
18 larger role in that or is that more on the
19 industry and academic, you know, on the private
20 side of the equation? And so that dialogue, I
21 think will continue. You know, I know that while
22 we recognize that we as the HMS Management

1 Division are not actively trying to develop or
2 pursue kind of additional marketplaces to help do
3 this. We're aware that we're part of the
4 conversation, but that isn't necessarily one of
5 our driving missions currently.

6 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Brad's right, but I
7 just wanted to add -- mention, that you know,
8 from an Agency standpoint, which has been -- we
9 have been in the process of working towards the
10 draft National Seafood Strategy in order to try
11 to, you know, work towards and help identify
12 different options and opportunities that there
13 may be to try to explore some of that. That is
14 an ongoing initiative, which you know, could be
15 helpful in some ways. And we hope that it will
16 be helpful in some ways in trying to reveal some
17 of those opportunities. So I'll just mention
18 that in followup.

19 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. I've got about
20 five speakers left and we've got 15 minutes left.
21 So I'll keep working around, but I'd ask folks to
22 be succinct so that we can have a chance to hear

1 from everybody. Bob Zales, your turn.

2 MR. ZALES: Yeah. Mine is on the head
3 boat versus charter boat. Your definition of
4 that was clearly a UPV versus a COI, they're
5 different. And head boats are typically
6 identified differently, depending on what region
7 you're in. COI is seven people are more. So
8 what are you classifying as a head boat -- for
9 the head boat category? Have you got a specific
10 number that those boats carry versus just
11 whatever -- however you define it?

12 MR. MCHALE: Yeah. Thanks, Bob. You
13 know, it is defined in the regulations. You
14 know, so essentially it's those vessels that are
15 uninspected that are authorized to carry six or
16 fewer passengers or commonly referred as the
17 charter boats. And I know I'm talking -- you
18 know this is aces. But the head boat definition
19 is then associated with those inspected vessels
20 -- U.S. Coast Guard inspected vessels that are
21 authorized to take seven or more paying
22 passengers. And so that's really the delineation

1 where it comes to the charter versus head boat
2 where we would look to see where certain
3 retention limits fall. And then the number of
4 vessels that kind of fall into those categories,
5 et cetera.

6 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Bob. Let's go
7 over to Marty.

8 MR. SCANLON: One of the things that
9 I see here that, you know, we constantly have the
10 same problem here when it comes to like the
11 survey and stuff. There was, you know,
12 inaccuracies and to be able to get sufficient
13 data. And one of the things that I've been
14 wondering is why aren't we utilizing the AIS
15 systems that are available today? I mean they're
16 pretty inexpensive pieces of equipment there to
17 me. You know, anybody that's fishing in the HMS
18 industry at this point -- or anything HMS, should
19 be required to have an active using, you know,
20 AIS on the system.

21 And you know, we need to document the
22 carbon footprint to all of these different

1 fisheries. You know and I can't see where it
2 would hurt in the survey if you were able to see,
3 you know, you've got boats coming in here and you
4 can easily look and see AIS wise, how many boats
5 are in an area that are fishing. You know, you'd
6 have a pretty accurate number. So I mean it
7 would only enhance your data collection and it
8 would also help in compliance, you know, by
9 utilizing those AIS systems.

10 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Thanks, Marty.
11 Willy, you had another comment.

12 MR. GOLDSMITH: Yeah. Just a quick
13 point of clarification. It's actually on this
14 slide. Just looking at the total ex-vessel
15 there, are those numbers inverted? I'm just
16 wondering if that's a typo. Okay. I wanted to
17 make sure just for the future. And are the
18 prices inverted as well or is it just the overall
19 --

20 MR. BROOKS: It looks like the exports
21 are about 80 percent, but they're showing up as
22 20 on the chart. Something is funny there.

1 MR. MCHALE: Yeah. You know what?
2 I'm just getting in on one wheel here from
3 travel. I'll look at the data behind it, but I
4 suspected it's just user error.

5 MR. BROOKS: Actually in this case,
6 the user was right. Let's go to, David Schalit,
7 you had a question -- comment? You're good.
8 Okay. Spencer.

9 MR. BODE: Brad, thank you very much
10 for the presentation. Could we just go to the
11 slide that showed the monthly ex-vessel price for
12 the general category? So as someone who
13 participates in the general category and has
14 family members that are dealers for HMS species,
15 there has been a real traction that we need some
16 sort of November 1st opening for general category
17 to allow as we see here, trending prices towards
18 the later months of the year. And what would the
19 process be if we as an AP group decided that was
20 the right action to take some of our Summer quota
21 and move it towards a November 1st opening to
22 allocate some separate quota so we don't go 50

1 days without any Bluefin Tuna hitting the market.
2 And then as you described in December, we had
3 tens and tens and tens of tons landed in six days
4 when the previous 50 we had none. Thank you very
5 much. Appreciate it.

6 MR. MCHALE: Thanks, Spencer. Welcome
7 to Bluefin Tuna allocation discussions. I
8 suspect there are a number of folks around the
9 table that can shed their own response. Here's
10 mine -- Here's the Agency. We've run at this --
11 We've run at this a number of different times of
12 trying to figure out how to distribute the
13 allocation equitably across the time period of
14 when those resources are available to U.S.
15 fishermen, recognizing the historical dependence
16 upon the when and the where that, that catch is
17 coming in and try to strike that right balance so
18 we don't get trapped into this is how it's always
19 been, therefore this is the model. But yet not
20 moving so far away from that, that it doesn't
21 recognize the dependence on whether the
22 infrastructures and everything else that comes

1 along with those fisheries.

2 In my 25 years of working with Bluefin
3 Tuna, reallocation is a four letter word.
4 Everyone around this table, regardless of where
5 you fish, when you fish, how you fish has a valid
6 argument of why they should get more for their
7 time period or their geographic location. And so
8 those conversations are usually highly sensitive.
9 Not that we shouldn't have them, but there's
10 always multiple viewpoints coming in to them.

11 From a process perspective, normally
12 what that would entail is a fishery management
13 plan amendment. And so that would require
14 various analytical documents where the Agency
15 puts together alternatives, assesses the pros and
16 cons of those alternatives. We go out for public
17 comment on those and then ultimately arrive at a
18 final decision of whether or not a change is
19 warranted.

20 We've done that. So we can do -- We
21 can share of the information to help inform that
22 of where over the last number of years or

1 decades, we've taken a run at that. And the end
2 result and where we ended up with those end
3 results of why there isn't necessarily a November
4 1st fishery right now where it's still, you know,
5 October and November, but we aren't getting to
6 November based on the catch rates. So while on
7 the face of it, I hear you. A valid question to
8 kind of look at. I also want to recognize
9 history that we've looked at this stuff a number
10 of different times. And haven't necessarily
11 pivoted for various reasons.

12 MR. BODE: Sir, I just have one more
13 question. Can we go to the slide that has unsold
14 fish? And I think it was over years and not
15 months. So I'd be willing -- I'm just guessing
16 and maybe you can confer or not if those unsold
17 fish are during the Summer months or during
18 September, October, and December.

19 MR. MCHALE: So we can definitely go
20 back and refine because we'll have the exact
21 dates landed. All these landings are taking
22 place while the general category is open. And it

1 will vary just from like general knowledge of the
2 landings where some of these fish, you know, will
3 be June. So there isn't necessarily a spike
4 where all the sudden -- unless there's an event
5 where there's really one dominant dealer in a
6 geographic area and they say they're not
7 accepting catch that the unsold tends to be
8 pretty well distributed throughout the fishery.
9 But that's something we could refine and report
10 back out on.

11 It's one of these kind of get backs
12 like sometimes if we don't have the information
13 in the presentation, we have staff working in the
14 background to help answer or run some of those
15 queries. And we can do that in this situation.
16 But generally speaking, they tend to be pretty
17 well distributed unless there is like an acute
18 event like we experienced out at Rhode Island
19 last year where one of the dealers after some of
20 the fish had already come across the dock, they
21 said we're not accepting any more fish. And then
22 it's like okay, a fisherman is still going, where

1 are those fish then ending up? And we know that
2 we had a spiked event in Point Judith where folks
3 were bringing fish in and they didn't have an
4 outlet or a dealer to move them to. So that's
5 the numbers that we can to refine to answer that
6 question.

7 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Any others
8 questions in the room or online? I'll note by
9 the way, Brad, that Raimundo said he'd love to
10 connect with you offline if possible about the
11 seafood wholesale permits for Puerto Rico, noting
12 that there's a permit in Puerto Rico from the
13 local Department of Health. So he would like to
14 connect with you offline. Dave.

15 MR. SCHALIT: I was getting ready to
16 pride myself on not saying anything about this
17 presentation. But now that you bring it up, I
18 think it's important to note there are some
19 developments that are taking place now that could
20 impact some of what we're talking about regarding
21 Bluefin in particular.

22 Ricardo Fuentes, that is the largest

1 owner -- owner of the greatest number of farms --
2 Bluefin farms in the Mediterranean. He also --
3 That company also pretty much owns all the
4 production in the Maghreb, which is Morocco,
5 Algeria, I don't know about Libya, and Tunisia.
6 So this is a tremendous business these people
7 have. Okay? So they have just this year begun
8 to offer product in the United States. And right
9 at the moment, they're offering Bluefin landed at
10 \$8 per pound. That price will change obviously
11 during the season.

12 We already have Balfego, another big
13 Spanish farm that is -- that has established an
14 office in Boston, I think two years ago if I'm
15 not mistaken. And they are selling into the U.S.
16 market farmed fish. Also the Turks, I don't
17 believe they've set up an office here, but the
18 Turkish farms are selling into the U.S. Market.
19 The Croatians are selling into the U.S. market.
20 And the Mexicans who were formerly selling most
21 of their production, their Pacific Bluefin
22 production -- I'm talking about farms off of

1 Ensenada in Baja, California are now mostly
2 focused on selling their fish -- their farmed
3 fish to the West Coast market basically. And
4 they're offering, I believe it's around \$8 per
5 pound FOB San Diego.

6 So what we're looking at, this trend
7 that's developing only now -- only recently
8 suggests that whenever we have a gap in our -- in
9 our harvesting -- Like for example from the end
10 of the first of October til the first day of
11 December, we may have plenty of fish in the
12 water, but we're not able to harvest them and
13 make them available to the domestic market. This
14 would be an opportunity for a restaurateur who
15 wants to carry Bluefin during that time, they
16 will simply revert to the Spanish farms or the
17 Turkish farms and buy their product from them.

18 So we are -- we have to be mindful
19 that the way we're managing this fishery is also
20 impacting, you know, has economic overtones. And
21 it's -- And so, you know, I think that we -- my
22 organization, we did present the perfect

1 alternative to the current distribution of the
2 quota for the year about three or four years ago.
3 It never got legs. And it may be something that
4 this committee may want to -- this panel may want
5 to address again in the future to see if there
6 are any good ideas for how we can deal with this.
7 Thank you.

8 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, David. So just
9 a couple things before we go to break. I think
10 there are two get backs from this one. Interest
11 in better understanding the compliance. What's
12 within 24 hours or longer? Interesting comment
13 from Spencer on unsold fish, what time of year?
14 When is that -- When is that coming in? And
15 then just in terms of comments that we heard
16 besides the many clarifying questions, suggestion
17 to think about expanding the LPS to accommodate
18 shifting seasons. A caution around the vessel
19 strike -- sort of the speed rule and how that
20 might impact future activities. Suggestion on
21 why not use AIS for reporting and compliance. A
22 comment towards the end here around at least

1 consider looking at general category and need for
2 November 1 opening. And then a couple of
3 comments sort of market related. One was
4 interest in exploring alternative domestic
5 markets. And then this comment at the end which
6 is be mindful of exports and the role they may
7 play during periods where there's not domestic
8 fish coming into the market.

9 So with that, if there are no other
10 comments in the room or online, and I don't see
11 any, let's go to a break and we will come back in
12 15 minutes at 2:30 and hand it over to Karyl for
13 an update on rulemaking. Thanks everybody.
14 Thanks, Brad.

15 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
16 went off the record at 2:15 p.m. and resumed at
17 2:30 p.m.)

18 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Again, if I can
19 get folks to their seats, either at the table or
20 around the chairs.

21 Just before we jump back in, two quick
22 notes. One is we promised to send around a list

1 of attendees, folks in the room and online, and
2 that will be going out I think by email. Is that
3 right, Pete? Yep. That's going out by email to
4 the AP momentarily.

5 So if you want to know who you can't
6 see, because they're either not in the room or
7 you're not online, that will come to your email
8 shortly.

9 And then just a note, again, for any
10 members of the public who are here and wanting to
11 have a comment, we will have two presentations,
12 and then at 4:30 we will pick up public comments.
13 So that's for folks who are in the room or
14 online.

15 Is there anyone in the room wanting to
16 make a public comment, just so I know? Okay.

17 All right. Then, with that, I'm going
18 to hand it over to Karyl to give us an update on
19 various rulemakings. Karyl?

20 MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ: Thank you,
21 Bennett. Hello, everyone. And to those of you
22 who I haven't met, I am Karyl Brewster-Geisz. I

1 am the Rulemaking Branch Chief here in HMS, and I
2 know many of you have known me over the years as
3 the shark person, only presenting on sharks,
4 shark girl, elasmobranch, all of that.

5 (Laughter.)

6 MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ: I am actually the
7 Rulemaking Branch Chief now. I do not do just
8 sharks, though I will always be the shark girl in
9 my heart.

10 So if you have questions about the
11 process and how long it takes to do an in-season
12 action, please do not count on Brad to answer
13 that correctly.

14 (Laughter.)

15 MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ: It takes a lot
16 more than 24 hours to do an in-season act.

17 MR. BROOKS: This is fun. Can we do
18 a little back and forth here for just a minute?

19 (Laughter.)

20 MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ: All right. So
21 I'm here today to talk about rules, not sharks,
22 so we will be talking about sharks later. I'm

1 looking forward to that.

2 So I'm going to tell you a little bit
3 about what we've completed recently, what's
4 coming up, and I would really like to have a
5 great discussion with all of you about public
6 hearing attendance and how we can get engagement
7 from all of you in our public hearings.

8 So last year we completed 45 actions.
9 Most of those were either in-season actions, of
10 which Brad went through a whole bunch of them in
11 the bluefin. They are almost all bluefin in
12 season actions.

13 We also did a number of notices, and
14 notices can be things such as the Federal
15 Register Notice announcing this Advisory Panel
16 meeting or it could be a Federal Register Notice
17 announcing our EFH five-year review. So notices
18 or a variety of things, and then we had a number
19 of proposed and final rules.

20 So, as Rulemaking Branch Chief, any
21 Federal Register Notice, any rule, any FMP
22 amendment, comes through my team. So if you have

1 questions about any of that, feel free to ask me
2 or any of my team.

3 Since our last Advisory Panel meeting
4 last fall, we have done a whole bunch of bluefin
5 tuna in-season actions. So while it does take us
6 more than 24 hours to do an in-season, we can get
7 these done relatively quickly once we -- once we
8 have the data from all of you and that has gone
9 through Brad's team for quality control.

10 So besides bluefin tuna in-season
11 actions since last fall, we have also completed
12 four final rulemakings, the annual northern
13 albacore, north and south Atlantic swordfish, and
14 bluefin tuna adjustment quota rule.

15 We have the 2024 shark quota, opening
16 date, retention limit rule, and this was a
17 different rule than we have done in the past, and
18 that now we have a much higher default retention
19 limit for large coastal sharks, we also have
20 opening automatically on January 1 instead of
21 waiting for a -- for this annual rule to be done.

22 We also earlier this year finalized

1 the prohibition on oceanic whitetip, and that
2 prohibition for oceanic whitetip is everywhere,
3 and scalloped hammerhead sharks in the Caribbean
4 region.

5 And, lastly, we recently published a
6 notice that the five-year review of essential
7 fish habitat is done, and we'll be initiating
8 Amendment 17. And of those, all the shark things
9 and the EFH will be discussed later in this
10 meeting.

11 So what have we done recently that is
12 not yet final and not going to be discussed later
13 in this meeting? One is the Advance Notice of
14 Proposed Rulemaking that we announced last summer
15 on electronic reporting.

16 And this ANPR, as we like to call it,
17 received 11 written comments, and then we had a
18 number of oral comments we received during seven
19 in-season -- in-season, ah -- in-person and
20 webinar public hearings, along with a lot of
21 Fishery Management Council meetings and the
22 Advisory Panel here.

1 So this is the rulemaking that would
2 essentially expand our electronic reporting
3 requirements across all of our commercial and
4 recreational fisheries and also for the dealers,
5 and it would be consistent with the agency one
6 stop reporting initiative.

7 We received a lot of really good
8 comments. Most of them were in support of the
9 rulemaking in general. Some people did want to
10 stick with the status quo, so the current
11 requirements for all the reporting. A lot of
12 people supported the one-stop reporting
13 initiative overall.

14 People had questions about the
15 rationale, why we were doing this, what were the
16 changes that we were thinking, how would we be
17 using the data that we're collecting, a lot of
18 people requesting more equitable reporting
19 systems across all the sectors. As you know, all
20 the commercial longliners have a lot of reporting
21 requirements. Whereas, if you were an angler,
22 particularly for sharks, you may not be required

1 to report quite as much as pelagic longliners.
2 So people requesting equitable reporting systems.

3 We also had commenters encouraging
4 collaboration with all the partners, so I do want
5 to emphasize, yes, we are collaborating with all
6 of our partners, both within the agency, ACCSP,
7 ASMFC, the Councils, we are trying to match as
8 much as possible. That is all part of the one
9 stop reporting initiative.

10 And then other commenters were really
11 curious about how, once we start collecting more
12 data, that data would be integrated into the
13 existing data streams, and how all that would be
14 worked out. So we have a lot of comments to go
15 through. We are working on that proposed rule as
16 soon as we can. And we are really hoping -- my
17 fingers are crossed, though I am not going to
18 make any promises, that we will have a proposed
19 rule out by the time this party meets next fall.
20 That is a goal of mine. As I said, I'm not
21 promising it, but we're trying.

22 So another action we have had come out

1 since last fall is the proposed rule for bluefin
2 tuna general category effort controls. This is
3 the restricted fishing days. This also looked at
4 the retention limits, the default retention
5 limits. So this is for the general category
6 fishermen, which include the charter head boat
7 fishermen fishing commercially.

8 We received 36 written comments on
9 this proposed rule, and we are working very hard
10 to get that final rule out before the start of
11 the fishing season.

12 We also released a proposed rule on
13 the sea turtle careful release requirements in
14 our longline fisheries. This proposed rule was
15 to bring the sea turtle safe handling and release
16 requirements for the pelagic longliners in line
17 with the technical memorandum that the Southeast
18 Fisheries Science Center issued several years ago
19 back before the pandemic.

20 This proposed rule didn't propose
21 changes to what is currently in place. It only
22 proposed additional things that the fishermen

1 could do to release -- safely release turtles.
2 It wasn't any additional requirements for them.

3 And so we just had the comment period
4 close last week. We had a number of comments
5 come in that were in support of the action, and
6 also some comments suggesting that we not allow
7 pelagic longline at all. So we're moving
8 forward. We hope to have the final rule out
9 later this year.

10 So besides what we have already done,
11 we have a number of other rules that we are
12 working on now. One of them is our annual
13 northern albacore, swordfish, and bluefin tuna
14 quota adjustments. If you listen to Walt's
15 presentation, you pretty much know what is going
16 to be in this rule, and we hope to have that out
17 sometime later this year.

18 There are a lot of rules coming up, so
19 I've talked about some of them. We'll be talking
20 about others during this meeting. So another one
21 that's coming up is Amendment 15. That will be
22 final rule coming out. We released the Final

1 Environmental Impact Statement already. So we'll
2 be talking about that tomorrow morning.

3 And then the consideration of pelagic
4 and bottom longline indicator species list. We
5 are working on that rule. It will take us longer
6 to get it done because we are trying to
7 prioritize other rules, such as that electronic
8 reporting rule. And then Amendment 16, and we
9 are having a presentation later on in this
10 meeting -- I think it's for our afternoon -- on
11 some of the shark actions that are coming up and
12 have been done.

13 There are two review/comment periods
14 that are open right now. Amendment 15, the final
15 environmental impact statement, has an open
16 review period until June 10th. If you do have
17 any particular comments or statements you want to
18 make about that, feel free to send both Randy and
19 me an email with that statement.

20 And then gear considerations, we just
21 released a scoping document a couple weeks ago.
22 Comment period ends at the end of July, and we

1 will have a presentation on that action, I want
2 to say on Wednesday, but it could be Thursday.
3 Thursday morning. All right. Thank you.

4 All right. So then we come to the
5 topic that I really want to have a great
6 discussion about, and that is public hearing
7 attendance. All the comments you guys submit to
8 us are critical. We read and listen to all of
9 them. We have endless meetings talking about the
10 comments and what they mean and where we should
11 go and adjust things.

12 Those of you who are aware of, for
13 example, Amendment 15 and what we have proposed
14 versus what we just released in the final
15 environmental impact statement, know that we do
16 make changes based on public comment all the
17 time. In almost every action we take, we make
18 changes based on what all of you say.

19 Last year was our first time doing in
20 person hearings since the pandemic hit, and we
21 did a lot to get people at these hearings. And
22 yet, if you look at these numbers, the in-person

1 public hearings, the most people we had was in
2 Manteo on Amendment 15 where we had 42 people
3 come.

4 We had a number of public hearings
5 where we went and we sent a lot of people to
6 these hearings where we only had one, and we even
7 had one case where we had no one show up. And
8 this was after a lot of effort where we made sure
9 that all of our hearings and all the information
10 was up on our broad NOAA webpage, the calendar
11 that they have there.

12 We sent out reminders every single
13 week reminding people that these hearings were
14 coming up. We tried reaching out to people we
15 thought would be interested before we went, and
16 we still didn't get a lot of people coming into
17 the in person hearings.

18 The webinars we had much better
19 attendance. So whereas we had an average of only
20 eight people at the in-person hearings, and I
21 would say that would be much lower if you didn't
22 consider Manteo, 42, we had about 25 people on

1 average at all of the webinars, including the
2 ones we have had this year.

3 So my questions to all of you is, how
4 do we get more engagement? Is it the timing of
5 the hearings? Is it the location of the
6 hearings? Is it just webinars are easier to get
7 to, so you're going to do that as opposed to the
8 in-person? We -- as the Rulemaking Branch Chief,
9 I will say seeing all of you in person, I feel
10 like I get a lot more interaction. I understand
11 more of your issues than over webinar. But, as I
12 said, we are getting a lot of people on the
13 webinars, more than we are on the in-person ones.

14 So I definitely welcome all of your
15 suggestions, either as soon as I finish or feel
16 free to find me or anybody on my team after this
17 discussion.

18 So this slide just has the webpages,
19 if you want to look at anything that we've done.

20 And then, again, if you have any
21 questions about how long it takes to do an in
22 season or what's involved in an FMP amendment,

1 feel free to reach out to me or any of the
2 members of my team.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Karyl.

5 Let's take this in two chunks. Let's
6 just first have any clarifying questions have --
7 folks might have on any of the rules that you
8 discussed, and then let's talk about this
9 question around public hearings and how might the
10 agency do more to have more folks weighing in or
11 do things differently.

12 So, first, clarifying questions? I'll
13 start over here, and then kind of work my way
14 around. So, Scott, no? Then -- is it David? Or
15 -- clarifying?

16 MR. HULL: Yeah. Thanks, Karyl. I
17 would say my clarifying question would be as far
18 as in-season rulemaking adjustments as to, say,
19 for example, trip limits. Obviously, you have a
20 framework or a process in place to do that. So
21 can that be applied in a broad basis that
22 framework for different -- for shark species as

1 and tuna species, the same process that you had?

2 MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ: So the rulemaking
3 process is the same regardless of the species.
4 Once it's in the rules, the flexibility we have
5 is driven by that rulemaking. So for sharks, I
6 know you were interested in blacknose sharks, we
7 have the limit for blacknose, and there is no
8 flexibility in that regulation right now. So if
9 we are to change the blacknose retention limit,
10 we have to do a full rulemaking to do that with
11 public comment period.

12 If we were talking large coastal
13 sharks, we have a range set up for the retention
14 limit. So then we can do an in-season action
15 pretty quickly to change that retention limit
16 from 55 to 35, back up to 55, maybe all the way
17 down to 15. We could do that throughout the
18 season depending upon the data.

19 So it -- a full rulemaking process can
20 take about a year, whereas the in-season actions
21 I would say could take, you know, a few days to
22 do.

1 MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you. I did
2 want to comment on the attendance, too, when
3 you're ready for that.

4 MR. BROOKS: I'm ready for that, so
5 why don't you start us off.

6 MR. HULL: Okay. Would say the way
7 that you started your presentation by, you know,
8 emphasizing how important comments are to the
9 agency and how it definitely makes a difference
10 in rulemaking, I think that that's where most
11 fishermen that I know, you know, and they talk
12 about - you're talking about inviting them to
13 make comment, they feel like their comments
14 aren't going to make any difference. So I think
15 it would be important to get that message out to
16 them better, you know, that, look, this does make
17 a difference. We are listening to you, and it
18 will impact management. You know, your input is
19 vital to management. Most -- on the street
20 level, it's just the opposite of that. They
21 don't think it does. They are not going to
22 listen to me.

1 MR. BROOKS: Jimmy, can I ask one
2 follow-up question on that? So I'm wondering
3 sort of who is -- who is the most effective
4 messenger on that message? Is that the agency?
5 Is it people around the table? Like how does
6 that message resonate? How might people say, oh,
7 okay, maybe I will pay attention.

8 MR. HULL: I think you'd have to show
9 some results from it. I think if you could show
10 somebody something in black and white, say, Look,
11 here is what they propose. Here is what -- I
12 think that that would make a difference. Seeing
13 is believing.

14 MR. BROOKS: Good. Thank you.

15 Matt?

16 MR. HUTH: Yeah. I just wanted to
17 kind of agree with what Jimmy said. You know, I
18 mean, the public attendance, I mean, on -- in
19 Manteo, I mean, it just -- and I think I told you
20 this, there is nobody left -- left to go fishing,
21 you know, on charts. And until we see something
22 happen in our favor, and people are losing faith,

1 but there's not - there's just not anybody left
2 to go -- to go fishing, and, you know, if we look
3 back, you know, it was 100-year rebuilding
4 period. You know what I mean?

5 And now everybody in the room has got
6 shark stories, you know, so I don't know. We
7 just -- I feel like we just need to reel it in,
8 you know, with our conservation measures and
9 really, like, take into account what people are
10 seeing out in the field.

11 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. I'm going to hop
12 around and just bring in some folks we haven't
13 heard from yet. Peter, why don't you come on in?

14 MR. CHAIBONGSAI: I just want to
15 reiterate what Jimmy was saying, too. I think --
16 I think the aspect of the attendance would be
17 great. I love the aspect of the webinars
18 personally. It makes it a lot easier. The in
19 person, I think we were one of the lone people to
20 attend. We were the lone person at one of the
21 in-person ones, either last year or two years
22 ago.

1 It's just tough, especially traffic in
2 South Florida, or wherever you're going,
3 especially if it's during a workday. I think you
4 typically have it at 5:00 p.m., which is tough as
5 well.

6 The webinars give anyone an
7 opportunity to participate, whether it's in a car
8 or on a computer, so I would definitely say the
9 webinar. But more to what Jimmy's point, which I
10 can't agree even further about, is -- or more to
11 is the fact that provide results.

12 If we're giving comments and the AP is
13 providing comments, which we have been for a lot
14 of you guys for many, many years, provide results
15 to show our constituents that you're actually
16 listening, and you're actually doing stuff with
17 those comments, not just posting that you're
18 posting the comments but actually showing that
19 you're actively listening and taking to heed what
20 we're -- what we're actually saying, too.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Rick, and then

1 we'll go down to Charles.

2 MR. WEBER: I had -- I had one word
3 written down here, which was simply "beer."

4 (Laughter.)

5 MR. WEBER: I'm going to agree with
6 Peter, because if Peter was the one in Fort
7 Lauderdale, I was the one in Toms River. So
8 probably those all count as zeroes, because those
9 were all people who had -- who are from here and
10 had already commented.

11 And I'm torn because of what -- what
12 you say as well about you like to get into the
13 field and meet the people. It is important that
14 the people meet you, because I think that's what
15 helps what Peter and Jimmy are saying is is some
16 level of personal connection. And then I'm
17 looking at the webinars being effective in
18 saying, well, then, just do them.

19 You know, I am -- I don't have a fast
20 answer for you, Karyl. I am trying -- I am
21 attempting to express some sympathy more than
22 anything, because, you know, e-reporting clearly

1 didn't get many people's juices moving to show
2 up, you know. I mean, the greater the threat,
3 the greater the turnout, and maybe people didn't
4 see a lot of threat in e-reporting.

5 And maybe it -- in government, there
6 is frequently a response of we're going to go all
7 one way or all another way. And maybe it will
8 also end up with a hybrid answer that is, you
9 know, you're sensing the interest through your
10 webinars.

11 And in particular hotbeds where a
12 topic is really important, and you want that
13 one-on-one eye contact, that you go into the
14 field, into those communities, the most impacted,
15 I mean, you get a vibe in this room of which
16 community is going to be most impacted.

17 Are you going to follow up on me
18 there?

19 MR. CHAIBONGSAI: I want to follow up
20 on you.

21 MR. WEBER: All right. Well, then,
22 I'll shut up and see if -- see if he calls on

1 you.

2 (Laughter.)

3 MR. BROOKS: You got one for the
4 meeting. Go, Peter.

5 MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Thank you. Sorry,
6 guys, just really quickly. So a lot of this
7 stuff is based off of you guys providing in
8 person resources -- obviously, resources for an
9 in-person meeting, which can be expensive and
10 time-consuming, and so forth.

11 The webinars are very easy, but what
12 about instead of having these in-person meetings,
13 while I'm not saying totally dissolve the aspect,
14 use some of the funds to actually go to the
15 docks, go to the landing sites, go to the vendors
16 specifically. That way you have what Rick was
17 saying. You have that face to face.

18 And then anyone from the commercial
19 side, the recreational side, can actually talk to
20 you and actually be able to maybe not influence
21 you, but at least be able to show you what is
22 actually happening on the water. I can guarantee

1 you, any of these guys probably, any of the
2 commercial guys or recreation guys, would gladly
3 take you out on the water to show you what's
4 happening, maybe to your chagrin, but that -- but
5 that would offer you an opportunity to have that
6 closer connection with our constituents.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. BROOKS: I think Peter says he
9 yields floor back to Rick briefly.

10 MR. WEBER: Well, yeah, because this
11 is going on at IAC at the same time, Karyl. You
12 know, I mean, the commissioners have expressed a
13 great interest in getting greater connection to
14 the end users within the IAC. And I am going to
15 build on what Peter was saying, which was you
16 have boat shows, you have commercial exhibitions,
17 you have gatherings, you have tournaments, you
18 have large groups that have annual meetings.

19 I understand that doesn't always work
20 when you're trying -- I can't not pile on. It's
21 just too much fun. When you're trying to do a
22 rulemaking in 24 hours, it's not convenient.

1 But to the extent that these things
2 frequently do take a long time, or longer than
3 even you'd like, but there are opportunities to
4 go to where the people are already aggregated,
5 and the commissioners had some decent turnout
6 with that when they used that model rather than
7 saying, we're going to be at this location. I
8 hope you'll rearrange your schedule for us.
9 There is an opportunity to recognize where people
10 are already gathering and you're going to them.

11 MR. BROOKS: All right. Let me go to
12 Charles in the corner, then I've got some -- at
13 least one person online, and then we're going to
14 sweep the rest of the room.

15 MR. WITEK: Okay. The first thing I'd
16 note is that this is not unique to HMS. We're
17 seeing the same thing at other fisheries
18 hearings. We just had a fairly important striped
19 bass action being taken at ASMFC.

20 And the turnout -- and I'm speaking
21 for the private recreational angler now, because
22 that's who I know. The private recreational

1 angler turnout at many of those hearings was
2 surprisingly low, even though bass are one of the
3 hot issues on the coast.

4 Beyond that, I think one of the
5 problems is you have to hold the hearing when and
6 where the people are. We heard this before, that
7 when you -- when you come home from work, you
8 can't go to a hearing at 5:00. You're still at
9 your workplace. So anything that starts before
10 about 7:00, at least in my area, is not going to
11 have a turnout because people are still on the
12 train coming home from work. So there's a
13 timing.

14 And, again, you need to do it where
15 the people are. Private anglers are not, if
16 you're in New York, at Montauk. So if you hold a
17 hearing out on the east end, if you hold it at
18 Montauk, if you hold it in Greenport, or areas
19 where there's a lot of for-hire boats and
20 commercial fishermen, you're not going to get the
21 recreational anglers because the drive is too
22 long. They're not -- just not going to be able

1 to make it.

2 Another thing you're seeing are the
3 people who used to come to hearings are aging out
4 of the fishery. And the younger anglers are more
5 computer-oriented. They like webinars. Webinars
6 are very convenient. You're not intimidated. A
7 lot of the young folks -- you know, public --
8 nobody, they say, likes public speaking, that
9 it's one of the most intimidating things out
10 there, especially in an audience where you may
11 have hostile members.

12 So webinars feel very safe. Public
13 hearings, perhaps not so. So webinars are in
14 many ways a natural evolution of where this is
15 going, just because technology is so much more a
16 part of our lives now.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Let's open up
19 Christine Kittle's line and bring her in. And,
20 Christine, I'll let you know when your line is
21 open. All right. You should be good, Christine.

22 MS. KITTLE: Yeah. So I just wanted

1 to provide some additional comments that may not
2 have been said, but I think it's also a
3 management approach. I think some of your
4 amendments are intimidating. They are not really
5 approachable for a fisherman or a recreational
6 person to fully understand what you guys are
7 proposing.

8 I mean, I don't see a fisherman being
9 able to sit down and look at a 700-page document
10 and be able to feel comfortable and confident to
11 share his -- share their views and understand
12 what's fully going on and what would affect him,
13 because of the time consumed -- time-consuming to
14 review that huge document.

15 And so I think what would be valuable
16 is I understand you want it to be comprehensive,
17 and I know a lot of this is linked, but maybe
18 breaking down documents, one, by region, or by
19 species or topics where you can, so people can be
20 like, oh, I do fish for that species. I know I
21 can provide comment. But some of it can be, like
22 I said, intimidating to -- to be able to express

1 and get your thoughts together on so many
2 different aspects of a document and what is being
3 reported.

4 Also, what I think could help us, you
5 know, I don't see a lot of, like, news picking --
6 like news picking up, like, these in-person
7 hearings. I think if you broke down the
8 amendments and you could really tailor, this is
9 one thing that we're proposing, or here is one or
10 two things we're proposing, I think a news outlet
11 could probably pick that up a little bit better
12 and share the word.

13 I think -- you know, and this kind of
14 goes back to Amendment 15 and Amendment 16, you
15 know, trying to move forward where you can and
16 not wait for a -- you know, not wait for
17 everything to be ready, and you could get
18 feedback as things progress.

19 And I think those small piecemeal
20 options, whether you do a webinar or maybe you do
21 multiple webinars and then you do a more
22 in-person hearing, so you have a webinar

1 specifically on one topic of each of those pieces
2 in the amendment, and then maybe an in-person
3 hearing for the whole thing, I just think it
4 would be more approachable, and I think more
5 understanding for the general public to get a
6 grasp on what you guys are proposing and what you
7 guys can -- what they can provide as far as
8 feedback.

9 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Christine. These
10 are all great comments. I think you've given
11 Karyl a stack of good thoughts to work with.

12 Let's work around the room now. I've
13 got eight folks in the queue. We've got about 15
14 minutes. I'm just going to take it right around
15 the table. Marty?

16 MR. SCANLON: Well, I think part of
17 the problem might be I'm looking at A15 here, and
18 one of the disappointments that -- that we had as
19 Blue Water was that, you know, these in-person
20 hearings were really in the wrong spot, three of
21 them, three of the four.

22 I mean, we would have liked to have

1 had an in-person meeting in, say, someplace in
2 Jersey where, you know, there's a large
3 contingent of longliners right there. There's
4 nobody up in the New England area also, in the
5 Point Judith area. I mean, at Houma, you look at
6 four people attended in person. I mean, there's
7 only 11 active vessels over there. So, I mean,
8 you got a pretty good representation here, along
9 with, you know, when you consider the people that
10 participated in the webinar as well.

11 But as far as Jupiter goes and Panama
12 City, I don't know how many boats are even over
13 there. So, I mean, aside from, you know, just
14 some of the locations that you might want to, you
15 know, inquire with the industry themselves where
16 they may want the meetings to be held, which
17 would be most beneficial, but I think a lot of
18 the responsibility falls on the industries
19 themselves.

20 I mean, I know Blue Water, when we
21 have an opportunity to attend a public hearing
22 like that, we reach out to our constituents

1 there, and we try to urge them and try to get a
2 contingent of people to show up at those
3 meetings. You know, I mean, they don't really
4 show up on their own. I mean, you've got to --
5 somebody has got to kind of lean on them a little
6 bit.

7 So, I mean, I really do appreciate the
8 in-person meetings. I mean, I think they are
9 very beneficial. I think they are more effective
10 than the webinars, and the webinars are a good
11 alternative. I mean, you know, a lot more people
12 have the opportunity to attend those meetings,
13 and that's a good sign that there are that many
14 people on the webinars.

15 The industry themselves have to look
16 at themselves in this and do a better job of
17 getting people to come and show up in person, you
18 know? Can't be all on you guys. We certainly
19 appreciate the fact that you put that effort in.
20 I mean, it is important to us.

21 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Marty. Good
22 thoughts there. Mike?

1 MR. PIERDINOCK: Thank you. I'll try
2 to avoid repeating what has already been said,
3 because I do agree with it. But maybe some
4 consideration of a hybrid with a webinar.
5 Webinar and in-person, there are still a lot of
6 people that do want to have an in-person meeting.
7 But, as you can see, the success of the webinars
8 does make it a lot easier for a lot of people,
9 especially with traffic and limitations with
10 times and timelines, and so on.

11 In addition, look at the ports, and
12 look where the landings are, commercially or
13 recreationally. And, you know, I can look up at
14 there -- at some of those locations, and I agree
15 with what Marty just said. They are not
16 corresponding to where you're going to get
17 participation, because they are not landing those
18 kind of fish in those ports.

19 And I can attest, as President of the
20 Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association, the
21 minute fishing starts, forget it. I can't get a
22 hold of my membership. It's very difficult. And

1 then, all of a sudden, November/December comes,
2 when they're not fishing during bluefin, and what
3 happened, you know?

4 So you have to look at, too, that when
5 people are fishing, they're on the water, at
6 least in the northeast, it's more of a seasonal
7 thing where maybe down south it's more of a year
8 round.

9 But even though we do have those that
10 fish that do fish year-round and go farther south
11 or Central America to fish, for outreach, we --
12 social media, podcasts, magazines, so on, to get
13 the news out to the audience, specific to the
14 audience, we have had participation by people in
15 this room from HMS and elsewhere with fishing
16 seminars that take place.

17 We had it in -- I think it was in
18 March. The Castafari Offshore Fishing Pro
19 Seminar, 300 people show up for that, and that's
20 general category bluefin as well as everyone else
21 that's there. And it filled up the room, and we
22 had a few different people there, Brad McHale,

1 Walt -- and others, that we discuss HMS issues
2 and concerns, and so on.

3 The difficulty of that, well, that's
4 good for outreach, but then the difficulty of
5 getting a public hearing to correspond with that
6 timeline, I know how that's difficult. But I
7 think that was very effective, and especially for
8 the recreational community where there was a mix
9 there of, you know, bluefin general category of
10 fishers that it's tough to find a mechanism to
11 reach out to the recreational community.

12 But I would look to that because
13 there's different seminars up and down the coast,
14 I think Canyon Runners in New Jersey, as well as
15 elsewhere. They get hundreds of people that show
16 up. So look at that as another mechanism for
17 outreach.

18 Thanks.

19 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks. And I
20 see a couple more cards have come up on the other
21 side. Just anticipate we are going to go past
22 break here. Just want to make sure we are

1 hearing from everybody.

2 Bob Humphrey.

3 MR. HUMPHREY: Thanks. Rick and Mike
4 stole most of my thunder, but that's okay. I
5 will second free beer.

6 (Laughter.)

7 MR. HUMPHREY: A little bit of
8 criticism. You guys are generally pretty good,
9 really good, about getting information out. But
10 when it came to the effort controls, I'm on the
11 AP. I'm on just about every mailing list that
12 has anything to do with fisheries, and I only
13 found out about it by accident through a
14 conversation with somebody in the office of law
15 enforcement a week before the webinar.

16 As a member of the media, I need as
17 much advance notice as possible. Online, I can
18 usually turn stuff around in two to three days.
19 Print, newspaper, a week to two weeks. Print,
20 tabloids, at least a month. So the more advance
21 notice that I can get and my peers, the more
22 people we can reach with information.

1 And also, second Mike's comments about
2 other public opportunities that are already
3 existing, like sportsman shows, etcetera.

4 Thank you.

5 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Bob.

6 MS. GUYAS: Hi. I feel like there has
7 been a lot of really good comments, and so I
8 won't repeat them. But I will kind of circle
9 back to I think Christine, what she said about I
10 guess tailoring the message for the individual
11 meetings to that group of people, that region.

12 I think -- thinking about that from an
13 outreach standpoint ahead of the meeting, you
14 know, reaching out to media, et cetera, really
15 driving home ahead of the meetings like you all
16 need to come to this, because it affects you this
17 way, and here is what the impacts are.

18 You know, when -- and certainly
19 industry can help with that to some degree, but,
20 you know, like looking at Amendment 15, Amendment
21 16, I mean, those are issues that people in my
22 region care about a lot, but Amendment 15 was

1 really big and scary and intimidating, and 16, I
2 mean, every other conversation I have is about
3 sharks. And I know that's the situation with a
4 lot of people around the table. So it's
5 something that people care about, but -- and I
6 have lots of other thoughts, Karyl. We can talk
7 offline.

8 Thanks.

9 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. I hopped over
10 Kesley. Let's go back.

11 MS. BANKS: That's all right. I'm
12 going to follow up kind of with what Martha had
13 to say. Regionally, you can look at maybe the
14 councils, because they have really good outreach,
15 maybe pairing some hearings while you're probably
16 sending someone to one of our council meetings
17 anyway. Because, I mean, we have 60-something
18 comments during public comment routinely in the
19 Gulf. So there are 60-something people that will
20 probably come sit and talk to you about sharks.

21 I will also note, too, that it's
22 people that are just getting into the fishery

1 don't necessarily understand how the management
2 is working. So they don't -- we hear comments at
3 the council, at the Gulf council, what are we
4 going to do about all these sharks? Well, we
5 don't manage sharks. So they're not sure who
6 they should be talking to.

7 So we might be getting some of your
8 people when we -- when we're having our meeting,
9 so maybe look at pairing with the regional
10 councils.

11 MR. BROOKS: Thank you. David, I
12 think you're up.

13 MR. SCHALIT: So we're really talking
14 about communications, communications skills.
15 Okay? And I asked this question of a roomful of
16 35 SCRS scientists, Does anyone have a background
17 in communications? Has anyone taken a class in
18 communications? And the answer was nobody said
19 anything.

20 Okay. So what I'm -- what I'm saying
21 is that on the ICCAT menu we are -- we are
22 looking at conversation between scientists and

1 managers. Those meetings do take place
2 regularly. All right?

3 Now, in that -- in that context, the
4 scientists are showing the managers PowerPoint
5 presentations involving spider plots and other
6 sexy plots, and using words like stochastic and
7 asymptotic. And nobody raises their hand and
8 says, Excuse me, Craig, but could you explain to
9 me how that plot -- what that plot is telling us?
10 No one says that, because no one wants to look
11 like an idiot. Okay?

12 So from a science -- in the science
13 venue, you have a huge gap, a huge yawning
14 communications gap. And the best explanation --
15 the best example I can give you of how to close
16 that gap is COVID-19. COVID-19 resulted in, you
17 know, all these big media organizations, like The
18 New York Times, The Washington Post, have science
19 journalists, journalists who specialize in
20 communicating sexy, difficult scientific ideas to
21 a civilian public. Okay. So that's a function
22 which we need to develop.

1 Now, when it comes to specifics,
2 Karyl, in this particular area, we are following
3 the paradigm of the councils. Okay. We are
4 using the same methodologies as the councils, but
5 this is not a council-managed species.

6 The councils have a distinct
7 advantage, because any fisherman who feels like
8 he wants to go to a council meeting, New England
9 council meeting, can just jump in his truck and
10 go, right? But how many people show up in Silver
11 Spring twice a year for these meetings that are
12 not on this committee, right? Do you see what
13 I'm saying?

14 So one suggestion I would make is
15 this, and I don't know if this is even possible,
16 but you do -- the permits are issued every year,
17 and in the permitting process you capture the
18 email address of that permitholder. And it's
19 possible you could automatically place them on a
20 mailing list, so they receive HMS email.

21 And if they don't like to receive HMS
22 email, well, it says you can click on unsubscribe

1 at the bottom and it goes away, right? But I
2 have to warn you about one thing. A lot of
3 fishermen will get upset if they're really only
4 interested in bigeye and bluefin and they're
5 receiving emails on sharks. You see what I'm
6 saying?

7 So you have to kind of create a couple
8 of different email lists in order to make sure
9 that you keep these people happy, because they
10 just -- they will get annoyed. But I think -- I
11 think that the -- what we -- the risk we run is
12 that we are basically operating a checkbox. We
13 are basically asking for public input, and we are
14 not doing anything to enhance the buy-in by the
15 fishermen. Okay? That's the key: buy-in by the
16 fishermen.

17 The fishermen buy-in seemingly takes
18 place when they are asked the question, Hey, how
19 do you feel about this, this idea, this
20 regulation we're looking at?

21 Okay. So, and then, from that point
22 -- so let's say he is enterprising enough that he

1 decides he wants to send in something to
2 regulations.gov. Okay? Now, what happens after
3 that? There's this great big yawning gap for
4 most of them who maybe never hear back. They
5 never hear -- so there's no buy-in.

6 The buy-in takes place when he sees
7 the result of what he read and his -- and his
8 ideas and what the agency ultimately decided.
9 Right? That's how you get to buy-in. If you're
10 only managing one-half of that equation, you're
11 not getting buy-in. You're getting a guy coming
12 once in a while to give public comment, throw it
13 out into the ether, so to speak.

14 So I think it's the -- I mean, the
15 specifics on, like, how we go about improving our
16 communications, really, I think we have to
17 consider the possibility that we need to be
18 working with a slightly different paradigm than
19 the councils, because of the fact that we are
20 only working with two meetings a year. You know,
21 it's just that councils have meetings all the
22 time. All the time, right?

1 Thanks.

2 MR. BROOKS: Thanks very much, David.
3 Appreciate it.

4 Bob?

5 MR. ZALES: My first meeting at a
6 council meeting was in 1990, Gulf of Mexico
7 Fishery Management Council. And I have attended
8 the vast majority of meetings on that council,
9 the South Atlantic Council, ever since then, and
10 I have represented every fisherman from a private
11 angler to a charter fisherman to a head boat
12 fisherman, commercial group or longline
13 fisherman, to now pretty much everybody through
14 Southeastern Fisheries Association, commercial
15 fishing.

16 And I can tell you that in all these
17 years of public comment and attending public
18 hearings and things where you could give advice,
19 the big problem is, and I've been told this just
20 about every time I see somebody, they want to
21 know why I continue to go to these meetings
22 because nothing ever gets changed. There is no

1 results given.

2 Queen Shark sitting over there has
3 been to several Gulf Council meetings regarding
4 the shark fishermen, and this has been pre-COVID
5 until now. And every time -- every -- right now,
6 you can call anybody in Panama City. They want
7 to know why it is nothing has been done on
8 sharks.

9 And a year or two ago -- I've
10 forgotten when it was -- but you all had like a
11 national webinar call-in thing. I mean, I heard
12 people -- and I was on the call -- I heard people
13 from Maine to Texas. Without fail, everybody
14 talked about the problem with sharks. Now that
15 told me just as an idiot sitting here, if
16 everybody is saying there's a problem, there
17 might be a problem. It wasn't just one group one
18 way.

19 So until you start getting results
20 from providing comments to the agencies -- and,
21 unfortunately, because you all are not the
22 council, but you're tied to the same process --

1 people go, they give comments, spend their time
2 and effort and money, and they never see a result
3 from it. So they get tired of doing that.

4 And in all deference to the Gulf
5 Council, there is a picture floating around now
6 on social media, at the last Gulf Council
7 meeting, two council members are like this, sound
8 asleep during public comment.

9 Now, that gets spread around and
10 people say, Okay. Well, there's a frequency
11 notion here that no matter what we say, the
12 decision is already made. We are just going
13 through a process. And you'll never get
14 attendance until you start showing results from
15 that.

16 Now, locations, times, days,
17 everything like that, that can all be worked out,
18 but the bottom line is, when you come to one of
19 the agency organizations and make recommendations
20 on what you think should be done, and it's pretty
21 much widespread consensus from stakeholders this
22 is what should be done, but it's totally ignored.

1 Until that mindset changes, you'll never get
2 participation.

3 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Bob.

4 Let's go to Fly and Esther, and then
5 we'll go back to the last two commenters here,
6 and then probably head into a break.

7 MR. NAVARRO: I'm going to make this
8 quick, just not to pile on, but I'm going to have
9 to agree with everybody. First of all, when you
10 want to have a conversation, you've got to hear
11 something back, whether it's results or copy, I
12 heard you.

13 We were having a conversation
14 yesterday with some boat captains down in South
15 Florida, and the first thing they said is, Nobody
16 ever listens. So people want to know that
17 they're being recognized.

18 Now, as far as locations are
19 concerned, I remember when George and Cliff were
20 doing the study on the economic impact of
21 tournaments. They were at tournaments all the
22 time. I mean, they were around hundreds of

1 people. I mean, a lot of tournament directors
2 spent a lot of money and a lot of time getting
3 people together. To try to get people on a
4 separate day, on a Thursday at 5:00, it's not
5 even redundant. It's kind of crazy.

6 They are putting the money behind it,
7 just set up shop there and talk to the people and
8 listen to them, give them a face to understand
9 when they are emailing you, because, again, just
10 like everybody else said here -- and I know we
11 are going to go over the topic tomorrow with
12 sharks -- but I get contacted four or five times
13 a week from fishing clubs all over the country,
14 and they're calling me because nobody else is
15 listening.

16 So a conversation is a two-way
17 conversation. So if you want people, more than
18 four or three or one, show them that you're
19 listening, show them that you're participating.
20 And actually, Karyl, you said that you take
21 comments into hand on a lot of these things. Let
22 the people know. Hey, listen, this -- here's

1 your comment. You asked for this. You got it
2 right here. And it shows a little bit of like an
3 olive branch.

4 So that's all I've got for right now.

5 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Fly.

6 Esther.

7 MS. WOZNIAK: Hi. Esther from Pew.

8 Just I'm listening to this conversation, and I
9 was going back and forth on whether or not I
10 could add something that might be constructive.
11 And so I'll base this on my experience at ICCAT,
12 but also at the Inter-American Tropical Tuna
13 Commission.

14 And there was a similar conversation
15 with the SCRS strategy working group earlier this
16 year when they were trying to figure out how to
17 communicate best between the scientists and the
18 managers. And a lot of what David just mentioned
19 came up there, too.

20 And some of the considerations there
21 that I've started to see play out, and I've seen
22 work elsewhere, is to schedule a webinar that

1 meets everybody -- and this is multiple countries
2 over multiple continents -- is very difficult.
3 So you tried the best you can with some timing
4 that's -- that works. Those who join, join.
5 Others can watch the recordings.

6 And then they are sent a summary with
7 the species and the areas that are covered. So
8 if they think it's relevant to them, they go
9 through this two-pager, and then they can go and
10 watch the webinar. And then it's always helpful
11 to have a content person.

12 So I've seen this at IATTC where if
13 you have -- you want to follow up on bycatch or
14 what the shark measures are that were just
15 adopted, when are they going to be implemented,
16 and what the compliance process is, they have
17 people on staff, and you can email them. And
18 I've done this multiple times, and they are
19 responsive within 24 hours and they can kind of
20 give you an overview of what was agreed to, when,
21 and how it is going to be implemented.

22 So those are just a few things that

1 I've seen to work elsewhere.

2 MR. BROOKS: Thanks so much, Esther.

3 Let's go over to Jackson, Greg, and
4 then I think Jimmy's card is back up. And I just
5 want to put in one last request that if there's
6 anyone online who wants to jump in, please raise
7 your card -- raise your hand. And let me just go
8 over to Jackson.

9 MR. MARTINEZ: Thanks, Bennett. And
10 thanks, Karyl. I wholeheartedly agree with
11 everything we are hearing around the table. I
12 also just wanted to add I guess a plug for in the
13 Gulf where the majority of the longlining effort
14 -- the longliners don't speak English or are
15 predominantly Vietnamese-speaking primarily, and
16 to prioritize, you know, real-time translation
17 capabilities at these meetings, so you can
18 ideally enhance the two-way communication with
19 this fleet, and really prioritize that two-way
20 communication hearing and also, you know, talking
21 with them about proposed changes, management
22 changes and things.

1 And then, also, I think David said it,
2 maybe it was Martha, really kind of tailoring the
3 meeting materials to your audience and making it
4 -- you know, translating I guess into plain
5 language and then translating into Vietnamese I
6 think would be really helpful.

7 Thanks.

8 MR. BROOKS: Greg.

9 MR. HINKS: Thanks, Bennett. I was
10 only going to suggest that rather than trying to
11 create these additional meetings into a lot of
12 other meetings that are already happening, try
13 piggybacking off those already occurring
14 meetings, and I guess the first one that comes to
15 mind are the State Fishery Council meetings.

16 You're automatically going to get a
17 turnout that, you know, a few thousands, 2,000
18 percent of what you're getting at, you know,
19 like, for example, the New Jersey Toms River
20 meeting. And if the public doesn't have comment,
21 guaranteed you're going to get something from the
22 council themselves. So --

1 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Sandy, I saw
2 your card went up a moment ago?

3 MS. NGUYEN: I'm going to wait until
4 later. Thank you.

5 MR. BROOKS: Okay. All right. Jimmy.

6 MR. HULL: Thank you, Bennett. Yeah.
7 I just wanted to add, to the credit of HMS staff,
8 anytime I have ever sent in a question or comment
9 to Peter or Karyl or Guy, I get a response. And
10 I may not like the response, but I do get a
11 response quickly.

12 So, you know, there are -- if I have
13 some -- you know, I'm at an advantage because I
14 know who they are and they know me, but I think I
15 just heard that if you had a certain person,
16 which you generally do, for further information,
17 contact a specific staff person. I think that's
18 important. But they do respond. So thank you.

19 MR. BROOKS: Yeah. And I might just
20 piggyback on that point. I think it's easy to
21 feel like if you don't have a positive response,
22 it's hard to respond. In my experience, just

1 responding, whether it's -- whether it's a Hey, I
2 can do it, or No, I can't and why, goes a long
3 way. People will be responsive to that.

4 Amy?

5 MS. DUKES: Thanks, Bennett. Just a
6 quick addition. In addition to your email
7 notification, have you guys thought about push
8 notifications through text messages? That seems
9 to really be a new way of communication with our
10 fishermen. They don't tend to eat a -- or to
11 read a lot of emails. They don't want to digest
12 going to a website.

13 But you really do get them if you grab
14 them with a text message, especially if that has
15 got a link in it that they can continue to have
16 more information provided to them, but it will at
17 least notify them if things are coming up. And
18 if you could make it specific to the area and the
19 region, so they're not being inundated with maybe
20 something that might be going on in the northeast
21 but more specifically to their region or their
22 area.

1 MR. BROOKS: Great thought. Let's go
2 to Charles, Randy, and then we're going to shift
3 to essential fish habitat, I think. Note, left
4 oh, is that -- that's Greg's card? Sorry.
5 Marty?

6 MR. SCANLON: One of the things you
7 might want to do is, you know, before you set up
8 these in-person meetings especially is to reach
9 out to the people at this -- on this panel itself
10 to see what works for their constituents, you
11 know, and try to set that up.

12 I know on the Hudson Canyon Sanctuary
13 they send out a -- you know, an email, you know,
14 soliciting potential dates, and just saying that
15 you're going to have a, you know, in-person
16 meeting, what might work best for those people,
17 you know, and where they should be held.

18 I know these meetings here were set
19 up, and, you know, we didn't have any input on
20 where they were going to be and when they were
21 going to be. But if you were to reach out to the
22 individual, you know, people at the -- on this

1 table here and find out what might work for them,
2 it might be a little bit more successful.

3 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Good thoughts.
4 I think Amy your card is left over there, right?
5 Nobody online yet?

6 Okay. All right. Thank you. That
7 was hugely helpful. I am not going to attempt to
8 summarize all of that, but I will say a couple of
9 things that I was hearing. One, I think sort of
10 first and foremost is results matter. Convincing
11 people that you are listening -- actually
12 listening -- and, again, whether the response is,
13 hey, here is what it was, here is what we heard,
14 here is how it changed, or here is what we heard
15 and here is why we are not making a change, I
16 think all of that is really important to helping
17 people feel that it's worth their time.

18 I think a second theme I heard was
19 around being clear on the purpose of why you're
20 going out. Is it about building relationships or
21 is it about getting input and outreach? And so
22 that might help think through the tension of, are

1 you in person or are you online, and when do you
2 do one versus the other?

3 If you're doing both of those things,
4 then it's also about making it accessible,
5 whether that's location, whether that's timing,
6 how you're writing, how you're presenting stuff.
7 That's a big piece. Using -- if you know how to
8 use media, earlier noticing, and then lots of
9 thoughts around piggybacking, piggybacking on
10 relationships around the table to figure out --
11 getting their council piggybacking on existing
12 events, media, et cetera. So lots more as well,
13 but those were sort of what popped for me.

14 So thanks, all, very much. That was
15 a really good conversation.

16 Thanks for putting it out there,
17 Karyl. I also think if you get an Instagram
18 account called Shark Queen or something that
19 could -- just a thought.

20 Okay. Let's switch. We want to shift
21 to essential fish habitat, the final five-year
22 review. Jen Cudney is going to tell us about

1 sort of what has been learned, what are the
2 results, and what's coming next.

3 So, Jen, over to you.

4 MS. CUDNEY: All right. Hello,
5 everybody. I'm Jennifer Cudney. I'm a fishery
6 management specialist with HMS. I do want to
7 acknowledge that the essential fish habitat team
8 consists of a lot of our staff members, and I
9 want to acknowledge my co-author, Ann, who is
10 sitting in the back over there.

11 So I will be chatting with you now
12 about our essential fish habitat five-year review
13 and hopefully give you a better understanding of
14 where we're at with our EFH review and update
15 process.

16 So, first, I'm going to go through a
17 little bit of the kind of requisite background of
18 what essential fish habitat or EFH is, note the
19 acronym. I'll be referring to it as EFH through
20 the rest of this presentation. I'll remind us
21 all about what our review and update process
22 actually looks like, and then we'll get into our

1 two phases, more of an explanation of what's
2 coming up or what has happened and what is coming
3 up next.

4 So with our phase 1, which is our five
5 year review, I will go over our summary of public
6 comments, and where we landed with our five-year
7 review results, and then I'll tell you a little
8 bit more about what's coming up in what we're
9 calling phase 2, next steps, our methodology, and
10 a request for information that was released a few
11 weeks ago.

12 All right. So coming into our
13 background section, again, EFH are the substrate
14 and waters that are necessary to support fish for
15 important parts of their life history, so
16 feeding, spotting, breeding, and growth to
17 maturity. And just noting we said waters and
18 substrate. So when we're thinking about waters,
19 we're thinking specifically about the physical,
20 biological, and chemical characteristics of that
21 habitat.

22 Why do we update it? Well, we are

1 required to under Magnuson. National Standard 2
2 also requires us to use best-available
3 information, best-available scientific
4 information, to base our fishery management plans
5 and regulations and decisions on. And because
6 new scientific information comes out all the
7 time, we do this review and update process, and
8 we try to do it at least once every five years.

9 Our primary audience for EFH is
10 usually our Office of Habitat Consultation or
11 Habitat Conservation. They do habitat
12 consultations. And so we really try very hard to
13 make sure that the products that we're putting
14 out are useful for those.

15 Now there are 10 components of EFH
16 that either must be or should be included in
17 fishery management plans. So the starred bullets
18 here are the must be's, and the other ones are
19 the should be's. And so when we go through our
20 EFH processes, we do try to check all of these
21 boxes. So we try to include description and
22 identification of EFH. This is typically going

1 to be the boundaries and text descriptions that
2 we'll give you an example of in a second here,
3 but it also includes a description and analysis
4 of fishing activities and non-fishing activities
5 and a few other things that are deemed important
6 to understanding fisheries habitat.

7 I also want to highlight that we've
8 got habitat areas of particular concern as a
9 should be. Those definitely come into play if
10 they're warranted.

11 All right. So this is a flowchart
12 that shows our review and update process. And
13 I'm going to start working in the upper left
14 corner and work through that flowchart for you.
15 So about five years after our previous EFH action
16 or step, we're going to initiate phase 1 of our
17 five-year review process.

18 So that is, again, our draft five-year
19 review, a public comment process, and the
20 development of our final five-year review. And
21 so we have a little icon. It's the You Are Here
22 icon that is on the final five-year review box in

1 phase 1, because we just finished that up. And
2 so we are in this transition point between phase
3 1 and phase 2 right now.

4 Phase 1 essentially asks whether EFH
5 updates are warranted, and we go through that
6 list of 10 components and within that, for each
7 of our managed species where we are able to
8 designate EFH, we actually ask that question for
9 each species and life stage where we can.

10 So there are some instances where we
11 have some species where updates may not be
12 warranted, and others where they might be
13 warranted. Once we go through this process of
14 asking that question and developing
15 recommendations, we go into phase 2, which is our
16 follow-up action. We draft a -- or we compile a
17 draft document, go through public comment, and
18 then do a final follow-up action.

19 So phase 1, our five-year review, we
20 did receive several comments, many of which came
21 from the AP, so we thank you for that. We had
22 recommendations to consider impacts of increasing

1 populations in year-round coastal communities, on
2 coastal, nearshore, and inshore waters. We had a
3 request that we consider the methodology very
4 carefully, make sure that we're not overly
5 smoothing our kind of diluting out the EFH.

6 We want to make sure what we're
7 providing is useful, so there were concerns about
8 the analytics. And there were also concerns
9 about making sure that we actually look at our
10 model outputs and ensure that they make sense.

11 There was an emphasized need to
12 include more information about predator-prey
13 relationships and our EFH analyses and products.
14 And then we also had support for including
15 acoustic tag and pop-up satellite, archival tag
16 data, into our analyses. So to date we have
17 mostly used point data.

18 However, the abundance of PSAT and
19 acoustic telemetry information that has come into
20 the scientific literature really warrants us
21 taking a look at our analytical methods and
22 making sure that we can consider that information

1 when we're designating our EFH boundaries.

2 So we published our final five-year
3 review on April 18th, 2024. There is a Federal
4 Register Notice and a website floating out there,
5 and we do have the links to that later on in the
6 presentation.

7 As far as our high-level outcomes from
8 that review, we -- in terms of the difference
9 between the draft and the final review, we have
10 expanded our analysis on climate change
11 literature, and that -- in our final document.
12 We have provided a little bit more information on
13 some recent ecosystem-based fishery management or
14 EBFM products that the agency has been working
15 on.

16 Randy spoke earlier about the new
17 policy update, so that is included in here, and
18 also, on actions or issues that are broadly
19 affecting HMS management. So this is kind of our
20 cumulative effects discussion section, and we're
21 just trying to make sure that we are thinking
22 broadly about the things that could potentially

1 impact HMS EFH.

2 We didn't really have changes to the
3 conclusions or recommendations from our draft
4 five-year review, though. And just to refresh
5 everybody's memory, we did identify that there
6 were some species where no new scientific
7 information warranted updates to species-specific
8 EFH. So we do have a box here that specifically
9 calls out the species where we don't plan on
10 making updates in our follow-on action.

11 But what do we want to do? So our
12 final five-year results are summarized in the
13 next two slides. We've got each EFH component
14 with a kind of high-level description of what it
15 is. We've got boxes that indicate whether
16 updates are warranted or not warranted, and then
17 a summary of our recommendations on the far right
18 of these tables.

19 So I'm going to walk us through these
20 fairly quickly. So for the description and
21 identification of EFH, again, this is drawing the
22 boundaries. We felt that updates were warranted

1 for 40 HMS and not warranted for the 13 that were
2 identified on the previous slide.

3 For the analysis of our federal
4 fishing activities, we felt that updates were
5 warranted, meaning there are some analyses that
6 could be updated with new information. We did
7 not identify that updates were warranted for the
8 EFH analyses concerning non-Magnuson or state
9 water fishing activities.

10 For our non-fishing activities, so
11 these are things like wind energy, oil and gas
12 exploration, sand mining, that type of thing, we
13 didn't identify a new activity that needed to be
14 added into our amendment or our upcoming action.
15 And so, but what we did identify was that the
16 activities that we have already analyzed had a
17 lot of new information. So we want to go through
18 and incorporate and build that new information
19 into our EFH products, so that they can be used
20 in conservation and consultations.

21 Cumulative impacts, whenever we get
22 new information, we want to make sure that we

1 include that, so we felt that a broad look at our
2 cumulative impacts section for EFH was warranted.
3 For -- these are -- component number 6 are the
4 identification of actions to enhance and conserve
5 EFH that's adversely affected by different non
6 fishing activities.

7 And so there are some updates that
8 were warranted. No updates were warranted for
9 the fishing activities.

10 We have already mentioned that there
11 was a public comment suggesting that we needed to
12 acknowledge prey and the role of prey in our EFH.
13 We agree. And so we -- our recommendation here
14 is to reorganize life history sections and
15 include more information on prey in those life
16 history sections.

17 Habitat areas of particular concern,
18 we felt that warranted -- that updates were
19 warranted in the sense that a habitat area of
20 particular concern has to be contained within the
21 boundaries of EFH. So you have a big area
22 designated for EFH. The habitat area of

1 particular concern might be a small area within
2 that.

3 However, if you change those big
4 boundaries, so that they are no longer
5 overlapping, that warrants a change to existing
6 HAPCs. So that's something that we would look
7 for.

8 We also noted that there was
9 sufficient information out there to consider a
10 white shark HAPC off of Long Island. However, we
11 did not find information that suggested that
12 implementing regulations were warranted.

13 We also noted that updates were
14 warranted for research and information needs and
15 for the methodology. So we have reviewed our
16 current methodology, and we would like to adjust
17 our methods to include new types of data and to
18 address some biases and streamline our analyses.
19 And I'll explain that a little bit more in a
20 second.

21 All right. So our EFH text
22 descriptions. So this is for some of our habitat

1 consultation biologists. This is the kind of
2 bread and butter of what they look at when
3 they're doing a habitat consultation. They are
4 basically trying to identify the specific areas
5 that could be affected by these different
6 activities, like sand mining and oil and gas
7 activities.

8 And so we define not only the spatial
9 extent, which are the boundaries of the EFH, but
10 the actual habitat features within those
11 boundaries that might be important. And so we
12 have to look at both of these when we do our
13 updates.

14 I also wanted to note on this slide
15 that we have a link to our current EFH
16 boundaries. So until we finalize this next
17 action, our current boundaries exist from
18 Amendment 10, and they are going to be still
19 valid until we publish that new action.

20 But, anyways, we are constantly in
21 this process of trying to provide better
22 information for our Office of Habitat

1 Conservation. And so, for them, getting more and
2 more specific with our text descriptions is
3 better.

4 We have a process that we want to use
5 to delineate both our EFH boundaries and to
6 refine our text descriptions. So our EFH
7 boundaries are estimated using what we call our
8 kernel density estimation and 95 percent volume
9 contour method. This method basically takes
10 point data and creates an interpolated surface.
11 So you can see two maps on the right side of the
12 slide basically showing what that looks like.

13 So we derive a boundary. As you can
14 see, the boundary in the lower right corner of
15 this slide is intersecting land, and we would
16 take something like that and consider the
17 scientific information that's available and do
18 some QA/QC on it to make sure that what we have
19 makes sense.

20 The recommendations that we have for
21 this process include using more sophisticated
22 statistical software and coding. We have

1 previously run these analyses in GIS software and
2 GIS add-ons, and we have found ourselves in a
3 situation where we're not able to keep up with
4 the -- the process that we used was not keeping
5 up with the versions of the Esri software that is
6 being released, so we want to take it into a
7 coding environment, so that we have more control
8 over the actual methods.

9 We want to weigh data to account for
10 different -- for the differences in our data
11 sources, so there are some instances where you
12 have a data source that has a lot of points, such
13 as PSAT data. It's a lot of -- it's a lot of
14 points in a line versus a survey which might have
15 a few random points here and there in an area
16 that is being sampled.

17 And then we went -- like I said, we
18 want to fully incorporate the satellite and
19 acoustic telemetry data, so that hopefully
20 weighting data is going to help with that.

21 We also are working on an analysis
22 that would use oceanographic and remotely sensed

1 products to help refine our text descriptions.
2 So we would basically overlay this information on
3 top of these data points and derive descriptive
4 statistics that can be used in cases where we
5 don't have anything more specific.

6 All right. Phase 2. So what is
7 coming up next? Well, we'd like to introduce
8 draft Amendment 17 hopefully. We are looking at,
9 yes, another amendment to our fishery management
10 plan. What this would consist of, of course, is
11 a draft stage where we would incorporate the new
12 information and literature identified in our five
13 year review, compile new data, run analyses, and
14 go through a consultation process with our NOAA
15 scientists and create draft boundaries.

16 Those boundaries would then be
17 released for public comment. We would hopefully
18 get good feedback from interested folks and
19 incorporate and consider that feedback. If we
20 receive new data, then we would have to rerun our
21 analyses, but that is part and parcel of this
22 process.

1 Then we would get into a final
2 amendment where we would repeat that analysis, if
3 necessary, considering public comment in any new
4 data and information received.

5 Just for your information, Amendment
6 10 included approximately 40 data sets that were
7 analyzed, half of which came from NOAA sources
8 and half of it -- half of which were contributed
9 by state and federal agencies or authors of
10 scientific papers.

11 We found a lot of data and a lot of
12 papers in our last five-year review. We also
13 received new data sets from the State of Maryland
14 and the State of Maine. And we flagged
15 approximately 150 papers that could potentially
16 have data that should be incorporated. So we are
17 going through a process right now of getting
18 ready to reach out to authors to inquire as to
19 whether or not they'd like to contribute that
20 information.

21 So what are we looking for? These are
22 the kind of minimum fields that we need for our

1 EFH analyses, including species, things make
2 sense, like date of capture, the type of event
3 that occurred, where it occurred, length, weight,
4 and sex of the animals that were tagged or
5 captured or sampled, hopefully some life stage
6 information, and contextual information.

7 More importantly, the last time we did
8 this we learned to ask if these data were
9 included in another data set, because sometimes
10 you have data sets that are contributed by
11 authors or states and they may have already been
12 included in essential fish -- or, excuse me, an
13 EFP data set, or they may have been included in a
14 cooperative tagging data set.

15 So we're keeping an eye out for
16 potential redundancies in the data that are being
17 considered in our analyses.

18 There is a website or, excuse me, an
19 email address that's included on this slide. If
20 you have information that you'd like us to
21 consider, please go ahead and send it to that
22 email address and include Atlantic HMS Amendment

1 17 Data in the subject line.

2 We are requesting information back by
3 July 17th. This will give us ample time to start
4 our formatting. This does take quite a long
5 time, and we will be able to get into some of our
6 analyses and hopefully consultations after the
7 field season ends for 2024.

8 So if you have any questions on the
9 five-year review, you are welcome to reach out to
10 me. If you have questions on Amendment 17, you
11 are welcome to reach out to Ann, who is, again,
12 sitting in the back. Our email addresses are
13 here.

14 I also have a couple of links to more
15 information on essential fish habitat. So if you
16 are interested in our products, we've got a
17 couple websites here. If you're interested in
18 general agency information on EFH, check out the
19 first website.

20 There is also a data inventory of all
21 of the agency's EFH information in one convenient
22 spot for download. So that is shape files. And

1 then there is also a mapper. So if you're
2 interested in looking at a live mapper that shows
3 where for particular places in the ocean you can
4 see different EFH, you are welcome to click on
5 that.

6 So, oh, backup slide. You don't need
7 to see that. We'll stop here with questions.

8 MR. BROOKS: All right. Let's just
9 see who wants to jump in here with questions,
10 comments, anything. And, again, encourage the AP
11 members who are online to participate fully as
12 well.

13 And I see Jeff Kneebone coming in, so
14 we'll start online, and then we'll come into the
15 room.

16 Jeff, I'll let you know when your line
17 is open. All right. Jeff, you should be good
18 now.

19 MR. KNEEBONE: Great. Thanks, Jen,
20 for the presentation. It's really great to see
21 this effort. I wish I was there in person
22 because I have so many questions. I hope that we

1 can catch up sometime after the meeting, so I can
2 ask all of them. I will just ask a couple. Can
3 you justify your decision to continue with the
4 kernel utilization distribution in the 95 percent
5 volume contour approach?

6 Just looking at some of your slides,
7 including the backup slide, which I have access
8 to online, and things you acknowledged, you are
9 having your distribution fall onto land. So
10 that's obviously a problem right from the start
11 because you're estimating essential fish habitat
12 in a place where essential fish habitat cannot
13 exist.

14 So I just want to hear why that
15 approach was chosen as the preferred, and then
16 I'll follow up on that.

17 Thank you so much.

18 MS. CUDNEY: Yeah. So our intention
19 is not to designate EFH on land, and that is, you
20 know, an error. We try to go through a process
21 of QA/QC where we don't designate EFH on land,
22 but sometimes things happen. So, in that case,

1 we do try to catch those errors. We have a
2 pretty rigorous process of consultation, but
3 invariably, you know, just if there is a -- if
4 there is a piece of that polygon that goes onto
5 land, then obviously that is not EFH. And that's
6 part of where having the text descriptions which
7 identify the specific habitats are kind of
8 important. So we will look out for that in the
9 future.

10 As far as this white shark slide goes,
11 this is just showing excerpts from papers. So we
12 haven't actually done any analyses on this yet.
13 So anything that's showing on this slide, which
14 is slide 20, is not, again, something that we
15 have done. What we have done and what I did show
16 as an example was further back. Here we go.

17 So it's on slide 13, and this is a
18 rough cut of our EFH. So this was not -- this is
19 -- I have to squint, but this is bluefin tuna
20 spawning, eggs, and larvae. And this is not what
21 the final boundaries of this EFH look like. This
22 is just, again, that rough kind of intermediate

1 product of this is what -- this is what it looks
2 like after you run that kernel density
3 estimation.

4 So if you'd like to see what the final
5 spawning, eggs, and larvae EFH boundary looks
6 like, I am very happy to pull that out for you.
7 But this was just a kind of example of that
8 process.

9 As far as justifying why we're going
10 with this method, in part it is because it is
11 robust to having multiple different data sets.
12 Again, we have 40. We kind of have to go with
13 the lowest common denominator in terms of the
14 analysis approach that we're taking, and it is
15 based on Level 1 data.

16 And so kernel density estimation has
17 been shown, like we've done a lot of analyses
18 through our past EFH amendments and products
19 where we have looked at different approaches, and
20 that has consistently come out as the best one.
21 And it has also kind of gotten a stamp of
22 approval from our science center. So we're not

1 the only ones looking at this and making a
2 decision. It's also based on recommendations
3 from our scientists at the science center.

4 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Jen.

5 Danny?

6 MR. COFFEY: Thank you very much for
7 that presentation, Jen. I just wanted to make a
8 couple recommendations and then a question to end
9 with. First, I just want to lend support for the
10 fishery independent electronic tagging data to be
11 integrated into essential fish habitat,
12 especially since point data, as you're well
13 aware, is just a snapshot in time and space, and
14 essential fish habitat may change spatially and
15 temporally throughout seasons and oceanographic
16 conditions and prey availability. So it's
17 important to account for that.

18 Secondly, I recommend distinguishing
19 between no updates are warranted and maybe a lack
20 of new scientific information just because I
21 think sometimes there is not -- for some of those
22 species that were listed, updates may be

1 warranted, but there's no scientific information
2 just because of funding availability. And some
3 of -- most of those species are not given
4 priority in at least the most recent request for
5 proposals as sponsored by the federal government.

6 And, lastly, are there plans, now that
7 you will be integrating some movement data, to
8 use movement-based kernel density estimation
9 tools that can account for, you know, points
10 being clustered together or spread out over time?

11 Thank you.

12 MS. CUDNEY: So what we had thought --
13 and I will take that as a suggestion for
14 consideration, so thank you. But what we had
15 thought about doing was, because you do have that
16 spatial out of correlation risk, we had thought
17 about taking some kind of either a daily average
18 for where a tagged animal might be or somehow
19 parsing out the data, so that we have a singular
20 data point that's representing what's happening
21 in a 24-hour window.

22 So, but if -- you know, we can

1 definitely talk about some of those other kernel
2 density approaches that might tackle that.

3 MR. BROOKS: Great. Let's go over to
4 Rick, and then over to David.

5 MR. WEBER: I need to learn to cough
6 before I turn the mic on. Rick Weber. Jen, I'm
7 going to tie this back to the -- to the last
8 conversation about public comment. This is so
9 arcane that it takes a scientist to engage you to
10 discuss pixelation and data points and all of
11 these things.

12 So while you were talking, I just
13 popped into the mapper and tried to do, do I
14 agree with it? You know, I don't have -- I don't
15 have any data source to help you with. But I
16 notice that the inshore boundary of white marlin
17 and roundscale spearfish are the same, and yet I
18 think most people who fish for them would tell
19 you that we believe the true white marlin
20 historically came more inshore. But there's no
21 -- I can't give you any data, and I don't know
22 how to engage in this conversation.

1 You know, a line that I remember from
2 this room is that the plural of anecdote is not
3 data. And while I get that, we're also trying to
4 ground truth what you're doing and determine
5 whether the models -- how do I, as somebody who
6 does not speak all of this pixelation and 95
7 percent and all of -- how do we engage you to say
8 whether or not we agree?

9 What is the anecdotal method of
10 looking at these charts and trying to figure out
11 why the juveniles have greater ranges than the
12 adults and why there are areas that are juvenile
13 areas for white marlin that are not areas of --
14 you know, I -- there are things that just don't
15 make sense to me when I try to look at the
16 mapper. Can you tell me how to help you?

17 MS. CUDNEY: I like that, help me help
18 you. Yeah, of course. So, again, the purpose of
19 this phase was to just say, should we do
20 something? And the answer is yes. So now we're
21 thinking, okay, what do we want to do? And there
22 are definitely products that we can make that

1 would help with that.

2 So the last time we did this we tried
3 ArcGIS online -- online mapper that was an
4 interface that you could go to. We're getting
5 really into that in NOAA, making story maps and
6 other products to help distill down some of this
7 information. So I'm expecting that we'll do
8 something like that.

9 And if we need to, when we get into
10 the public comment process, we could maybe do
11 something like roundtables, virtual roundtables,
12 or something, office hours, you know, we can try
13 to walk you through some of these mappers. And
14 I'm just spit-balling ideas right now. But I am
15 hearing a request for something that's more
16 interactive that would facilitate that
17 conversation. And I would like to do something
18 like that.

19 MR. WEBER: In order to have the
20 conversation -- that's why I said I tie it back
21 to the last conversation about public comment --
22 we have to feel like we're going to be heard.

1 And if what we're going to hear is, yes, but
2 you're not bringing any new data set for me, so
3 you may be right but you're not bringing in new
4 data set, that will just frustrate me because I
5 have no data set to bring.

6 And I don't know how to contribute to
7 your QA/QC knowledge if what you're going to do
8 is counter me or anyone else who is coming from
9 an on-the-water perspective and saying, "You may
10 well be right, but we have no data set that
11 supports it."

12 And so that's my frustration of really
13 wanting to engage or encouraging more people to
14 look at the mapper, because, you know, Marty may
15 tell you this doesn't make any sense. Why do you
16 not have the fish in this zone or why do you have
17 the fish in that zone? But if he doesn't have a
18 data source, does the conversation end there?

19 MS. CUDNEY: Not necessarily. So as
20 part of this process, we get public comment. We
21 get that feedback, and we have a
22 species-by-species conversation with our subject

1 matter experts in the science centers, and we
2 take that public feedback to them and say, "Hey,
3 we got a comment that said we should -- this is
4 what this inshore boundary should look like."

5 And we will consider that when we are looking at
6 the final shape files, and we consider that with
7 our scientists.

8 And so that is the process. It's more
9 of that discussion that's happening between the
10 managers and the scientists, but that is where
11 that fits in. And so anything that we would
12 receive during the public comment process would
13 be considered when we go back, because we
14 basically would redo the analysis if we got new
15 information and take a second look at the shape
16 files with our scientists. And that's where it
17 feeds in.

18 MR. WEBER: Thank you.

19 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Rick. Let's go
20 over to David, then Mike, then Martha, and then I
21 can't see if that's just your card, Greg, or Greg
22 and Charles both. Okay.

1 MR. SCHALIT: Thanks, Jen. That was
2 a good presentation. It's been five years, so,
3 yeah, okay. So I'm getting this that you're --
4 typically the data that you're -- that you're
5 using in your shape files comes from PSAT or
6 archival tags, or let's say you have a group of
7 scientists who say, "Hey, we found some larvae
8 over here," and then, you know, that gets put in
9 there, right?

10 Okay. So this is by way of what --
11 what I stumbled upon has to do with the -- it's
12 connected with the Gulf of Maine and BOEM and the
13 big question of -- issue of offshore wind. There
14 is a -- there has been a lot of money, a lot of
15 funding provided to a handful of scientists
16 starting back I think in 1998 to do tagging of
17 bluefin tuna on the -- you know, throughout the
18 east coast and Gulf of the United States.

19 And I just sort of automatically
20 assumed that NOAA was in possession of that data.
21 But I'm told that that's not exactly the case. I
22 mean, I'm assuming whenever the U.S. government

1 funds a scientific research project, the data
2 that's generated or created as a result, the
3 final result, is in the public domain. That was
4 my assumption, but then that's not necessarily
5 the case.

6 In fact, when I -- when I spoke with
7 the Secretary at ICCAT, they didn't have this
8 data available from -- I mean, we're talking
9 about essentially I had no idea how many -- how
10 many tags we're talking about, but it was tags
11 that were -- that were by -- that were
12 implemented by Barbara Block, Molly Lutcavage. I
13 mean, it must be close to 3,000 tags, expensive
14 tags.

15 And so the problem was, at the time,
16 the exercise was -- which involved Jon Hare and
17 Clay Porch was, can we find a way of identifying
18 where these fish swim where they -- where they
19 exist in the Gulf of Maine, right? And the only
20 way we could do that would be through archive --
21 through tagging data, because we don't -- we
22 don't -- you know, we have no way of proving to

1 them where we actually fish.

2 So what I'm wondering is, are you
3 sitting -- are you using data that ICCAT doesn't
4 even have on tagging data that has been generated
5 through the BTRP, let's say, or paid for by GBYP?

6 MS. CUDNEY: Well, a lot of the papers
7 that are contributed to the SCRS are things that
8 we have flagged in our five-year review. And so
9 we're looking for those things. Hopefully we'll
10 be able to get our hands on that data.

11 The data that we had gotten ahold of
12 last time that we did this exercise was really
13 focused on our -- the Deepwater Horizon
14 Restoration Program. We have access to a
15 database called the DIVER database that
16 restoration program manages. And so we were able
17 to access some PSAT data. The problem was that
18 we -- at the time, we didn't have a very good way
19 of building -- like incorporating it into our
20 analyses.

21 So we did have a small bit of that.
22 A lot of times when -- previously when we were

1 looking at papers that, you know, published PSAT
2 data or acoustic telemetry data, we were looking
3 at the maps in those papers. And if they
4 included data points, great. We would pull those
5 out of the papers. But we were kind of doing a
6 visual comparison of what was in the maps in
7 those papers versus the boundaries and kind of
8 including that in our QA/QC process.

9 So there were different places where
10 that information was fitting into that analysis
11 method based on whether we had the raw data or
12 not. So without knowing exactly what papers
13 you're referencing here, I -- I mean, I'd be
14 happy to talk with you more after the fact to
15 see, like, do we have this one? Do we not have
16 that paper?

17 But, in general, the SCRS is one of
18 our sources. We do go through all of the
19 contributed papers, and we look for who is
20 contributing that information, and we do ask them
21 for it.

22 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thank you.

1 Let's go over to Mike, and then to
2 Martha, and then we'll head to the corner.

3 MR. PIERDINOCK: Thank you, Jennifer,
4 for your presentation. As you noted earlier,
5 this is -- those items are things that are
6 broadly affecting the EFH and HAPC. So if any of
7 my questions aren't -- are too specific, because
8 I think it has hit me this is broadly affects.
9 So it's not specific effects.

10 So, in general, I mean, up in -- I'll
11 be specific to New England, a lot of our -- a lot
12 of northerly species that northerly ranges in
13 general right around the southern side of the
14 Cape Cod, and with increased temperatures and
15 shifting stock, shifting forage, and so on, we
16 have multiple species that are being found
17 farther north, specifically, in New England,
18 different than a lot of other parts of the
19 country.

20 So we're the receiver of a lot of
21 shifting stocks, shifting forage, shifting, you
22 know, species regulated by Atlantic States Marine

1 Fishery Commission, or elsewhere, as well as HMS,
2 as well as these fish are going up into Canada,
3 as well as in forage.

4 So has this evaluation taken into
5 consideration shifting forage, shifting stocks,
6 change in predator-prey relationships? And then
7 we have intrusive species that are now competing
8 with what was normally not there that are now
9 found within those areas. That's question number
10 1.

11 Question number 2, I was glad to see
12 that you noted water -- specific waters,
13 physical, biological, chemical. Some of the
14 studies being conducted nowadays are taking water
15 samples, assessing for microplastics, PFAS, the
16 new forever chemicals, pharmaceuticals, because
17 we have this big disconnect with our fishery that
18 we can manage our fishery to death and
19 environmental impacts are impacting, for
20 instance, recruitment, and we don't know why.

21 But these are chemicals here that we
22 have in our waters that have changed recruitment

1 and other factors that could be impacting our
2 fishery. So does that include chemical? And
3 what measures are being taken to see that that
4 type of work is being expanded to address that
5 data set to see that we can properly evaluate
6 that in our fishery?

7 MS. CUDNEY: All right. I'm going to
8 do my best. If I forget part of your question,
9 let me know, and I'll get to it.

10 Okay. So as far as the chemicals go,
11 yes, we have different non-fishing impacts that
12 we analyze, microplastics, those types of things.
13 They fit under marine debris, and they fit under
14 water pollution. And so there is an analysis
15 that is done of the literature where we look for
16 that type of information and its effects on fish,
17 and then also its specific effects on HMS.

18 So we are constantly on the lookout
19 for that stuff. I know that my team is taking
20 notes, and so the things that you mentioned we
21 will double check those against what we have
22 already found to make sure that we've got all of

1 those topics covered. But I believe that they
2 are broadly covered in our analyses already.

3 As far as making -- I think you asked
4 if we're making sure that the information is out
5 there. I mean, if it's out there, we'll try to
6 find it in our searches. But I guess I'm not
7 really sure what -- like what you're asking
8 there. Is it -- are we going to try to fund
9 research for it? Okay.

10 That's a big question. And, I mean,
11 it could be included in something like a future
12 version of our research priorities document. We
13 also have our research and information needs
14 section of our EFH follow-up action. So that
15 could be included in there.

16 Let's see. The other question,
17 shifting stocks and climate change. We have
18 expanded the discussion on climate change in the
19 five-year review document, and we're going to
20 continue to include those considerations in our
21 EFH analyses.

22 So thankfully we've got the climate

1 vulnerability assessment that is underway. Randy
2 talked about it in the overview presentation, so
3 the results from that will inform our EFH. And
4 part of that is looking at the changing
5 distribution of, and the likelihood of, changing
6 distribution for these different species.

7 And of course there is a big body of
8 literature that's out there that we can look at
9 in reference to shifting stocks. So, yeah, we
10 would -- we would take a look at that and
11 consider it when we're looking at our EFH
12 boundaries.

13 As far as the predator-prey
14 relationship goes, yeah, absolutely, we're hoping
15 to capture some of that information in our life
16 history summaries for each species. So if there
17 were changes in the predator-prey distribution
18 information that is identifiable and in the
19 literature, then we'll include it, especially if
20 it's -- you know, this shark has a strong
21 association with this prey species and we know
22 that there is a climate effect here, of course

1 we're going to include that in our discussion.

2 Is that everything? Almost?

3 MR. PIERDINOCK: No. Thank you,
4 Jennifer. Right on. To add to your data set,
5 the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary has
6 done a study. They have done a presentation of
7 that study where they collected samples of water
8 throughout the sanctuary that had parts per
9 trillion levels of pharmaceuticals, birth
10 control, mind-altering drugs, you name it. And
11 the fact that that is so far offshore we have the
12 MWRA outfall from the Boston Harbor Treatment
13 Plant that discharges into the area is alarming.

14 So there has been concerns for many
15 years why that area has been shut down to
16 dragging in certain areas, for example, and it
17 has not rebounded like it has every place else in
18 the world, so this may be an example where these
19 type of pharmaceuticals, and so on, are impacting
20 things.

21 There is also a peer-reviewed study of
22 the Columbia River salmon and the discharge of

1 sewage and the connection of such
2 pharmaceuticals. If you need a peer-reviewed
3 paper, that paper should be peer-reviewed soon
4 from the Stellwagen Bank National Marine
5 Sanctuary, but I would encourage you to use that
6 or go to it to provide you some details.

7 Thank you.

8 MS. CUDNEY: All right. Thank you.
9 We'll look for it.

10 MR. BROOKS: All right. Let's go to
11 Martha, Greg, Charles, and then we'll go back to
12 Jeff online, and then over to Jimmy.

13 MS. GUYAS: Hey, Jennifer. Just a
14 quick question about the slide 20 potential HAPC,
15 since we've already ripped the lid off of that
16 one. As you contemplate that, would you be
17 considering regulatory changes to go along with
18 that or would it just simply be a designation?

19 MS. CUDNEY: It's a little early to
20 say what exactly is going to happen, because we
21 have to go through the -- you know, the public
22 comment process and draft amendment process. But

1 our five-year review did not identify anything
2 that would warrant implementing regulations for
3 any EFH. So if that continues to hold true, I
4 mean, I just don't know at this point.

5 But I can say that the review -- the
6 five-year review itself didn't say, "Hey, you
7 need to close this area." It just said, "Hey,
8 this area is important." And that has
9 implications for, like, the wind energy
10 development and other activities that are
11 happening in that area.

12 MR. BROOKS: To the corner.

13 MR. HINKS: I'm just curious, besides
14 your publication reviews, how are your methods
15 for searching out data sets, especially on -- I'm
16 thinking the states in mind, how that does that
17 process typically go? Or is it -- or is it
18 confined to strictly publication reviews?

19 MS. CUDNEY: It's not confined to
20 something that specifically is in a publication,
21 although that helps because it's publicly
22 available. We can point to it and say, "Here is

1 this data set."

2 But as far as the body of scientific
3 literature that's out there, we went through this
4 massive literature review process. And through
5 the course of it, our team of eight or ten people
6 that, you know, at any point in time were looking
7 at that data, if they saw discrete point
8 information or a map in a paper and thought, hey,
9 this could be useful, then it was flagged.

10 So that's the process basically.
11 We've got -- all of these papers we are going to
12 try to reach out to these authors and see if we
13 can get the information. And if we can, great.
14 And if they're not able to provide it or we can't
15 get ahold of them, there you go.

16 As far as the other data sets, we have
17 20 data sets that we routinely hit that are
18 controlled by the agency. They are things like
19 our shark bottom longline survey, COASTSPAN,
20 GULFSPAN, these are our shark nursery area
21 surveys. We have ichthyoplankton tow surveys for
22 larval billfish, swordfish, tunas, whatever else

1 that's floating out there in the Gulf of Mexico.

2 These are just things that we go to
3 regularly when we do this type of an exercise.
4 So some of this stuff has been pre-identified.
5 When we find a good data set, we want to continue
6 using it. But we also don't want to -- don't
7 want to, like, just say these are the only things
8 we are considering.

9 If you look at the distribution of
10 these different data sets, we don't have a single
11 data source that comprehensively covers the
12 entire EEZ, and that's why we have to take this
13 sort of piecemeal approach and layer in a whole
14 bunch of different data sets, because HMS are
15 kind of a rare event species in some cases and
16 we're just looking for as much information as we
17 can get on them.

18 MR. HINKS: So with that in mind, I
19 personally haven't seen any data requests from
20 any of our state surveys come across my desk.
21 But I know for a fact we have an abundance of --
22 I wouldn't -- I shouldn't say "an abundance." We

1 do have HMS data, especially from our trawl
2 survey. But now that you're talking about
3 incorporating prey into this analysis as well, I
4 mean, that's 100-fold compared to the HMS, and
5 I'm sure the other states will have similar data
6 to us.

7 So if you haven't already, or if you
8 don't have plans already, I would suggest
9 reaching out to the state -- at least the state
10 reps from the -- from the panel, because I think
11 you're going to get -- receive a plethora of
12 information.

13 Especially in my case -- I can't speak
14 for the other states, but I know we've dealt with
15 difficulties in making our information readily
16 available to the public, not that -- not that
17 it's not accessible, but basically we rely on
18 them to come to us to let us know when they need
19 it. And that is something we're working on, but
20 I think that's probably commonplace, at least
21 among the state agencies. So --

22 MS. CUDNEY: And thank you for that.

1 We'll be in touch. And if there is a specific
2 process or a form or something that we have to
3 fill out to get those data sets, I know some
4 states do have these data request procedures.
5 We'll go through that if we need to.

6 MR. BROOKS: Charles.

7 MR. WITEK: Okay. Just want to know
8 -- there's something pretty special going on off
9 Long Island right now. I shark fished out of
10 Fire Island Inlet for 40 years. Until 2019, I
11 never saw a juvenile white shark. I saw 12- to
12 15-footers, maybe a couple 10-footers, but that's
13 as small as they got.

14 Beginning in 2019, we started seeing
15 the juvenile whites. One of the things I do, I
16 volunteer my boat and my time to help out shark
17 researchers at Stony Brook University, and fish
18 three and seven at least were tagged by those
19 researchers on my boat.

20 So we're seeing these little whites.
21 It's something we never saw before. But what I
22 will say is I remember when I was very young back

1 in the 70s, and I was in my teens, maybe early
2 twenties, there were reports of those juvenile
3 whites being caught. Every now and then you
4 would see a charter boat because in those days,
5 you know, there were no prohibited species, so
6 people brought them in. A charter boat would
7 bring in a 100-pound white shark.

8 I remember a magazine article where
9 somebody was saying they were catching them off
10 of New Jersey Inlet. There were no striped bass.
11 There were no bluefish at that time. So to pass
12 time, to catch something, they were targeting
13 these little 100-pound white sharks. And then we
14 lost them. Now they're coming back.

15 We're seeing them, and I encourage you
16 to pay attention to it, because this, you know,
17 renaissance and this nursery area is real, and
18 they are falling victim. You know, having
19 conversations with fishermen, they are falling
20 victim, discards, bycatch, and some inshore gill
21 net and trawl fisheries. So I do ask you to keep
22 your eye on these fish.

1 MS. CUDNEY: Thank you.

2 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Let's go to
3 Jeff. I think that's a fresh hand up. Is that
4 right? And just wait a second. I'll tell you
5 when you are open. Still closed. Jeff, can you
6 throw something in the chat if you're there? I'm
7 not seeing his line open, though. There we go.
8 Okay. Jeff, I think you can talk now.

9 MR. KNEEBONE: Yep. Seems to be
10 working. Thanks. So I have follow-ups. I'll
11 start with a point. So I fully appreciate the
12 ability to incorporate satellite tag data and
13 acoustic tag data into these analyses. I think
14 it's essential.

15 Just one point I'd like to make is
16 acoustic tag data are one thing. Boiling things
17 down into a single point for data makes sense.
18 With pop-up satellite tag data, as some people
19 know, the point estimates that you get from those
20 tags are themselves full of a ton of error. So
21 I'd just caution you against putting too much
22 stock in some of those tracks.

1 Yes, they are locations, but sometimes
2 they are really not the best locations. So
3 having some sort of insight into how those are
4 weighted in response -- in relation to other
5 locations that are more well-known like an
6 acoustic tag detection, unconventional tag or
7 capture, some type of fisheries-dependent record
8 would be great.

9 And then my other -- my question is,
10 Jen, before you said that -- in reference to my
11 question about the volume contours occurring on
12 places where EFH can't be, like land, you
13 mentioned a QA or QC process that you go through
14 to address that. Can you elaborate on that,
15 please, and talk about what you mean, what
16 exactly would be the way you would address those
17 discrepancies? Thank you very much.

18 MS. CUDNEY: Yes. So what we do is we
19 get the data. We run a model, run a tool, to
20 derive that density surface, and then we run a
21 percent volume contour tool to get the boundary.
22 And we'll take those raw boundaries and do a

1 little bit of work on them, trying to cut things
2 that are on land off. We can -- there's
3 different tools you can use in GIS to do that.

4 But then we have a conversation with
5 our scientists from the science centers, and so
6 this is going to include folks from both the
7 southeast and northeast fisheries science center.
8 We have different HMS programs in those two
9 regions, and we have a conversation with those
10 folks and say, "These are our preliminary
11 boundaries. You know, what do you think? Is
12 this supported by your experiences, by the
13 scientific literature? These are the data." And
14 we'll take a look at them together and get
15 recommendations based on the scientific
16 literature.

17 It's going to be things like the
18 inshore boundary should be the 200-meter isobath.
19 The seaward boundary should be the -- well, we're
20 required to make it the seaward boundary of the
21 EEZ, but we can have conversations about where
22 exactly in -- you know, inside of the EEZ that

1 might be.

2 We can highlight, you know, sometimes
3 these models will spit out tiny little circles
4 just as a function of the model, and we'll look
5 at those and say, "Does it make sense to have a
6 big blob and a bunch of little blobs or should we
7 merge them together?"

8 So these conversations are all part of
9 that QA/QC process, and it comes down to making
10 sure that what we have makes biological sense.

11 And then we go and take those shape
12 files that we sort of finalize in the draft
13 process with our scientists, and we go into
14 public comment, and we ask the public, "Does this
15 make sense?" So part of the reason why we do the
16 public comment, and why we're trying to come up,
17 Rick, with good ways to have these conversations
18 is that it's the public-facing version of that
19 QA/QC process. And we take that information
20 back, redo the analyses if we need to.

21 A lot of times that public comment
22 process is going to generate new information. We

1 have somebody that will come along and say, "Hey,
2 you didn't look at my paper" or "you didn't look
3 at my data set. We want you to include it." And
4 we'll rerun the analyses if we need to to
5 incorporate those new data sets.

6 And then we go through the whole thing
7 again with our scientists to make sure that the
8 new model output makes biological sense, and it
9 is aligned with what the literature is saying.
10 And we turn that into our final boundaries.

11 MR. BROOKS: Go ahead, Jeff. Do you
12 have a follow-up? Go.

13 MR. KNEEBONE: I think I am, so I'm
14 just going to say one quick question. Jen, thank
15 you so much for that explanation. Was that QA/QC
16 process done in 2010 the last time the EFH was
17 reviewed? And thank you very much. That's all I
18 have.

19 MS. CUDNEY: Yes, it was.

20 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks, Jeff.

21 I think -- please, Jimmy.

22 MR. HULL: Yeah. Thank you. I was

1 just going to make two points. You know, this is
2 -- this amendment is going to be a perfect
3 example where a fisherman stakeholder is going to
4 have to have, you know, some education to really
5 provide good comment if you want it from that
6 level down the line as opposed to someone that is
7 going to provide hard data.

8 And then the other point was, are you
9 taking into consideration, like, state water
10 boundaries in some of these, like off the State
11 of Florida, for instance, the east coast? We
12 can't bottom longline inside state waters, so --
13 for coastal sharks.

14 So to say that -- is that into the
15 modeling to take into account? Well, this is --
16 we basically have, you know, a preserve. We call
17 it a shark preserve inside state waters, because
18 there is just no fishing impacts at that level.
19 So thank you.

20 MS. CUDNEY: Yes. There are fishery
21 independent surveys that are happening in state
22 waters, and that's where some of the state

1 information is kind of important, too. But,
2 yeah, we do have some data sources that are in
3 areas that are otherwise not accessible to
4 commercial fishermen, to the commercial
5 fisheries.

6 We -- our coast span survey, which is
7 run by Cami McCandless and Michelle Passerotti
8 out of our Apex Predators Program in the
9 northeast will actually go into inshore waters.
10 And so we do include that as part of our EFH
11 analyses.

12 MR. BROOKS: Great. Martha, I'm
13 assuming your card is left over. Is that right?
14 Okay. Good.

15 MS. GUYAS: Sorry.

16 MR. BROOKS: No worries. Anybody else
17 in the room or online have any final comments or
18 questions for Jen?

19 Okay. Then, if not, thank you so
20 much. That was a really helpful discussion.

21 We are coming up on 4:30, so we want
22 to shift to public comment. Alan Weiss, I see

1 you're in the room. Welcome.

2 So do we have anybody online or
3 anybody in the room who would like to be making a
4 public comment here today? In the room, anybody?
5 Sandy, I know you want to, so I'll get to you in
6 one sec. I just want to see who we've got.

7 And online, do we have anybody? And,
8 Pete, I'm not convinced that my online list of
9 attendees is freshening. So if it's not, if you
10 see something, just give me a shout. But I'm not
11 seeing any hands raised. You don't see anything?
12 Okay.

13 All right. Then let's start, Sandy,
14 with you, and see if anyone else folds in.

15 MS. NGUYEN: Can you hear me? Hi.
16 For those that doesn't know me, I am the
17 Executive Director of Coastal Communities
18 Consulting, probably the only organization that
19 does direct services to the commercial fishermen
20 and their families. So I've been around for a
21 long time.

22 I've been with the pelagic longline

1 fisheries for over 36 years. I think I was a
2 member of this committee in 2012 and '14. Didn't
3 know much about it. Knew more than I thought,
4 but I've been with them for a long time. We're
5 down to about -- when I started with them at the
6 age of 15, probably were 100, and now we're about
7 17 licensed, right, Jasmine? About 10 operating.

8 I just wanted to go back to the
9 communication part of the issue, the -- prior to
10 everybody made the comment that you made. With
11 us, this is when I miss Charlie. The size --
12 translating size to just normal English, daily
13 English, daily English, before I could tweak it
14 into Vietnamese, has been tough.

15 We only have seven boats, like 10
16 boats operating right now. I think we would like
17 to preserve the industry. However, one of the
18 things that most of you guys don't realize is
19 that the State of Louisiana, pelagic longline,
20 nobody knows about them, not even the state
21 wildlife, in my opinion.

22 They are not regulated by the state.

1 So when you go up to the state for any
2 information on PLL, you get none. And so we're
3 I've been utilizing people like our office --
4 Steve Campbell, who is the officer that was in
5 charge of our area for the longest time, we had
6 Charlie, we have Gary Grahams, and most recently
7 some environmental friends like Will and Jackson,
8 who is -- and then Marty.

9 You know, the past two years with
10 these three folks did -- and with Jackson and
11 Will, and of course, Randy, you've been there
12 with us, too.

13 You know, some of the proudest things
14 that NOAA have done back to the days for us was
15 the Blue Bulletin. It came out in four languages
16 at one point mailed to our houses. That was
17 great. And then that was all taken away by
18 online, and that just kind of wiped off the
19 communication altogether, because none of our
20 fishermen know how to use computers.

21 But even if -- and just to make it
22 better from now on, I just think of course they

1 think they are going to outlive me with the
2 stress I deal with. But the only way to
3 communicate with the fleet in Louisiana is
4 through our organization. We just don't have
5 funding to -- it probably will take a whole -- a
6 full-time position to handle this whole shebang.
7 This is a lot. I mean, I still don't know 90
8 percent of what's going on.

9 But I'd like to -- I'm with Jackson
10 and a lot of environmental friends that we are
11 working with and trying to save the industry in
12 Louisiana. We only have 10 boat owners that's
13 going. All are over 65 years old and are
14 Vietnamese.

15 And so last year with Amendment 15 was
16 the first time they ever engaged in public
17 comment through our office. And that was a
18 direct result of the two workshops that we worked
19 with EDF on for them to educate us as well as the
20 fleet.

21 And then coming back to us, Larry --
22 Larry was at the workshop. It's just simple

1 things. I think from now on I don't think that
2 the best way to handle it is just to go through
3 our office, because that's where they seek
4 information. That's where we do and handle all
5 of the businesses and all of the conferences.

6 And so I just want someone either on
7 this committee, like I have always stressed, or
8 at NOAA to where when we see a bulletin shoot
9 through our email, I can contact that one
10 individual to kind of give me the lowdown, what
11 this means and doing more daily English, so that
12 I can work with the boys, because that -- I move
13 to all the fleets. And then I'd like to move
14 forward like that, if possible.

15 Thank you.

16 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Thank you very
17 much. Appreciate it.

18 All right. I have one hand online.
19 If we can open up Todd's line, and, Todd, if you
20 could start with your name and affiliation and
21 whatever topic you want to talk to. I'd ask that
22 you hold your comments to about three minutes or

1 so would be great. And you should be open now,
2 Too.

3 MR. ELDER: Are you able to hear me?

4 MR. BROOKS: Yes, we do. We hear you
5 perfectly.

6 MR. ELDER: Yeah. I am the one that
7 has put the request in a few years back for
8 harvest of BAYS tunas.

9 MR. BROOKS: I'm sorry, Todd. Can you
10 start name and affiliation again, please?
11 Thanks.

12 MR. ELDER: Sorry. Todd Elder from
13 Virginia Beach, affiliation Virginia Beach
14 Seafood is my small seafood company. And, yeah,
15 I just open up for any questions or concerns that
16 anyone may have about the request to use
17 spearguns to harvest tuna.

18 MR. BROOKS: Yeah. Typically, Todd,
19 we use these periods more for people to sort of
20 share their comments. So if there is a
21 perspective you would like this group to hear
22 about that, it would be really welcome. So maybe

1 you can just share a few thoughts for everyone's
2 benefit.

3 MR. ELDER: Sure. What I'm doing here
4 in Virginia Beach is basically just following my
5 passion. I love diving, and I'm trying to offer
6 our local community, you know, fresh dayboat
7 fish, which is surprisingly rare unless you go
8 out and catch it yourself. And I feel that, you
9 know, spearfishing, especially free diving and
10 spearfishing, is, like, the most sustainable
11 method to harvest.

12 And you're allowed to do it
13 recreationally, but not on a commercial level, so
14 I'm hoping to get that changed and supply my
15 local community with fresh dayboat fish or as
16 sustainable as possible.

17 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thank you very
18 much. Appreciate that. Thanks for making the
19 time to join in today.

20 Anyone else in the room, anyone else
21 online, who would care to make any comments at
22 this point?

1 Okay. And then -- yes? Oh, Jimmy,
2 please.

3 MR. HULL: Yeah. Thank you. Yeah.
4 Jimmy Hull, commercial shark fisherman, Ponce
5 Inlet, Florida. I'd like to comment on, as we
6 all know, fishermen are not harvesting our annual
7 quotas of shark for several years now. And
8 especially with the Shark Fin Sales Elimination
9 Act, there has been a huge reduction in shark
10 trips and shark fishermen.

11 So currently, from my perspective and
12 what we're doing, we're undergoing a major change
13 in the directed shark fishery. And I feel it's
14 time for management to change to help us develop
15 our evolving and growing shark meat fishery to be
16 successful and for trips to be efficient and not
17 be wasteful.

18 There is many positive management
19 proposals in the Amendment 16 scoping document
20 that could help us immediately, you know, such as
21 grouping animals that are caught together for
22 management together. That would be one thing

1 that would be helpful.

2 Also, a primary meat fish is
3 blacktips, of course, but blacknose. And
4 blacknose sharks, we have an eight-animal trip
5 limit. This is very wasteful. So we put in that
6 limit a couple years ago, and fishermen
7 understood that -- at that time that that would
8 be evaluated and it could be toggled like other
9 animals up or down, so that we could catch more
10 of the annual quota.

11 So my comment is, why can't we do that
12 and why can't we move faster on some of these
13 proposals in Amendment 16? If that's possible,
14 break it down into smaller pieces and try to
15 implement them faster than the entire
16 comprehensive amendment.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. BROOKS: Yeah. And, obviously,
19 we're talking about sharks tomorrow afternoon, so
20 certainly encourage you to weigh in again then.

21 All right. I'm going to note in --
22 and I think, Sandy, you're here. I don't know

1 how to handle this, but I don't know if it's you
2 or the HMS staff, but there is a request from one
3 of our online folks, from Jimmy Phan saying, "My
4 name is Jimmy Phan. I'm from Houma, Louisiana.
5 It would be a great help if I can get in -- get
6 the contact information for you."

7 So I'll leave that to you.

8 MS. NGUYEN: Oh. Phan is a Vietnamese
9 guy. That's good.

10 MR. BROOKS: I think I would agree
11 with that. I'm going to leave that to you or HMS
12 staff to figure out how to handle that. I'm
13 certainly not going to give out your contact
14 information right now, so --

15 All right. Just one last check. Is
16 there any -- any final comments? I don't think I
17 see any online or in the room.

18 So, if not, just to remind us of a
19 couple of things before we finish up for the day
20 and fix the microphones for tomorrow. One
21 reminder, we will have a no-host social hour
22 immediately following this. So invite anybody to

1 head downstairs to the first floor.

2 Again, really good chance for folks to
3 get to know each other. Particularly, we've got
4 a number of new people around the table.
5 Encourage people to reach out to them, introduce
6 yourselves, make them feel welcome, and know who
7 you all are.

8 Then, the game plan for tomorrow is we
9 will start at 9:30 sharp. Feel free to come
10 become then for coffee, for just getting settled.
11 Tomorrow will be Amendment 15 all morning. We'll
12 start with a presentation, so we all understand
13 what's in the FEIS. And then, obviously,
14 opportunity for comment and feedback from you
15 all, questions in particular. We really want to
16 make sure people understood what's in there.

17 After lunch, which will be from 12:00
18 to 1:30, we'll come back. We'll have an update
19 on DWH, Deepwater Horizon restoration. We will
20 have an enforcement update from both U.S. Coast
21 Guard and NOAA Office of Law Enforcement. And
22 then after a break we will come back and have a

1 conversation on Atlantic shark fishery.

2 We will get updates on management and
3 recent trends, and of course hear whatever is on
4 your mind. Public comment will be at 4:30, and,
5 again, wrapping up at 5:00.

6 So, Randy, I don't know what you have
7 to add, if anything?

8 All right. Anybody, last questions,
9 comments, anything before we adjourn?

10 All right. If not, then thanks, all.
11 I have to figure out what's the expression on
12 Mike's face. It's mysterious.

13 And we will adjourn.

14 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
15 went off the record at 4:37 p.m.)

16

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22

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This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Highly Migratory Species Panel

Before: NOAA

Date: 05-14-24

Place: Silver Spring, Maryland

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate complete record of the proceedings.

Neal R Gross

Court Reporter

NEAL R. GROSS

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