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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
(NOAA)

Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee

Meeting

Thursday

September 12, 2024

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee met at the Kodiak Area Native Association, 111 W Rezanof Drive, Kodiak, Alaska, at 8:30 a.m., Jocelyn Runnebaum, Chair, presiding.

## Members Present:

Kristina Alexander, Endowed Chair of Marine Policy and Law, Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies, Texas A&M University

Bob Beal, Executive Director, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission\*

Janet Coit, Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service

Hugh Cowperthwaite, Senior Program Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Jaime Diamond, CEO/General Manager, Santa Barbara Landing LLC; Owner, Stardust Sportfishing

David Donaldson, Executive Director, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission\*

Thomas Fote, Retired, Recreational Fisherman\*

Jamie Goen, Executive Director, Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers

Jim Green, Master/Captain, F/V American Spirit

Amy Green, Director, Center for Science & Technology in Education; Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership, College of Education, University of Maryland

Jennifer Hagen, Marine Policy Advisor, Quileute Tribe; Marine Biologist\*

Natasha M. Hayden, PE, Vice President of Lands & Natural Resources, Afognak Native Corporation

Bobbi Hudson, Executive Director, Pacific Shellfish Institute

Marissa Mercurieff, Director, Office of Justice and Governance Administration for the Aleut Community of St. Paul Alaska

Meredith Moore, Director, Fish Conservation Program at Ocean Conservancy

Linda O'Dierno, Fish and Seafood Development Specialist

Ryan Prewitt, Chef and Owner, Peche Restaurant

Kellie Ralston, Vice Chair; Vice President for Conservation and Public Policy, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust

Jocelyn Runnebaum, Ph.D., Chair; Marine Scientist, The Nature Conservancy

Sarah Schumann, Fisherman; Owner/Principal Consultant, Shining Sea Fisheries Consulting, LLC\*

Patrick Sullivan, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University

Clayward Tam, Cooperative Fisheries Research Coordinator, Pacific Islands Fisheries Group\*

Brett Veerhusen, Principal, Ocean Strategies

#### NOAA/NMFS Staff Participants Present:

Russ Dunn, National Policy Advisor for Recreational Fisheries

Ben Fissel, Economist, Office of Science and Technology, NOAA Fisheries

Bob Foy, Ph.D., Director, Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Stephen Kasperski, Economist, Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Heidi Lovett, Supervisory Policy Analyst, Office of Policy, and Designated Federal Officer

Emily Menashes, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Operations

Sam Rauch, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Regulatory Programs

Jenni Wallace, Director, Office of Policy

Cisco Werner, Director, Scientific Programs and Chief Science Advisor

Katie Zanowicz, Assistant DFO

#### Also Present (NOAA/NMFS Staff and Visitors):

Alisa Abookire, Alaska Coastal Observations and Research \*

Caitlin Adams, Senior Advisor to the Assistant

## Administrator

Scott Arndt, Mayor, Kodiak Island Borough

Eva Benedezova, APS Kodiak

Sherry Boaitey, NOAA\*

Loretta Brown, Legal and Policy Analyst,  
Salmon State\*

Elizabeth Cerny-Chipman, Ocean  
Conservancy\*

Laura Diederick, Lead, External Affairs and  
Stakeholder Engagement

Bill Donaldson, Fishery Management  
Specialist, Alaska Fisheries Science  
Center

Paul Doremus, Vice President for Policy and  
Sustainability Strategy, Trident  
Seafoods\*

Karen Eason, Program Analyst, NMFS Budget  
Formulation Division\*

Brandee Gerke\*

Clayton Hexley, North Pacific Seafoods

Oliver Holm

Davis Hovey, KMXT Radio\*

Lindsey Kraatz, Ph.D., Senior Science Advisor

Gabriela McMurtry, Fisheries Policy Analyst,  
NMFS Office of Policy\*

Kate Naughten, Director, NMFS Office of  
Communications\*

Patty O'Donnell, Alaska Whitefish Trawlers  
Association

Danielle Ringer\*

Sean Rooney, Fisheries Biologist, Alaska  
Fisheries Science Center

Spencer Showalter, Advisor to the Chief of  
Staff; Advisor to the Deputy  
Administrator for Operations

Rebecca Skinner

Jeff Stephan, United Fishermen's Marketing  
Association

Geoff Toy\*

Maureen Trnka, Ph.D., Senior Advisor for  
Regulatory Programs

Steve Williams\*

\*participating via webinar

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## Proceedings

(8:32 a.m.)

## Opening for Day 3

Chair Runnebaum: All right. Good morning, everybody. We have a hard stop at 9:35, so we are going to get this show on the road.

So, there's a few announcements.

We're going to get a presentation this morning on the Alaska Fishing Industry's Snapshot Report. We're going to start off with Bob. And we have some folks online, Ben Fissel and Steve Kasperski, joining us.

Then we're going to go to the processors. So, we're going to meet outside and walk to the processors starting at 9:35. And we're going to first get a tour of Kodiak Island Wild Source, and then Ocean Beauty Seafoods.

So, Katie's going to help keep us on track for timing of when we need to move.

We're then going to go to lunch at 12:30. And then we're going to come back and begin at 1:50 to get our reports from the commissioners. And we're going to be joined by Bob Beal and Dave Donaldson.

Then, at 2:50 we'll get a report from Emily Menashes on our budget outlook, or NOAA's budget outlook.

And then at 4:00 we'll take some public comment. I think I saw some folks signed up for public comment.

And then at 4:15 we're going to have MAFAC's discussion again. And we're going to sort of adjust the schedule or the agenda a little bit where each of the subcommittee chairs are going to take about 15 minutes to facilitate a conversation of how the things that we've talked about this week fit into the work plans for each of the subcommittees.

So, we're going to give it a go. I appreciate

everybody's flexibility in having these different types of conversations.

And thanks to the subcommittee chairs for being willing to take this on. I appreciate it.

And then we're going to wrap up by 5:30.

So, we have another busy day.

I wanted to -- we have a couple of announcements that we wanted to make this morning.

So, first of all, Katie has some thank you notes for our host for the dinner on Monday and for the panelists that joined us. So, please be sure to sign those.

Where do we go to sign those, Katie? Okay, Katie's going to pass them around for everybody.

This is also Jamie Goen's last day. It's been a real honor and a pleasure to have you here for this one meeting in person and our two virtual meetings. We are sad to see you go. And, also, I know you are going to do great things on the North Pacific Council.

So, happy to let you say a word, if you want to say goodbye.

(Off-microphone comments.)

Chair Runnebaum: Thanks, Jamie.

And before we begin our subcommittee conversations for this afternoon, Heidi wanted to make an announcement about our new Rec Committee subcommittee chair.

Ms. Lovett: So, we've been very thankful that Pat Sullivan has stepped up and chaired the Rec Fish Subcommittee, since a number of members and the former chair stepped down when their term ended.

And we're happy to have some new Recreational Fishery folks on that subcommittee who just, of

course, came in. And Jim Green and Jaime Diamond have stepped up, volunteered, and are going to co-chair our committee, the Rec Fish Committee, moving forward.

So, thank you so much.

Chair Runnebaum: Great. Thank you. Thank you for volunteering for that.

Okay. Katie is going to say two more things. And then, Bob, I promise I'm going to let you talk.

Ms. Zanowicz: So, first thing, Natasha has been awesome and brought some smoked salmon. So, there is a bag of smoked salmon in the back of the room. So, please enjoy.

Thank you, Natasha.

And then, so far I have Steve on line -- I don't see Ben Fissel -- but, Steve, can you please share slides and advance them? We do not have access. So, that would be great.

Mr. Kasperski: Great. That sounds great.

Chair Runnebaum: Great, thanks.

Mr. Kasperski: Ben is here with me.

Chair Runnebaum: Oh, perfect. That's great.

So, I'm going to turn it over to Bob, and Steve, and Ben to kick us off.

Thank you.

### Alaska Fishing Industry Snapshot Report

Dr. Foy: Good morning, again. I hope everyone is drying out, enjoying the dry Kodiak morning.

So, I'm really just doing an introduction here for the experts. Joining me today on this discussion or on this presentation is Ben Fissel. He is the Acting Chief, Economics and Social Analysis Division for that



division of the Office of Science and Technology.

And Steve Kasperski is at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, one of our economists, and lead author on the document that's about to be presented.

So, the background on this is this past May there was a meeting with Senators Sullivan and Murkowski, Representative Peltola, Secretary Raimondo -- with Secretary Raimondo, and Alaska businesses, some community members, and industry. And the goal of that meeting was to discuss the global seafood market crisis, acknowledge that there is market crisis and discuss solutions.

So, that, that discussion focused on how we might improve the competitive position of U.S.-produced seafood on global markets.

And a result of that, the Secretary asked for some information from NOAA Fisheries on information that we have, current state of the industry.

And that led to this snapshot report that we're presenting here today.

I'll note that the information that you're going to see is available on an annual basis in different forms. So, we provide economic information to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, as do other regions. So, information on revenues, and efforts, and fleet performance, and items like that are presented in an economic safe document.

And the information is usually included in a nowcast, meaning that it's, you know, this is the current state of the economics of, of our fisheries.

But what we have not done is put it into a report like this in such a short period of time in a way that communicates out to the industry, and to the public, and to others the full situation for the Alaska fisheries as we see it right now.

So, this snapshot, again, that you're going to see

here is an example of the type of work that we want to be able to advance through implementing a seafood strategy that is out there. And it is providing a rapid response to crises like we're seeing.

And the National Marine Fisheries Service wants to be able to recognize these crises and provide information as appropriate for industry and for communities.

So, it's also helpful to acknowledge, I mentioned the National Seafood Strategy, it's helpful to acknowledge that this is the kind of product that we hope to be able to produce as an industry service in the future. And we're hoping that our ability to do this continues to grow.

I mentioned that seafood strategy a couple times. The strategy itself is, is already out. It's our final document that provides the direction for the next 5 years for how we support domestic U.S. seafood economy, how we enhance resilience of the seafood sector, especially in the face of climate change and other stressors.

So, again, this snapshot is a potential method for us to be considering elsewhere as well.

And then, lastly, I'll just mention that there is an Alaska legislature effort, a Seafood Industry Task Force that is actually meeting here soon, in a handful of months, that was just put up within the State of Alaska. And we'll be presenting some of this information to, to that group as well.

So, with that, I am going to pass it over to Steve and Ben to provide the presentation.

Mr. Kasperski: All right. Thank you very much, Bob.

I'll start my video here.

So, I'm Steve Kasperski. And here we have Ben Fissel over here. Sorry, we're coming from a -- we just had a Social Science Meeting in Portland. And so, just one

quick correction.

Ben was the Acting Branch Chief at the time of ST 5, the Economics and Social Science Research Program, or generally called S&T. But now there has been a permanent replacement. Cameron Spear is now the director there. Ben is an economist in the Office of Science and Technology.

Okay. Let me get this little screen.

Can everyone see the presentation and hear me okay?

Okay, thank you. I got a couple head nods.

So, we're going to provide a little bit of a summary and some of the highlights of this report. It's a pretty short-term turnaround. I think we have 3 to 4 months to put this together. A lot of the information we'll be presenting soon, again, to the Council.

And, yeah, so, so to provide an overview. Bob did a nice job explaining kind of the purpose and the motivation behind the report.

But, really, we wanted kind of an independent assessment of the current economic and social conditions in the Alaska seafood industry. So, we're taking all state and federal commercial fisheries' data in Alaska, just focused on the commercial side, using data from fisheries and third party data sources to assess changes in costs and revenues, supplemented by discussions with industry members to conceptualize the current market conditions facing the Alaska seafood industry.

And note that all 2023 is still preliminary, I think until another month or two.

And just thank you to everybody who talked to us during this process, also thank you for having us to talk about this. We're really excited to do that.

Sorry.

Another key takeaway is really that there, there is evidence of substantial increased costs starting in 2022, and price declines that really started in 2023 that led to increased pressure on both the harvesting and processing business operations.

Okay. So, just to kind of set the stage, provide a little background of the social and economic importance of seafood in Alaska. The seafood industry is a major private sector employer in Alaska, and fisheries are an economic and cultural engine across coastal communities.

There's a really strong connection between commercial fishing and food security in Alaska communities. And fisheries underpin well-being across coastal Alaska communities.

So, "well-being" is a multifaceted term and it includes a lot of different aspects. But it's a state where individuals' needs are met and individuals, communities can pursue their goals and enjoy a satisfactory quality of life.

And the connection between fisheries and well-being in Alaska and other coastal communities are pretty well established in the academic literature and some of the work that we've done here at NOAA.

So, a number of the recent challenges that the industry has been facing, really a lot of these are kind of involved in lower seafood prices. But that's kind of a major drive is lower seafood prices, and that has to do with a lot of reasons. But one of which is there are some changes in the way that retail operations are handling seasonal influx of seafood products, which have contributed to some large seafood inventories and some lower prices received by processors and wholesalers.

There's a lack of market differentiation between the sustainably harvested and regulated Alaska seafood and products produced in Russia through the MSE certification.

Trade, exchange rates, and tariffs are really important to Alaska fisheries.

National and international market forces have resulted in really high inventories and low seafood prices throughout the global supply chain. We have some indications that that is becoming less of an issue currently. That was particularly a problem in 2022.

The strength of the U.S. dollar makes U.S. exports more competitive, which is particularly a challenge for Alaska, the Alaskan industry.

And seafood tariff asymmetries still exist for several important trading partners, including China, the EU, and Japan, which have duty free access to the U.S. markets. But U.S. producers on average face between 1 and 30 percent tariffs in those countries.

There also a lack of revenue insurance in the fisheries sector, unlike the agricultural sector. There's no federally sponsored revenue insurance mechanisms for the fisheries sector that might help to mitigate against unexpected revenue declines as a result of these market collapses or environmental challenges.

This is also the result of higher input costs, both on the harvesting and processing side. We've seen large increases in the cost of fuel, and borrowing, interest rates, labor costs and wages. They've all increased substantially starting in 2022.

The fisheries disasters are also an ongoing challenge in Alaska. Since 2019, the Secretary of Commerce has approved \$340 million in disaster relief funds for loss of crab, salmon, and cod fisheries. And there are amounts still to be determined for three additional cases of disaster relief.

And so, this has also resulted in a number of processing plant closures, either seasonal or permanent, processing plant sales. So, in 2024 there's been multiple processors that have announced seasonal or permanent plant closures

across a variety of Alaska fishing communities.

There are still, I think industry is still dealing with a number of residual COVID impacts. You know, the COVID pandemic really brought unprecedented and destabilizing changes to the seafood industry and fishing communities that led to some substantial revenue losses, substantially increased costs, and decreased participation among a lot of communities and individual couples.

We have an ageing physical capital infrastructure in Alaska. There's need to reinvest in technological upgrades in processing plants to increase efficiencies to compete in the global market.

And kind of cumulatively, the ultimate impact of these stressors is a severe decline in the commercial fishing participation in the region for about the last decade.

Communities with plant closures face substantial tax loss, tax revenue losses from processing and local spending, creating uncertainty in community budgets and spending.

And community businesses that support the fishing industry and rely on fishermen's spending are also struggling to survive.

So, I mentioned before that Alaska seafood is, you know, exports are important, that Alaska seafood really competes in the global market. And these global trade markets are really integral to, to how Alaska seafood is defined trade-wise.

Upwards of 70 percent of our products are exported. And many products will undergo some form of secondary processing in China or some other country, which means we're kind of exposed to a number of trade shocks, supply chain disruptions, or changes in costs, shipping costs, or issues, you know, Panama or Suez Canal issues.

And, really, a strengthening of the dollar makes U.S.

exports more expensive.

So, you can see this graph here is the real extracted effective exchange rate for Alaska seafood exports, which is a weighted average of our -- the exchange rates with our seafood trade, trade partners. And you see this acceleration really sharply starting in 2022.

And, you know, Alaska seafood is competing in global markets against countries that have lower operating costs, and subsidy support, and less environmental and labor regulations, which makes it difficult to compete, with our standards.

And that leaves us exposed to supply shocks. As well as there's tariff and non-tariff areas which continue to be an impediment to developing new markets, as well as expanding current markets.

We still have some trade asymmetries between U.S. trade partners, so there's some unfairness there.

And tariffs and these non-tariff areas generally will provide upward pressure on domestic prices for U.S. consumers.

So, to provide a summary of what went on in 2023, the statewide first wholesale average price we estimate is going to decline by about 23 percent between 2022 and 2023.

The statewide average ex-vessel price is estimated to drop by 38 percent from 2022 and 2023. Which means that revenues are going to -- are expected to decline by 26 -- first wholesale revenues are expected to decline by 26 percent, over \$1.2 billion. And the ex-vessel revenues are expected to decline by 38 million -- 38 percent or \$617 million.

And this is actually, you can see on the gray line and the gray bars in the bottom-right figure of total landings. This is an increase in landing between 2022 and 2023. So, the volumes are still there but prices have really substantially declined this year.

The other key factor impacting the industry is increased costs that really started increasing pretty substantially in '22.

So, this figure is fewer and specific cost indices that are made up of relative cost shares across interest rates, food prices, wage, some wage rates, and general inflation. And so, we really see these, basically all of these different cost categories really started increasing in 2022.

And so, when you combine this decline in revenue and increases in costs, so, you can see in the middle figure here, that's the revenue index, it's normalized to 1 in 2011. So, any value in 20 -- the value in 2011 is 1.

The same is true of the cost index.

And so, what we do, so that previous slide showed the input price index. And so, we multiple that input price index by an input quantity index to get our cost index in the bottom figure.

And you can see that the input price index is really pretty flat, you know, through most of the time period until the last couple years when that really brings that cost index up again.

And so, we define in the top figure the ex-vessel margin index which is basically the revenue index divided by the cost index, which is equal to 1 in 2011. So, that's basically the metric is, you know, relative ex-vessel profit margin relative to 2011.

And when you look at that, the ex-vessel profit margin index, you know, is essentially 1 for most of the time between 2011 and 2021. But then drops about 50 percent to about .5 between 2022 and 2023, which suggests that there's substantially reduced profitability in the harvesting sector in particular.

So, now what we do, we take that \$1.8 billion in direct fisheries losses from ex-vessel and for



wholesale side, and we put that into a regional, regional social accounting matrix, multi-regional social accounting matrix model, or MRSAM, that some colleagues at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Alaska's regional office, Chang Seung and Scott Miller, have put together.

And that estimates the impact not just on the fisheries but also on those support sectors and the future -- the income that comes from, you know, consumer retail operations, you know, producing the fish, consuming it at restaurants, et cetera. And so, we include that and we include all the import -- the inputs that go into the gear, the fuel, the boats, all the investments that the industry makes.

You know, those are all bought and contribute to the relative total output of the economy.

So, when we combine this \$1.8 billion in losses, direct losses, then apply the \$4.3 billion loss in output, over 38,000 job losses, and \$269 million loss to state and local government revenue, a lot of these impacts happened in Alaska, but 41 percent of them about have been in the rest of the U.S. or Washington, Oregon, and California.

As I mentioned, a lot of the inputs are purchased in those states, come from those states. And the number of jobs here is representing the total number of seasonal and, you know, full-time workers. And so it includes -- it doesn't include, or it is not limited to the people who live in those communities. It includes all the seasonal workers as well.

So, just thinking about some of the implications for these downturns on well-being, you know, the declining profits in the last few years, the low prices, bound in a number of stressors associated with ecological changes, so the warm blob impacts on the Pacific cod and multiple salmon species that runs in the gulf, the disappearance of the snow crab from the Bering Sea, there's been closures of a number of commercial and subsistence salmon fisheries for Western Alaska communities.

And as a result, some fishermen and fishing communities are struggling to survive in response. We are hearing reporting of declining physical and mental health, increasing substance abuse issues, struggling to make loan payments due to the post-COVID and insurance, declining profits.

One thing we have heard, or we haven't heard of banks foreclosing on individuals to, you know, take back some of their collateral. They are working with their lenders to modify the terms of their loans if they are having, you know, issues.

Yeah, that's something we've heard.

And, in particular, you know, the community of King Cove, Alaska, has lost its Peter Pan Processing Plant, which was its only processing plant, and it accounted for 70 percent of its community tax revenues. And so that has, you know, compounded living -- it's compounding some impacts by losing momentum on multiple community projects that relied on that processing facility to purchase hydroelectric power, water, and solid waste disposal. So, it's having some pretty big challenges there.

You know, these have growing local food security implications. There's concerns over large scale losses in fisheries participation, potentially with generational implications for fishing communities.

And these recent market disruptions undermine fishermen and communities' capacities to ultimately be resilient and survive the fisheries and their climate stressors.

So, in this report we're trying to identify a number of the drivers and consider, you know, what the current status of the industry is, not getting into a whole lot of policy suggestions or advice. Hopefully, that comes later.

But some of the transitory drivers are high inventories, exchange rates, exports from Russia, energy and fuel costs and market interest rates.

Those are somewhat transitory.

But some of the structure things that may not, you know, change too much: tariff and non-tariff barriers, and market access to various countries, depreciating our ageing physical capital, the lack of revenue insurance, higher wages for processing workers and crew, likely here to stay. Market insurance rates seem to be getting higher continually.

The climate change, well, climate change and heat waves kind of impact on abundance and the location of stocks.

So, just to summarize, we have estimated that there's going to be or there was a \$1.8 billion loss in direct revenue to the Alaska seafood industry between 2022 and 2023, which resulted in a loss of 38,000 jobs to the U.S. jobs, both fishing and non-fishing, for a result of a \$4.3 billion loss in U.S. output, \$269 million decrease in U.S. state and local tax revenues.

And there's, we estimate there is a 50 percent decline in the ex-vessel margin index, which is a measure for profitability, between '21 -- 2021 and '23, which is a compound effect of decreasing prices in 2023 and increased costs starting in 2022, for a key production and process wages, energy prices, and interest rates.

The revenue losses in 2023 are largely driven by low seafood prices across nearly all Alaska's species. That was one thing that we heard from a number of individuals that was different about this, you know, this kind of market conditions being different than -- you know, we always had crises in a number of our fisheries, but in other cases there's been another fishery that's doing well to compensate for that.

In this case all major species' prices are down. And that, you know, is a result of, you know, exchange rates and tariffs, you know, global market forces, high inventories, high level global supply, lower global consumer demand for seafood due to inflation and high prices, lower costs of seafood production

and processing in countries that compete with the U.S. seafood products.

The important thing to note here is these are not disaster-eligible causes for federal fisheries' disaster support.

So, and just to kind of summarize at the very end, the Alaska seafood industry is a really important way of life, an essential place of community and identity. It's a prominent food security provider for many Alaskans.

These recent changes have caused significant revenue losses in Alaska for states, towns, and communities. They threaten the sustainability of Alaska fishery-dependent communities and that way of life.

Thank you.

And I think Bob will now kind of, hopefully, facilitate any questions for us.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you, Steve, for that really informative presentation. And I have a lot of questions sitting in my head.

But Pat's going to kick us off.

Dr. Sullivan: Thank you.

Thank you, Steven, for the presentation. I think it's a nice quantitative summary of what we've been talking about all week. And so, I appreciate hearing that.

Is the next presentation going to give us some ideas of what we do about it? Is that what will happen?

Mr. Kasperski: I would say that I believe is what the Alaska State Legislature Task Force is going to be tasked with. So, hopefully, that, this is what will help inform that. And we can help do that down the line.

But I don't think that's necessarily in our, in our

wheelhouse right now.

Ms. Coit: Pat, let me just add to that.

The National Seafood Strategy that I mentioned in my opening remark is intended to address some of this, as was made clear in some of the earlier comments. And I think Meredith mentioned it again yesterday.

A lot of the issues are outside of our specific purview. They're not things we have authorities under the Magnuson-Stevens Act to address.

However, we've been working with the Alaska delegation, not just on the implementation plan for that strategy, but some things beyond that. One successful effort was at the recent G-7 meeting. Everybody worked together to get language into the G-7 countries committing to trying to reduce Russian seafood by using prohibitions or tariffs.

Russian seafood is flooding the market with cheap pollock, Alaskan pollock, and following it.

Anyway, there's a number of things. We have the Trade Working Group. And so it kind of all speaks to what we had talked about yesterday about using our might to work with other federal agencies and across.

So, we do have some things. They're not going to solve this, but they might help.

Chair Runnebaum: Really? Okay. Erase.

Hugh, go ahead.

Mr. Cowperthwaite: I just have a quick question.

The comment about, you know, processing in China and other places, I'm just really curious what that is. You know, what are we talking about?

And is there a way to stop that?

I mean, there's nine processors in town here. And I'm

just very curious about that.

Thank you.

Mr. Kasperski: Yeah, I mean a lot of, I mean, China processes and fillets a lot of seafood for a lot of countries, not just the U.S. And a lot of it has to do with low labor costs in doing that.

How can we stop it? You know, I think there, there's a number of different things in the National Seafood Strategy that speaks to bringing more U.S. seafood back to U.S. seafood -- U.S. consumers, as well as trying to bolster kind of a domestic processing capacity.

Yeah, I guess that, that's about as good of an answer as I can provide right now.

Mr. Fissel: I guess I would also kind of add that we, you know, I mean, so there's two things, there's like, you know, there's the domestic market, you know, the domestic processing.

And then there's other, you know, potentially alternative countries. And so, you know, diversifying kind of, like, the export portfolios that you're, you know, processing, you know, more in different countries.

Kind of in your conversations and, you know, because some of the exchange, there's a little bit more of that kind of diversification, you know, of where we're kind of exporting. But there's kind of a lack of, you know, other countries, you know, would need to kind of build up infrastructure in the same way that, you know, China has if we were going to kind of, I guess, more fully utilize them as re-processors.

You know, there are potential policy ways in which we could kind of incentivize, I think, domestic processing, you know. But, I mean, part of that I think, you know, has to be, you know, coupled with it to support, you know, because some of this, you know, some of the domestic infrastructure, domestic

infrastructure. And in order for it to be competitive.

I mean, the reason that they, you know, export abroad and they bring it back is so that we, you know, have competitive products, you know. Because they can produce it, you know, they can process it more cheaply abroad.

And so, you know, so there are some things that have to be kind of thought about, you know, in terms of how we might be able to make ourselves kind of more competitive as a processing, you know, country.

Chair Runnebaum: All right. Yeah, let me get a microphone to you. Let Katie help you out.

Thanks, Brett.

Mr. Veerhusen: Yeah, this isn't a question. And this is I am, I am just coming from my own background and history, and not speaking on behalf of anybody. It would be great to have Nicole or Stefanie here to answer this better.

But as I understand it, so, so much of, like, historically seafood that was caught -- and I'm just speaking specifically for kind of the areas I know in Alaska that was processed here in, you know, canneries and processing plants in the state and then, of course, distributed domestically and internationally, what's been happening is in order to be, as these gentlemen were saying, competitive in a global market, and also because freezing technology has drastically improved, you can harvest and catch -- I'm going to speak specifically to salmon -- here in Alaska where it's high volume, everything's happening very fast, and we're also under increased controls for quality and demand for quality for the consumer, you can catch your salmon here, get it first processed on land where it's, like, headed and gutted, for example. And then sent to China for value-add or further processing.

So, when you see a vacuum-packed fillet at Costco, you know, that was the secondary processing

happening in China, sent back here, and still certified under various certification schemes.

Now, that might sound scary, but I would also offer around the quality still remains much higher than ever would have been possible in decades prior because of what used to be degradation to the flesh of the seafood when you defrost, and then process, and then refreeze.

So, there is competitive advantages in keeping price to match what consumers are wanting. Consumers are wanting value-add, put into the oven already ready to go for most of their food. And so, in order to meet those demands while staying competitive at \$9.99 a pound, \$12.99 a pound versus chicken at \$5.99 a pound, if we were to do it all here we would be losing out greatly.

And so it's just, so it's cheaper to have secondary processing in China and then re-sent here or elsewhere in the globe in order to be competitive and meet the demand.

I know that sounds why is it cheaper to process in China? Ask somebody. I don't know the answer to that.

But I think it's cheaper to --

Chair Runnebaum: Okay, okay.

Mr. Veerhusen: Yeah, I don't know.

So, I just wanted to give some --

Chair Runnebaum: Thanks.

Mr. Veerhusen: -- background on that as to I think we live in a much more international, global marketplace. And the industry is responding in those demands in order to keep our products competitive.

Chair Runnebaum: Thanks for that, Brett. I think that's sort of a national-wide, nationwide issue of processing moving overseas.



I'm going to really mix it up here and let Ryan have the floor first. And I recognize the cards that are up, and I have your names down.

But Katie, can Ryan.

Mr. Prewitt: So, I think what Brett was saying in that the picture that he painted to me really sort of exemplifies the problem. You know, we've gotten caught in this crazy supply chain that is sending all of this American-caught seafood to another country and then bringing it back at what, as Brett described, as much better quality than it was a couple of decades ago.

But it's still not the same quality as it was when it was first pulled out of the water, you know.

And I think a lot of this was sort of exemplified by the sushi restaurant we ate at last night where, you know, we had a Tanner crab that most certainly was caught somewhere near here. But then it took a long trip in a freezer container and sat there for a long time, for an indeterminate number of months or years, before it was then served in a restaurant literally beside the port where it was probably brought in.

You know, so, and this is something that Dave touched on, and many people have touched on, but solving this supply chain crisis and keeping American seafood in America, and selling it at its top quality as close to where it comes out of the water as possible, is really how you differentiate seafood from being just another protein that competes with chicken, to being something that is extraordinary and inherently one of the best things that we have in the country.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you, Ryan.

If you don't know, Ryan's a chef, so.

(Laughter.)

Chair Runnebaum: He's feeding, he's going to feed

our soul.

Okay, Kristina and Jaime, I didn't know who came up first.

So, Kristina, please go ahead.

Ms. Alexander: Bit of a turn here. As I look at the USDA tax benefits for farmers, and then I Google tax benefits for fishers, it says that fishers can deduct the cost for their gloves, and their sat phones, and their gear.

And then I look at an entire IRS handbook for what farmers can deduct.

And to me, that lays out what the nation prioritizes in terms of locally grown, grown food. And as Ryan so carefully pointed out, seafood is one of our treasured products, but we don't value it either domestically or when we export it to the extent that we do our grain, and cattle, and chicken, and pork.

So, I am new to this researching the tax benefits. So, perhaps the economists know of more tax credits.

I know years ago when I looked at the Farm Bill, if you had \$900,000 worth of income you were eligible for a tax credit up to \$900,000.

And I was very impressed by that because, having never made \$900,000 in a year, the idea of then getting a tax deduction or credit for that was impressive. I was trying to find my facts for that and I looked in the current Farm Bill. And I didn't have time to put that together.

But what do you, what can you tell us about what sort of tax benefits fishers can claim that would help offset these tremendous losses?

Mr. Fissel: Well, so --

(Audio malfunction.)

Mr. Fissel: So, we don't, we don't -- we look at some

tax data in terms of how it comes in. We don't necessarily look -- we aren't looking at industry's tax returns.

I think, you know, for a better answer to that you might be able to turn some, to some of your colleagues, you know, within the room who, you know, pay taxes and, you know, would kind of know some of those differences.

I don't know if Steve has anything to add?

Mr. Kasperski: No. Yeah, I would prefer to speak to someone at USDA. Or I think there's something else we could do is kind of look up some of these, you know, what either tax or other kind of benefits that are available to fishers that we might not know about.

I think that's something that NOAA has put together at some point and we could probably do that again.

Chair Runnebaum: Yeah, thank you.

Kristina's the lawyer in the room. So, we're really, like, covering the gamut here of how to support the seafood industry from all the points of view.

And so, Bob and to NOAA leadership, it might be useful to think about in the National Seafood Strategy and in the snapshot report how taxes compare to across these different industries between farmers and harvesters that are on the water, and that plays into the full picture.

I will say my uncle -- I mean, not my uncle, my brother-in-law -- well, never mind. Okay.

New trucks, there's a lot of new trucks in Maine is all I'll say.

Okay. Jaime. I've lost my list but I recognize Meredith and Jim also have their cards up. Oh, and Natasha.

Ms. Diamond: Okay, hi. Jaime Diamond, recreational out of Southern California.

But when I first came on MAFAC earlier this year, the big thing that was at the first meeting that I was at, which I didn't have much to contribute to, was the Seafood Import Monitoring Program. And it was a culmination of a long body of work by this, by MAFAC.

And one of the, one of the background items it says the International Trade Commission estimates that the exclusion of imports originating for IUU fishing would lead to an increase in imports, seafood prices, reducing imports, and ultimately benefitting American harvesters and fish farmers.

But that would only increase the operating income of our U.S. commercial fishing by \$60.8 million. And I say "only," as compared to the billions of losses.

And so there's another piece of this puzzle beyond just the imports, obviously. Because if it was just the imports, that would be a much bigger number.

And one of the things that is actually, it was a public comment that submitted for the Pacific Council Meeting coming up, and this is in regards to commercial fisherman having to go up against offshore wind energy. And Heather Mann wrote this. It's a David vs. Goliath story is what she's called it.

And it says there's no doubt -- let's see here, this is about offshore wind. These goals are in direct opposition with other presidential executive orders looking to element tribal voices, protect food security, and pursue environmental justice for marginalized communities most impacted by climate change. The hypocrisy is alarming.

And then with the lens of the SIMP, the Seafood Importation Plan, and the National Seafood Strategy, and all of these other efforts that are supposed to be helping bolster U.S. seafood, we are being faced -- and I say "we," I mean I should say "I," except I'm not a commercial fisherman, so but I feel part, as part of the fishing community we are faced with so much regulatory adversity from our own government that it will never be possible for us to compete.

It feels like we can, we can try and do these reports, and say these things, but in order for us to pay our employees a living wage, in order for us to be insured at the level that we need to be insured because we live in a litigious world, and all of the other things, I don't know that, that, you know, Pat, you know, when's the next presentation with the answer? I don't know that that's ever really going to come.

And I hope that that's something that we are here to -- I know that's what we're here to work through and figure out. But I struggle when I see things like this to have that glimmer of hope.

And why am I trying to have my 18-year-old come into fisheries? I ask myself that, aside from the fact that it's a part of him.

Your well-being for the social and economic importance of seafood in Alaska could, could, you know, be for the Pacific, it could be for the Atlantic, it could be for any other region. And I know as a fisherman we, we bring that up when we're dealing with management issues. And yet it's the threat of not taking an action because of the threat of a lawsuit from another organization that forces a hand.

And maybe I'm, you know, stepping on some hot coals right now, but it's the truth. And it's, it's frustrating as fishermen to feel like we're, you know, we're having to fight this battle with, you know, both our arms tied behind our back.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you, Jaime.

Natasha, we going to have you next, and then we'll go to Jim and then Meredith.

Ms. Hayden: Thank you. Good morning.

That was a great presentation. Thank you very much, Steve and -- and Ben. Sorry. Steve and Steve's friend. Thanks.

(Laughter.)

Ms. Hayden: I'm so glad that our questions led with a question about exporting, or no, the secondary processing overseas because that's really, and Brett's remarks about that.

There's, it's not that there's a lot more to it. He was talking about in a very, in a very gracious way about salmon.

But there's about 5 billion pounds of seafood extracted out of Alaska waters every year. And salmon is a fraction of that. I don't know what the percentage is, but it's 10 percent maybe.

And so, this is, like, this is hitting all the buttons for me because on the first day I was talking about how 40 years ago it was, like, primarily salmon and very high value species. There was shrimp, king crab, Tanner crab, clams. I mean, we have, like, the best seafood in the world.

And then it has shifted to 5 billion pounds, 5 with a "B," 5 billion pounds of seafood coming out of Alaska waters every year. And there's no way that all of that is going to be processed so that it is dinner plate ready and to be consumed in the United States. I mean, it's just in Alaska, for it to be processed so that it is plate-ready in Alaska.

And that is part of the system as it is now, that it is I think that us, as, you know, policy advisors, is that sustainable?

And that's when we talk about sustainable fisheries, it is not just the act of the extraction, it's the system that then takes it from the ocean, you know, from the sea to the table, is that sustainable when 4.5 billion pounds has to, or, you know, probably 4.9 billion goes, so we -- fish comes out of the water, gets its head cut off and then gutted, and then flash frozen. And then indeed is really superior quality at that point.

But then is blocked, you know, put in 100-pound blocks or something and sent to China. And that's

where the secondary processing happens. And it gets turned into a product through whatever sort of industrial processes.

And I'm just so glad -- I know this isn't the focus of your presentation -- but I'm just so glad that this was brought up in this way because this is Alaska fisheries, and that is the large scale, you know, component of a fishing community that has really good representation in all of the management bodies, all of the political arenas you guys were talking about. And then seafood is only, like, 3 percent of the national protein or -- I mean, it's a tiny fraction.

The reason, there's real reasons why seafood doesn't have a Farm Bill, you know, there's not a Seafood Bill. And our representatives are working really hard to try to get some, some, you know, allowances for our seafood industry.

And I am sure that those opportunities, and tax breaks, and subsidies, and whatnot, are going to go to that 4.9 billion pound producers and not -- and just because of the nature of the beast, our small scale people are not -- we don't have, they're all, they're all out fishing right now. They couldn't come to this meeting.

And so, and then I'm just going to close with that, in that the -- it makes me sad to hear about, you know, whether or not you're having second thoughts about encouraging your 18-year-old in going into fishing because as fishing people, like, we're making sure that our young people have the skills that they need to be able to thrive in whatever, you know, rural, urban, coastal, inland, whatever, but that they're always going to be able to come back here and do this.

And so, when 5 billion pounds a year system comes to an end, that they'll still be able to come and fish, and they'll still be able to do that, and there's still going to be a town here.

And those communities that across Alaska where, I

mean, even King Cove, like, I heard two presentations last year about the impacts of their processing plant closing, one from the mayor. And he was, like, well, you know, we're just going to dry up and leave.

And the one from a tribal leader. And she said, well, you know what, it's going to be rough for a while but we're still going to be here. Because her ancestors are in the backyard, and they've been there for 5,000 or 6,000 years.

And so, it's going to be hard, you know, but when all of this, like, sort of comes to an end it will still, you know, as long as there's the system.

So, anyway, thanks for all of that. And I know I don't -- I'm never going to get these kind of opportunities again, so I'm just going to take them.

But, and I don't have any answers to that. But I just to raise awareness of how that system controls how we fish, and controls how we live, and how, you know, what our role is to get to work to try to sustain it.

Thank you.

Chair Runnebaum: Thanks, Natasha.

I keep this, what can the fish give, not what we can take. I think Jim mentioned that, so, very similar.

Jim, go ahead.

Mr. Green: I just want to kind of elaborate on what Brett informed us. And also agreed with Ryan that, you know, all you ever hear about is how much more stringent the American process is on, on how fish and everything is done. And that's why you should pay a little bit more, because if it comes from America then, you know, then it's gone, it's been in a more regimented process all the way through.

And to hear that that much seafood is put on a ship and sent to another country like China, who has



glaring problems throughout its whole system, that, that's disheartening. Because at that point you lose chain of custody, you don't know what they're sending back is the same thing you're sending over.

Yeah, they can say that this is the way we do it. But in essence we really do it this way.

I'm a firm believer that everything, that America can do most everything that any other country can do. And I find it disheartening that we don't have, even if it's, like, Alaska, all these jobs that are being lost during this presentation, why is there not investment in the infrastructure to have secondary processing in this state or in the continental U.S.?

And have it to where the chain of custody of that fish, of that finest grade seafood in the world isn't processed completely in America is beyond me.

That, that's really eye-opening. You know, like, we all want, hey, spend a little bit more money because America has more stringent guidelines and ensures that what you're getting is quality. And then we're talking about it gets on a ship that takes a week to get over there. How long does it sit on that port? What do you actually get back?

I mean, there's a lot of red flags there.

So, I, I don't really have a question. But I just wanted to say that that's kind of an eye-opening situation there.

And it seems like if you're going to invest, if we're going to invest in something, the infrastructure of having this abundant resource and being able to get it to more Americans.

I mean, international I understand. Like, we want to sell it to the rest of the world. But, you know, that's our resource, it's the country's resource. And we've got such great quality. And that should be American all the way, from the time it leaves that water till the time it hits Costco, till the time it gets in a fish

market, that, I think that's pretty glaring to me.

And Kristina spoke about making \$900,000. I want to let you all know that most of these fishery operations are small business or pass-through corporations. So, whenever you see a tax benefit for \$900,000, that most of these small businesses are operating in a sense as a pass-through. So, everything that that business makes you have to claim on your own taxes. Therefore, that's, it's a bit misconstrued.

They're, they're grossing \$900,000. They're probably taking home 100, you know, after costs and everything like that.

And, Jaime, it is not your decision for your son.

(Laughter.)

Mr. Green: I mean, Jaime, I mean Jaime was using that as a way of getting her point across. But as somebody who was thoroughly pressed by my entire family to go to college and, like, have this -- do this for fun and then go do something -- it was no their decision. It's not yours either, so.

(Laughter.)

Chair Runnebaum: I'm here for the parenting advice.

Okay. I have Meredith. And then I have Linda. And we're going to have to keep it quick because we have 6 minutes.

Ms. Moore: Great. I'm aware we're short on time.

Thank you both so much for the really, really good report. And want to give you a lot of credit. That was very clear. It went over a lot of stuff. And I know you put that together really quickly.

I know it comes from the states' reports, but I found this to be extremely helpful in understanding, like, how severe and buttoned the issues are on this.

So, a lot of credit.

Also, really appreciated you sharing both what the, like, acute issues are but also the systemic issues that are being faced so that, like, we can start thinking about how to address both of those types of scenarios.

My question's going to be about revenue insurance.

So, certainly inputs to fishing are very different than the inputs for agriculture, which makes crop insurance a really difficult model to just kind of lift and put into fisheries. And so, I'm wondering if we have functional models for useful forms of insurance that work for the fishing?

And, also, if private insurance sector is actually going to offer these things if we come up with the right model? I know they are fleeing sort of parts of the insurance market that are directly and increasingly impacted by climate change. And I'm wondering if that makes it more difficult to try to establish something useful with the private insurance market to address this, or whether it will have to be sort of a public or federal model to try to address this issue?

Thank you.

Mr. Kasperski: Wow. Tough question but a great one.

There are some experiences with risk pools, like self-organized voluntary risk pools in a couple different - - for a couple different reasons.

I believe there was an attempt to -- well, there's been an attempt to do some more cooperative type properties that have some kind of shared revenue component to them. But I'm not really aware of a successful model, nor am I positive that people would be willing to pay into this kind of insurance scheme.

So, I think this is kind of a new area that we need to -- a lot more work needs to go into, a lot more work needs to be spent working with the USDA, talking to

them about their programs.

What programs might be relevant and useful to fishers?

What programs might need to be tweaked a little bit?

But I think, really, the expertise in a lot of those, those schemes are really of use to USDA. And I think the goal, at least from the folks in the NOAA's Fisheries part that I've talked to, is to partner with USDA as much as we can to help try to figure out, you know, who the leading agency for a number of these different --

(Audio malfunction.)

Chair Runnebaum: Okay. I'm in the unfortunate position to say we need to wrap this up.

So, Linda, is it possible to either write the question down or say it in less than 30 seconds? Okay.

Clay? Clay, is it possible to email it to Katie and we can get it to Steve, and Ben, and Bob?

Okay, Linda, you have 25 seconds. And Katie's not going to be happy with me.

Ms. O'Dierno: Twenty-five seconds. I'm a fast talker.

When we talk about tariffs, NFI recently in some futuring exercises said whatever administration comes in next, that we're going to have protective tariffs.

And I think as an industry we're not looking for protective tariffs, we're looking for a level playing field. Some product that comes into this country comes at zero tariff. We're shipping product overseas. In some markets we have 60 percent tariff on it.

And I know some of the species that were being exported from Alaska for processing overseas in fact were not included under the 301 Act exclusions, and

I wonder if that situation has changed.

Mr. Fissel: I think it's something we'll have to look into. I think we're kind of running short on time here.

But, yeah, if you send us an email, you know, I think we can sort it out and respond to you.

Ms. Coit: Yeah. I know Alexa Cole. We've been working with USTR who, you know, represents us at the World Trade Organization. And so, I do not have the answer. I know that we've been working on that, and I cannot recall.

So, we'll get you an answer.

Chair Runnebaum: Great. Thank you.

Okay. Clay, my deepest apologies. Maybe write your question down and we'll try and get that answered.

Okay. We're going to walk over to the process -- Katie's going to lead the charge.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 9:35 a.m. and resumed at 1:50 p.m.)

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you all for being back. I know people are starting to need to make their departures. So, I appreciate the time that people had with us, and those of you that are still here.

So, now, I've started this meeting without my agenda open.

Thank you for organizing the -- Katie and Natasha and Brad, thank you for organizing the processor tours. It was really helpful to see a processor in action.

So, we're now going to get reports from Executive Director of the Commissions.

And we have Bob and Dave with us.

And there's always this question of who goes first?

But Bob, you're listed first on my -- and you came up, so, you're going first.

Please.

Mr. Beal: Someone's got to do it.

Thank you, Jocelyn.

And can you hear me okay?

Chair Runnebaum: Yes.

Mr. Beal: Yes, okay.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you, we hear you great.

Reports from the State Directors Meeting and  
Fisheries Commissions - Informational/Discussion

Mr. Beal: All right, great.

Well, thanks for the time and my apologies for not being able to be there this week. A number of conflicts and other things came up.

So, I hope you guys are having a great time. It sounds like, you know, some pretty awesome field trips and adventures around town.

So, hopefully, I will see you at your next meeting for sure.

A quick update from the Atlantic States and happy to answer any questions.

Can I -- I'll essentially be going off the read ahead document that I submitted before the meeting.

There's a number of fishery management issues here on the East Coast, but I'll hit a couple highlights.

Striped bass is always a challenge on the East Coast and always plenty of work to do there.

Currently, unfortunately, the stock is overfished and we are working -- we're rebuilding that stock by

2029.

We've got an updated assessment coming out in October. The management board's going to review that and make management adjustments, if necessary, to the -- achieve that 2029 deadline.

You know, the unfortunate thing is that for the last five years, and potentially six years, the recruitment has been at the lowest level throughout the time series of data that we have.

So, it's tough to rebuild a stock when you're not getting new animals into that population.

So, there appears to be some climate issues and climate link associated with that poor recruitment, especially in the Mid-Atlantic, Chesapeake Bay area in particular.

So, we're trying to determine, you know, what -- has the productivity of this stock significantly changed?

And are we trying to rebuild to levels that the stock may no longer be able to support?

So, it's kind of an unfortunate situation, but we'll, you know, we're continuing to assess this on a very regular basis.

And the good news is striped bass has really good data.

The bad news is that data's showing the population's not doing very well and we need -- we have some work to do to get rebuilt by 2029.

Another Chesapeake Bay issue to some degree is Atlantic menhaden. I think folks know, the menhaden fishery here on the East Coast, there's a significant reduction fishery that uses menhaden for fish oil, fish meal, omega-3 pills, and a number of other things.

There also is an emerging very significant bait market for blue crab fisheries and lobster fisheries that are along here on the East Coast. And the herring

population on the East Coast is in really bad shape up in New England. So, menhaden is being used as a replacement for herring and a bait -- for bait in those pot and trap fisheries.

So, there's a concern that the -- from a number of stakeholders that the harvest levels in the Chesapeake Bay may not be sustainable or at the right level.

And the Commission has recently initiated a working group and, actually, their first meeting is tomorrow morning, to look at Chesapeake Bay management of menhaden and determine if we should be more precautionary within the Chesapeake Bay in particular.

When we look at the coast-wide stock, the population is doing really well. We're above all of our targets and, you know, however, we don't have the resolution of the data to assess anything smaller than the coast-wide population right now.

So, we can't really figure out what's going on specific in the Chesapeake Bay. So, we have to use, you know, whatever indicator we can cobble together to make some sense of what's going on in the Chesapeake Bay.

The third issue is American lobster which is, you know, the largest or the most valuable single species fishery along the East Coast.

We, obviously, want to make sure we're doing a good job managing that fishery.

We -- there's a lot of interaction -- potential interactions between Atlantic Right Whales and lobster fisheries and other fixed gears on the East Coast.

So, we're -- in order to better understand those potential interactions, we -- the Commission came up with a plan and required all federally permitted vessels to carry cellular trackers on board.



And the idea there is to have high resolution data on where the lobster fishery, in particular, and Jonah crab fishery is occurring so that we can -- we've also got initiatives to have high resolution data that characterizes where the North Atlantic Right Whales are and then we can overlay those two sets of data to determine where we really need to put our focus on for interactions between -- or potential interactions between fixed gear on the East Coast and North Atlantic Right Whales that are, unfortunately, severely endangered.

There's only 350 to 370 of those animals left.

So, however, there's a couple of legal challenges to those -- the use of trackers on lobster vessels right now, one in Maine and one in Rhode Island.

So, we're working with the, you know, those folks trying to, you know, sort of describe the need for that high resolution data.

There's concern that it's an invasion of privacy potentially and unlawful search and seizure and that sort of thing.

And we're saying, well, we're really trying to be helpful to the industry by understanding where that fishery is occurring and understanding where the whales are so we can separate the two out.

And the strategy now will, ultimately, be the close larger chunks of the ocean and to be precautionary and reduce risk.

But if we can be more sort of surgical on where those fisheries overlap and where the whale population overlaps, we can maybe close smaller areas and have less impact -- less negative impact to the lobster fishery.

So, that's to goal with this data, but there are some legal challenges and concerns about the high resolution data collection.

Also, there's some signs that the population of the lobster in the Gulf of Maine may be trailing off a bit.

The landings are down about 40 percent from the highs -- and 35 to 40 percent.

And the Commission is proposing minimum size increase to increased resiliency of this population.

We set up a trigger and once that trigger was met, then the minimum size increases went in place. And that trigger was met last year.

This increase has been delayed a couple times due to potential economic concerns for the lobster fishery and as well as some trade issues with Canada where we may end up harvesting different size lobsters in Canada and Canada will want to import those smaller lobsters into the United States.

And that creates potentially a loophole in the market where small lobsters are in the market, but they aren't allowed to be harvested in U.S. waters.

And you know, there's law enforcement concerns there. So, those are kind of three highlights. There's a number of other fishery issues we're working on along the East Coast. Other more broad issues, fundamental data collection, as I talked about in the past continues to be a concern along the East Coast.

You know, the NOAA Fishery Trawl Surveys are critically important to a number of state and managed fisheries and federal managed fisheries. And there's been a number of gaps in those surveys.

And the biological sampling, port sampling, in the Mid-Atlantic and North East is down by about 50 percent in the past few years. And it -- it's projected to be down as much as 80 percent.

So, we may not have a really effective size characterization of what's being caught along the East Coast as that sampling drops out.

So, we're looking at ways to supplement biological

sampling as well supplement the survey work -- the trawl surveys that are done offshore from in the Mid-Atlantic and New England area.

We're looking for pilot program funded through Congress that would allow industry boats to supplement the federal boats and tow similar gear and, you know, be able to supplement that data if and when the federal vessels are not able to go out.

Also, you know, back related to menhaden, there's a -- the biological sampling at the menhaden plant in Reedville may be discontinued at the end of this fishing season due to budget issues within NOAA as well as the quota monitoring in Virginia, which is where the rebuild plan is, which is where 75 percent of the menhaden are landed.

So, we've got some concerns there about decreased support and sampling for a lot of fisheries along the East Coast.

Climate change, big issue on the East Coast as it has been for a decade or 15 years. Fish are moving faster than management and science can keep up almost. And we've been working on a scenario planning exercise for the last few years which involves NOAA Fisheries, the three East Coast Councils, the 15 states, ASMFC.

And we're looking at, you know, what's the -- what scenarios are likely moving forward with climate and how do we set ourselves up as a group of management entities so we can react to those different scenarios.

And we've mapped out the scenarios and mapped out potential impacts of those scenarios.

Now, we're at the stage of actually taking steps to be more reactive and be able to move quicker.

However, we don't -- quickness shouldn't mean diluting the ability of the public to participate and to, you know, engage in our process and be, you know,

make sure the stakeholder perspectives are represented.

So, we are -- the Councils along the East Coast, as all Councils are, getting a slug of Inflation Reduction Act funding.

And most of those -- most of that funding at the Councils is focused on reacting to climate change initiatives and figure out how we can better manage and better understand these fisheries and changing distributions and changing productivity to be stocked. And it's just the East Coast is pretty complicated these days.

North Atlantic Right Whale, I mentioned a lot of this already, you know, we're working through with the lobster fishery.

Congress has allocated a lot of money for characterizing and better understanding these whales, surveillance projects, either that are airborne or at sea acoustic monitoring.

There's also monitoring for the plankton that the whales eat, so we can hopefully understand the plankton populations which predicts where the whales will go next because they are going to where the food are.

So, we're -- there's a lot of effort going on on the East Coast as well as on demand of ropeless gear, I mean, or traditional lobster pot has a float above it and a vertical line between the float and the pot.

And, you know, those vertical lines are what -- where the risk is along the East Coast.

So, if there's a way to minimize those vertical lines through ropeless gear or other technologies, then we're, you know, we're exploring that right now.

It's not really ready to be ramped up to full scale lobster fishery, but it's -- there's a lot of promising technology that's out there.

Offshore energy development, you know, it's still, I think, 1.5 million acres or so has been leased along the East Coast.

Multiple projects are ongoing right now. There are a few that are actually up and running.

There's others that are in various stages of development and, you know, it's changing a lot of fishery -- or it's having significant fishery impacts in those areas, either commercial fishing with mobile gear is no longer able to fish in there, some of the survey work that we do won't be able to continue in those wind farm areas as they get developed.

And so, you know, just those impacts and better understanding how fisheries will change as those projects are constructed.

And there's also a lot of significant work for compensation and mitigation if when commercial fisheries and for-hire fisheries are displaced from those wind farm leases, what -- how should, you know, how should those folks that are no longer able to do what they used to do in those areas, how should they be compensated.

So, that's a hot topic along the East Coast as well.

So, Madam Chair, that's quick highlights from the East Coast.

Happy to answer any questions either now or after Dave gives his presentation, whatever the group would like.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you so much, Bob.

There is a lot happening on the East Coast.

I think I would prefer to do questions for you.

We have an hour, so let's do some questions for you and then, we'll go to Dave, unless Dave is just like dying to jump in there.

Yes, let's do -- if anybody has any questions or comments for Bob? I don't either.

I do have a question for the fundamental data collection and seeking support for that industry based pilot program.

What is the funding outlook for that and is that a guaranteed thing?

Maybe you mentioned it and I totally missed it.

Mr. Beal: Yes, no guarantees at this point.

What we're seeking is about \$3 million to support that pilot program.

The Senate version of the FY25 budget does include that \$3 million. So, you know, that's good news.

The House version doesn't. So, that's bad news.

And you know, everyone in the room, I think, knows that there's a lot of uncertainty about the timing of budgets and how this is going to go forward.

So, you know, there is positive movement there and we -- that money is in the Senate version, but no guarantees.

We'll keep trying and we're pushing pretty hard for it and we'll see if we're successful.

Chair Runnebaum: Great, thank you.

Amy?

(Off-microphone comments.)

Chair Runnebaum: Hold on, hold on, hold on, we're going to get you a mic.

Dr. Green: Thank you.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you.

Dr. Green: Hi, just quickly.

I'm at the University of Maryland, so Chesapeake Region.

And I feel like I was interested in your comments about menhaden. I feel like I've been hearing for years and years and years about the issues that they were harvesting, that the working group was just formed.

And then, what is the time line for action items on that?

Mr. Beal: Yes, no, your point is well taken at this conversation about harvesting the menhaden or the Chesapeake Bay. Menhaden harvest has been going on for quite a while.

We've been sort of hamstrung by the lack of data, lack of resolution in the data.

We can't do a Chesapeake Bay specific stock assessment.

And, you know, we've been -- another area we've been trying to find funding and conduct that science on understanding the movement of menhaden in and out of the Chesapeake Bay.

There -- the symptoms are getting more visible over the last few years in a sense where, you know, the menhaden population seems to be overwintering farther up the coast up off of New Jersey versus off of North Carolina.

And when they overwintered off of North Carolina, they seemed to enter the Bay more frequently as the water warmed and they started heading north in the summer.

So, now, that question is, now they overwinter farther north, are they not sort of coming back south and going in the Chesapeake?

And we're trying to figure that out.

The time line for the working group is first meeting

tomorrow, report out to our menhaden management board at our October meeting, probably will not be a final report. But the hope is to have the final report from the working group at what we call our winter meeting which is in the first week of February.

And then, the board will decide if they want to initiate some sort of management action changing the harvest practices within the Chesapeake Bay for the reduction fishery only or bait fisheries as well as reduction fisheries.

It's all fair game right now as to the next steps for menhaden management.

Chair Runnebaum: Great, thank you.

Tom?

Mr. Fote: Yes, Bob, long time no see.

I was wondering what happened on black sea bass? I could not make the joint meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Council in the United States.

I understand you went two different directions.

Mr. Beal: Yes, the -- just as background for folks in the room, black sea bass on the East Coast is managed jointly by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Council.

It's a complicated process where we put our full black sea bass management board around the table with the Mid-Atlantic Council and we pass joint motions to be -- to do anything.

And so, you know, 50-plus people around one table trying to decide how to manage one critter is complex and sometimes not real efficient.

In this instance, normally, what we do is like motions passed by both bodies and we end up with identical regulations in state waters and federal waters because those species moves in and out and, you know, a lot of harvest in both state and federal



waters.

However, this year, there's a new assessment that came out based on a new model.

And the population size is still about two times the target, so about 200 percent of where we want to be, which is great news.

Black sea bass is kind of a winner in the climate change situation we have going on here on the East Coast. They have moved north and found a lot of habitat that they really like.

However, the assessment made a number of assumptions about what the future condition of black sea bass might look like as far as making assumptions about future recruitment for that fishery.

And the ASMFC and the Commission -- I mean, and the Council differed a bit. ASMFC wanted to maintain essentially status quo. However, the Council is essentially bound by their SSC recommendation which is about a 20 percent cut. So, we're in a different place right now.

The Council's recommendation, obviously, has to go to the Regional Administrator for approval.

And the Commission, you know, is waiting to see what the Regional Administrator does.

There's a lot of problems associated with different quotas at state and federal levels. It, you know, impacts state permit holders differently than federal permit holders, the recreational fishery gets really confusing when regulations in federal waters that different from state waters.

And it's really a borderline unworkable situation when we end up with different quotas.

But the Commission felt that, you know, given the unbelievably healthy position of the stock, they felt status quo was not a risky position and we could

harvest, you know, what we did last year and not impact the stock negatively.

So, a lot of conversations still to happen on that.

And you know, we're waiting on the Regional Administrator to send out a proposed rule.

And I think, you know, the Commission may work itself backwards and become consistent with the Mid-Atlantic Council. We'll have to see how that shakes out.

But, yes, Tom, it's good to see you.

Mr. Fote: Yes, I really like what the Commission did.

Chair Runnebaum: Great, thank you.

I don't see any new cards around the table.

So, I think, Dave, we'll go to you and get your presentation, open it up for questions for you.

And then, we can -- if anybody has other points for Bob, we can return back to that, if that's okay.

I appreciate you both joining remotely. I know there's a lot going on. So, thank you.

Mr. Donaldson: Thank you, Madam Chair, appreciate the opportunity to talk with the group.

I'm disappointed that I can't be there with you.

I've been listening in the last several days and there's been some great discussion.

And but, like Bob, my schedule wouldn't allow it.

So, data collection is a big issue in the Gulf of Mexico, similar to the Atlantic Commission.

And we knew that the -- this day was coming. There's several funding streams that ran out in 2024.

So, 2025 is not looking particularly promising.

Talking with the congressional folks, the possibility of increased funding is not particularly high.

So, there's some concerns we will not be able to do any biological -- recreational biological sampling in the Gulf of Mexico through the Gulf FIN program, which is a huge hit to assessments.

Gulf FIN provides the only recreational biological sampling in the Gulf of Mexico.

These data are used to get the ages of the population and are critical to assessments, so we're concerned about that.

Some longer term issues, the funding for the new state recreational surveys in Mississippi and Alabama, Mississippi and Alabama are implementing a new recreational survey or new recreational surveys starting next year.

They're utilizing the Louisiana Creel methodology.

We currently have funds for implementation, but we're working with Evan and his folks up at S&T up in headquarters to determine the long-term funding for both the effort and the catch side of that.

So, that's a concern as well.

On a positive note, there's been some talk about IRA funding.

And the Commission did receive some IRA funding and cooperatively with the Gulf States, all our five build states and NOAA Fisheries, to address several issues, including the revitalization of -- and strengthening the state-federal partnership.

Russ mentioned that yesterday afternoon in his talk.

And I want to express my appreciation for Evan and his staff as well as Any Strelcheck in the regional office and his staff in kind of re-energizing this partnership.

We've had this partnership for a number of years, but it's something that we needed to kind of jump start again and I appreciate their efforts and keeping everybody at the table and discussing the path forward with data collection and recreational fishing efforts.

One of the other issues is revisiting and updating the recreational data standards.

And then, evaluating and improving the data management systems, both for Gulf FIN as well as the states.

But the ultimate plan is for the Commission to house all the recreational data in the Gulf of Mexico from Texas through Florida, be kind of a one-stop-shop.

And we're utilizing some of the IRA funding to make that happen.

The other two activities are convening workshops regarding recreational fishing effort and discards.

The recreational fishing effort validation workshop occurred in early June in New Orleans. We had participants from the private recreational industry, NOAA Fisheries, all the five Gulf states and other agencies.

And we discussed the -- a variety of alternative methods for estimating effort. That was the purpose of the workshop was to look at ways -- new ways to estimate recreational fishing effort in the Gulf of Mexico.

The best methods are still to be determined, but will probably be a suite of options and not -- and potentially vary by state.

The other workshop was recreational discards. That's a huge issue in the Gulf of Mexico. It shortens seasons because we're -- it's regulatory discards. We're throwing fish back and that needs to be accounted for in the catch.

And so, we're looking at -- and this is not a new issue. We've actually been talking about it for a number of years and it's a difficult issue to address.

But we held a workshop at the end of June, first of August, again, in New Orleans, the same type of folks, NOAA Fisheries, the private rec industry, all the five states and other agencies.

We had a variety of different presentations that, you know, understanding the magnitude of release-catch and the impacts it has management, how the current surveys are estimating discards, and then, the concerns and struggles with collecting this type of data.

And then, we also looked at various new approaches using at-sea observers for the for-hire fishery, remote monitoring using cameras, looking at citizen science as a potential vehicle, and then, using pre-trip notification cards.

And so, from these two workshops, we have -- we've got a steering committee that developed terms and reference in the agendas for both of these workshops.

And they are currently using the findings from these two workshops to develop a request for proposals, an RFP. And the purpose the RFP is to solicit research projects in these two areas and that will address these two areas.

We approximately have about \$10 million to address it. We're hopeful to have the RFP out by fall of this year. And then, targeting early 2025 to select -- to actually select the research proposals. And then, later in '25, begin actual work on those proposals.

So, it's a daunting effort, but it needs to -- we need to look at it and get a handle on these two huge, huge issues.

So, that kind of concludes what I had to say, but I did want to say, listening to the discussions about the

seafood industry and, it was interesting to hear that a lot of the issues that you guys are talking about in Alaska and in other areas are issues that we're facing here in the Gulf.

Last October, our Commission tasked us with looking at the future of the seafood industry in the Gulf of Mexico.

The shrimp fishery in the Gulf is in dire straits with imports and all the issues that you guys have talked about.

So, I've been listening with interest on those discussions and, hopefully, we can come with some solutions and so we can continue to make sure that future generations are able to maintain this -- the lifestyle and continue fishing.

So, that's all I've got, Madam Chair, and I'll answer any questions.

Chair Runnebaum: Great, thank you, Dave.

I've already got three cards up for you and I think I saw Kristina.

And then, it was Jim.

And then, Meredith.

Ms. Alexander: Hello, I'm Kristina Alexander. I'm with the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies. So, shout out for the Gulf there.

Mr. Donaldson: Yes.

Ms. Alexander: We've been talking a lot in this group about fishery disaster funding. And that funding, of course, goes through different Commissions.

And so, this is open to both Bob and David.

Could you explain the process within the Commission for once the funding is reached by you before you hand it to the states?

What are you looking for? Who looks at it? Time lines? Any information you could give us?

Thank you.

Mr. Donaldson: So, in the Gulf, we don't -- unlike the West Coast, we don't handle all the fisheries disasters. It depends on the magnitude.

When Hurricane Katrina hit, it had an effect on all five states. So, we handled it.

It's, as a rule of thumb, it has to affect at least two or three of the states for us to get involved. If it's just one or two, we don't usually -- we aren't involved.

But when we are involved, we work closely with the states in developing their spend plans and getting the needed information to NOAA Fisheries.

And once those spend plans are approved, we enter into agreements with the states on the various activities that they're going -- depending on the disaster, depending on the activities they're going to address.

And the money comes to the Commission and then, through these sub-agreements, we distribute money out to the states based on the approved spend plan.

So, that's kind of how it works in the Gulf of Mexico.

Bob, do you want to --

Chair Runnebaum: Go ahead, Bob.

Mr. Beal: Yes, thank you.

We're in a very similar spot.

We handle things much more closely -- much more similarly to the Gulf than the Pacific.

The Pacific states does it all from top to bottom.

But we -- the most recent one we did was Atlantic Herring Fishery which involved the states of Maine

through Rhode Island.

And we received one grant from NOAA Fisheries. And within that grant was an allocation to each of the four states.

And then, those four states were -- developed their own spend plans.

So, the states decided if they wanted to do, you know, monitoring projects or direct payments to industry or some sort of other program that would prevent future disasters.

And then, all four of those spend plans were put into one larger spend plan and submitted to NOAA Fisheries, then, ultimately, OMB for approval.

And then, once those were approved, the states, through sub-awards from us, just as is done in the Gulf, executed those plans.

So, if a state had, whatever, a 100 individuals that were getting direct payments, ASMFC, they would let us know who is to receive those payments, how much they were for, and we would send them the checks.

Or if there was a monitoring program or a survey of some sort, we would hire a contractor or work with a state to fund that work and pay directly to that contractor.

Most of the money did move directly from us to an individual rather than through a state.

So, but, we were very much the -- had an administrative role rather than a decision making role on who gets the money and how much they get and what projects are priorities for those individual states.

Mr. Donaldson: And that's similar to the Gulf.

We're not deciding who gets the money, what the money is are going to be -- determine that because



they know best for their particular state.

Chair Runnebaum: Great, thank you.

Jim, you're up next.

And then, Tom, I see your hand as well.

So, we'll do Jim, Meredith, Tom.

Mr. Green: Hey, Dave, Jim Green from Destin. Good to see you again.

Mr. Donaldson: Yes, good seeing you.

Mr. Green: I had a question about -- I had two questions.

So, in the effort validation workshop, I heard you say, basically, it's going to be a suite of options which is nothing new to the Gulf. You've got five different states with five different opinions.

But is there anything that was glaringly obvious like a standout? And what was that? Or was it all pretty much kind of a hodge-podge of ideas?

Mr. Donaldson: There was -- I mean, there was a variety of different, you know, a lot of talk about using cameras and passes and using -- I think Florida and Alabama both utilize that now.

So, hearing about that.

It was really a mish-mash of things.

There was an interesting presentation from someone out of Louisiana that was using cell phone usage to determine use.

(Audio malfunction.)

Mr. Green: Oh, come back, Dave. He was just getting to the point.

(Laughter.)

Chair Runnebaum: Dave, you froze on us.

(Off-microphone comments.)

(Laughter.)

Chair Runnebaum: Bob, Meredith has extended the invitation for you to answer that.

Mr. Beal: I'm not sure where he was going, but apparently his Wi-Fi shuts off at 5:30 and they all go home from his office, so I'm not sure.

Mr. Green: Well, I have another question for Dave, but if we need to move on then maybe I can ask that if he pops back up.

(Off-microphone comments.)

(Laughter.)

Mr. Green: He was using his foot to turn off his --

Chair Runnebaum: Uh-huh, yes, he unplugged his computer.

Yes.

Mr. Green: Well, my other question to, if he comes back up, was in discards.

Was there any in the discard workshop, was there any discussion concerning degradation with discards?

She is a distraction.

So, in the discard workshop, was there any discussion of degradation being part of that discussion?

Mr. Dunn: I wasn't able to participate in it, so I can't answer that directly.

But again, I can get you an overview of --

Mr. Green: Here's your mic back, Katie.

(Laughter.)

Chair Runnebaum: Okay, okay, go for it.

Ms. Moore: Sorry, Russ.

So, I was going to ask about the line that they had in theirs about developing recreational data standards in their report out.

And I'm wondering if that's the same thing that you referred to in your presentation and if you know what role the Commission might play in that or implementing that?

That was the question I was going to ask.

So, is it going to the NAS first and then, we'll see what happens? Or how is that going?

Mr. Dunn: Yes, so, the NAS study, like we said, there's a contract that's being worked through. It should be -- the study should kick off in the beginning of the year. I think they're anticipating a year for the entire study to be concluded.

And so, as NAS does, I would expect that they're going to get out and not -- speak not only with other experts on standards, but also the Councils, Commissions, anglers, participants, to make sure that they're sort of realistic and useful, applicable standards.

(Off-microphone comments.)

Chair Runnebaum: Okay.

I'll give any last questions for Bob, otherwise, I think we can just move on.

Does anybody -- all right.

Bob, thank you so much for joining us and it's always a pleasure and enjoy AFS and we'll send our email questions to Dave.

Mr. Beal: Yes, I've been texting with Dave and he asked me if everybody kicked off and I said, no, just

you.

(Laughter.)

Mr. Beal: So, he may be trying to dial back in or maybe he's having a real internet problem, I don't know.

So, but if he doesn't, I'm going to hang around for a while.

But thank you all for the time.

And yes, real quick on degradation and discards, it -  
- discards are a huge issue on the East Coast as well as the Gulf.

You know, striped bass fishery, you know, I talked about earlier, 50 percent of the mortality from that whole fishery is discards, you know, released fish.

And you're trying to rebuild a stock and, you know, the discards are still there. So, the discard mortality is still there.

And so, it's a tough issue and degradation and especially, I don't know, from the Mid-Atlantic south it's becoming a much bigger issue that we're trying to sort out. It's a tough one.

So, we're all kind of misery loves company there, unfortunately.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you.

Did I see that Dave came back on? He's in the chat but he needs to be made a participant.

And Katie just disappeared.

Jim, let's get you a mic so you can ask your question again.

Mr. Green: Hey, Dave, you with us?

(Off-microphone comments.)

Mr. Green: There's no doubt he was kicking the power cord.

(Laughter.)

Chair Runnebaum: Dave, are you back with us?

Jim is just waiting to jump in and ask a second question.

Mr. Green: I'm very patient.

Mr. Fote: Dave's in the chat box.

Mr. Green: Yes, he might just be having --

Chair Runnebaum: Yes, okay.

So, Jim, we'll just do --

Mr. Green: It's fine, I'll bend his ear in November at the Gulf Council meeting.

Chair Runnebaum: Okay, great, thank you.

Okay, sorry, Dave.

If you can hear us, thank you very much. We appreciate you joining us.

And Jim is going to give you a pass and bug you another time.

Okay, I think we're going to turn it over to Emily now and get a budget update now.

NOAA Fisheries Budget Outlook (FY25) –  
Informational/Discussion

Ms. Menashes: All right, can y'all hear me?

Very good. And so, yes, I'm Emily Menashes. I'm the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Operations within NOAA Fisheries.

I've been in the job about a -- closer? There we go.

I've been in the job about a year. And for those of

you -- I'll just kind of explain a little bit of what that position is.

But I'm in the job that Paul Doremus had previously if that helps know what my set of responsibilities are.

But I have the operational aspects of NOAA Fisheries under my purview which includes our management and budget, administration, administrative functions, as well as our human capital, our communications, our -- and our IT work.

And then, programmatically, I have international affairs, trade, and commerce, our Office of Aquaculture and also law enforcement.

So, these are program offices that really kind of cut across fisheries responsibilities. They don't necessarily fit neatly under regulations or science that Sam and Cisco have.

So, just to give you a little bit of perspective.

So, those of you who've been on MAFAC before have seen versions of this presentation, but I'll also include a little information for those of you that are new to kind of give you some perspectives about the Fisheries budget overall.

So, for this, I'm going to go through sort of the budget time line. And this is something we kind of go through every year and we're dealing with multiple budgets at a period of -- at any point in time.

Also, we're at a point now where we have some various scenarios for what our FY25 budget would look like.

And for those of you who aren't familiar with the federal budget, we go from October 1st each year to September 30th. So, we are about done with the FY24 -- fiscal year '24 budget.

And October 1, we will start our FY25 budget.

So, we are weeks away from finishing all the

execution of our FY25 resources.

But we'll sort of talk a little bit about those different pieces and what '25 may look like.

And then, after that, sort of just kind of talk what's going -- what we think is coming.

All right, so, within the agency, we are almost always working in three, if not four, budget cycles at any given time.

So, right now, as I just mentioned, we are closing out our FY24 budget. And that is -- those books close at the end of September.

This has been a particularly challenging year for us because within the Department of Commerce, some of you may know this, we transitioned to several new financial systems. So, it's created a lot of heartache and headaches and just transitional changes, both adapting to a new system, people learning how to use it, and making sure everything's working.

We are also right now in the process of the FY25 budget development.

And so, that's broken down into a number of phases.

The first starts with kind of, well, where we are in '25 is basically the President's budget was submitted to Congress last -- late winter, last spring. And Congress has, from about March on to be looking at the different agency budgets.

Committees look at aspects of the budget request from the President.

And they're also both on the House side and the Senate side, they'll do independent marks -- what are called marks of the budget.

And then, theoretically, by October 1st, they are supposed to appropriate budgets for the federal agencies.

And that does -- almost never happens by October 1st.

And so, then, we will have what is called a Continuing Resolution which is much better than a shutdown which is the other option that might happen if Congress doesn't do their work on time.

The other part of the process that we're in right now is FY26, which is really a formulation phase.

And so, where we are, generally, in the spring, we start developing within NOAA what we would like to ask for.

And then, at some point, that request goes to the Department of Commerce and they look at it and they mess with it a little bit.

And then, at some point, it goes to the Office of Personnel Management -- or sorry, Office of Management and Budget, OMB, and they will then also look at that budget.

And eventually, that gets turned into the President's budget.

Normally, the President's budget is supposed to be issued in early February.

This year, because it's an election year, we would expect that that would probably be later.

We're going to have a new administration one way or the other. And so, that administration's going to probably want to look at everything and put their mark on it as well.

So then, after the President's budget goes to Congress and we start that process.

And then, we also are thinking ahead in terms of FY27. This would still be very internal to the agency. Or as we hear things and ideas that you all have and we start to think about how -- what we might need in terms of planning or what we might want to ask



for.

So, as I mentioned, for us, we're very close to the end of FY24. All of our contracts, all of our grants, those have been submitted, hopefully, executed or very close to being executed.

We received a House mark on June 9th and a Senate mark on July 25th. And I'll talk about those a little bit more.

But we're still waiting for Congress to conference, which is for the House and the Senate to get together and decide where they're going to end up and for them, again, to make a final decision.

Okay, so, I want to give you a little bit of view of how the Fisheries budget is actually structured.

And again, I know some of you have seen this before, but some of you are new to this.

So the four circles you see here are really the four main budget activities around which our budget is structured.

And if you look at our congressional justification, which is also called our budget request, you'll see that our budget is presented this way as well.

So, protected resources, fishery science and management, enforcement, and habitat conservation and restoration.

So, you can't see it on the screen, but if you zoom in on the presentation, you can, within each of these programmatic activities, we also have budget lines, also called PPAs, which stand for programs, projects, and activities, you want to know what an acronym means.

But those are basically the budget lines that we have within that.

We basically -- we have to spend budget within the lines by which -- under which they're appropriated.

So, we don't have the flexibility to take something from an enforcement and put it towards protected resources.

If you need to do that, you can go to Congress and ask for reprogramming. That's a different process.

But for the most part, you have to spend according to how the budget is appropriated within those PPAs or those budget lines.

And while sometimes we have a lot of flexibility, we also sometimes get congressional direction about what we should do and how we should spend some of the funds within those lines as well.

I'll also comment that this is a regular annual appropriated budget structure.

When we have things -- when you hear about supplementals, for example, the Inflation Reduction Act, or the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, those were separate budget processes. They don't necessarily follow this kind of structure and they have different rules and different structures and different direction that come with them.

Okay, so, shifting towards a little bit of the numbers, so this is giving -- this is focusing on our -- on the left, there's some graphs that are showing kind of the budget numbers we've had by these budget activities in the last couple of years.

And then, the donut on the right is giving a view of what our operations, research, and facilities budget, our ORF, which is basically our entire budget is ORF.

There's some other parts of the NOAA that have PAC money which is procurement and construction.

And that's basically for building things.

So, if you're building a ship, if you're building a satellite, you get PAC money.

So, it's just a different budget account.

But all of our budget is, for the most part, is under ORF, what we call ORF.

So, the majority of our budget, 65, 70 percent, is in the fishery, science, and management line.

The other major chunk is in protected resources.

And then, you see how that's broken down also between habitat and enforcement as part of the whole pie.

So, our FY24 enacted budget, so that was the budget that Congress passed, was about \$1.1 billion.

And we had a relatively modest net increase of \$20.5 million above the FY23 enacted.

That was also below the President's budget that was submitted.

So, even though we knew it was in the President's budget and we had input into that, but that doesn't necessarily mean that that's what we're going to get or that the Congress is going to give us the same direction that was asked for in the President's budget.

The other thing I'll just point out and it's our asterisked in here, we also had \$46 million in community -- what did they call it, community funded projects, also formerly known as earmarks, that directed us to do that.

But that's not included in the \$1.1 million. That's sort of a separate piece of money.

Okay, so, breaking down the increase that we had in '24, we had kind of a number of things, but one of the things that I just want to point out, and again, this kind of goes to the point I made earlier is that, none of the money that we got here as increases were actually something that we were -- we requested in the President's budget.

So, you have to adjust and adapt and take that direction.

Sorry, I'm looking at a note that I have.

So, in terms of the activity, the biggest chunk kind of at the bottom was \$10 million which was directed to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission for repair and renovation of infrastructure, supporting sustainable fisheries.

We also received \$5 million to stand up an Aquaculture Cooperative Institute.

There were some increases for Pacific salmon.

And you can see some of the other pieces up there as well.

And that did income with also a reduction to some of our budget lines as well.

So, this was kind of where we ended up in terms of the change between our '23 enacted and our '24 budget that we've -- we're wrapping up the execution of this year.

So, starting to look ahead a little bit at what we might be looking at for '25.

And if any of you have a crystal ball, please share it with us because the more you have -- information you have about what you're actually going to do, the easier it is to plan and the quicker you can move forward on things.

So, what we saw for this year is, When we started with the President's budget, that was actually a \$9.7 million reduction from what we had from our FY24 enacted.

And some of this is, you know, within -- while information and sort of direction have -- within the internal budget process kind of flows up and down, we know of things that we'd like to ask for and we try and reflect those in the requests that go kind of up the process to NOAA and DOC and OMB.

But we also get a lot of direction coming down.

Some of that, and I -- it's escaping me what it was called, but when, you know, kind of Congress and the President agreed to sort of budget ceilings, right, and so, then, OMB takes that, and when they're giving guidance to the agencies, they're kind of giving the agencies a ceiling to which they can submit requests for.

And there may also be other administration priorities that they want to see budget requests for.

So, we can't always necessarily ask for everything we would want, both because we're often not allowed to request above a certain amount, and also because, sometimes, we're directed to request things that meet administration priority.

So, it's a balance and there's a lot of back and forth in that federal budget bureaucracy.

So, one of the things that you'll notice here, which is a challenge, so for the FY25 House mark, it was almost \$250 million less than the enacted budget we have this year, which is a very big drop that would have significant impact across about all of our program areas if that came to pass.

The Senate mark, on the other hand, is \$43 million above what the President even asked for.

And so, that gives us another extreme for what we could potentially request or what we might eventually get.

So, it's going to be somewhere between the House mark and the Senate mark, which is a really wide -- almost a \$300 million spread in what we could be spending next year, which is substantial.

We're a \$1 billion agency, roughly. That's, you know, almost a 30 percent difference in, you know, on knowing now what we might need to be planning for and executing next year.

So, it's a big swing. And like, so as I said, if any of

you have crystal ball, we would love to get a little glimpse in that.

Okay, I think this is really just, you know, can give a little bit more detail, if you're really into the numbers, about how -- the differences between that.

So, just to kind of give you a sense qualitatively of what's in the different pieces, the President's budget for FY25 had two main increases for us in priority areas.

There was about \$25 million -- \$24.6 for offshore wind. And that went both for protected species, environmental reviews and science, for fishery science and reviews, scientific survey, mitigation, and fisheries management programs and services.

And then, there was also a \$10 million increase in the President's budget for Mitchell Act Hatch on the West Coast.

In terms of the House mark, it has a few programmatic increases for wind energy.

It actually provides some -- what are called ATBs, adjustments to base for Councils and Commissions, which are basically inflationary costs.

But it also has about \$50 million of new directed spending within our base funds and also significant cuts across almost all of the PPAs that we have.

The Senate mark also funded the Mitchell act Hatcheries, as requested in the President's budget, provided funding for the ATBs for the Councils and Commissions, and, you know, also that's kind of the big changes within that budget line as well.

So, looking ahead, this is -- Congress is just back in session. However, we don't know -- they don't have a schedule that I'm aware of. Maybe something happened in the last day or two about when there will be an FY25 Conference Committee, which is when the House and the Senate will come together.

We're also looking at an election year which puts another level of complexity in terms of, you know, are the parties willing to come together and come up with either a CR or an appropriation when they all sort of have some incentive to kind of wait and see what happens in the election process.

And that's not necessarily just the Presidential election outcomes, it could also be, you know, what happens in terms of the House or the Senate.

So, again, a lot of uncertainty.

I think we are certainly expecting we'll have a Continuing Resolution, a CR. How long that would go, sometimes, CRs turn into a full year appropriation which is helpful because that's -- if there's a lot of flux and it's going to take them a long time to figure that out, at least, generally, a CR is equivalent to last year's appropriations. So, it gives you some stability, at least an understanding where you might put your resources.

But again, having that unknown makes that planning really, really challenging.

So, you know, one of the other things that we're all starting to isn't necessarily developing new budget priorities, but thinking about how we would convey the priorities that we have, sort of the core needs for the agency to a new administration and how those might fit within a new administration's priorities as well.

So, just before we open up for questions, there were just a couple of other things that weren't directly -- indirectly related to this presentation that I wanted to comment on, I -- one of the things was just I wanted to thank MAFAC for the letter that you all put together last year that was submitted in December that really was kind of outlining some of the priority areas that you really felt should be taken into account.

It may not seem like that yielded immediate results,

because it didn't. But I think just to say that those things are actually really helpful. It's a really nice summary of some of the things that are really important to meet the current and the future needs for fisheries management.

And it's incredibly helpful for us to have that kind of documented support and justification for why those activities are important.

And, you know, one of the aspects of having something like that is it's available to use when we have the opportunity to need it.

I think the last budget cycle of an administration is always challenging because they're trying to get that last marker down of those big priorities that they had.

And so, while it may not feel that that work paid off, it is incredibly useful for us to have that.

And, you know, we -- it is something also that a number of the things that you all called out in that document are things that internally we are working on, both related to fleet, to our data modernization, to, you know, survey, improving surveys, and all of that.

So, the fact that we are working on those things internally, but then, we also have sort of an externally validated group that says, yes, keep, doing those things.

It's not necessarily only helpful for if we get an opportunity to ask for things, but it also can be very helpful if we're asked to provide offsets, you know, basically take reductions to pay for something else, to say, no, we can't affect this. And look, we have this other group that says we have to continue to doing this work, so we can't cut this.

So, there's different ways that information like that can be very helpful as we support what we need. So, just wanted to put that out there. The other thing that we talked about last fall with all of you was the



process we were just starting to develop program plans. And we started them on five areas, focusing on IUU fishing, illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing, aquaculture, fishery surveys, Right Whales, and consultations. And we have been working on those. We're not yet at the point where we're ready to kind of roll those out externally. But we are still interested in engaging MAFAC on that.

I would say that, across the five programs plans that we were testing out, there -- they all sort of have some different purposes.

They're still intended to kind of help coordinate some program areas that work across our different regions and centers and offices.

And then, one of the aspects of all of them is trying to articulate what we would be able to accomplish with the resources we have right now, what might happen if we don't get inflationary adjustments to those resources or real spending power goes down.

But what also might happen, if we have increases, if we had more resources, where would we put that?

And part of that is, when it comes to the federal budget process, we're often very limited in what we, as an agency, can say.

However, these were documents that are also intended to be kind of outside of a specific President's budget request or budget justification so that we can start to talk about what you might get with some more investment or less investment.

And so, we are still working on those and we haven't forgotten about them. And I think they are -- the ones that I'm involved with are shaping up to be, I think, really useful documents and really helpful, both from an internal coordination standpoint, as well as for some external communication when we get to the point of being able to share those more broadly.

So, those were just sort of two budget adjacent

things that I wanted to mention.

And happy to open it up for questions.

Chair Runnebaum: Great. Thank you so much, Emily.

I see that we have a few questions already. And I think I'm going to ask the first question.

Ms. Menashes: Okay, you can do that as Chair.

Chair Runnebaum: I really appreciate you indicating that our letter from last November/December was really helpful in your budgeting process.

And I think that I've been trying to figure out a way to be a real cheerleader and champion for NOAA fisheries and getting the budgets that are needed to provide the services to the nation that are critical to keeping communities on the coast alive and well. So maybe you can't answer this question, but is there a timing that's really specific that would be helpful? And would it be helpful to have that input on an annual basis?

Ms. Menashes: So the development of our internal budget is kind of really between, it's kind of in the, in the spring. And again, it's a sort of once the President's Budget is out, the President's Budget is out. So right now, for example, and even for us, the FY 26 budget is sort of already within the administrative process.

So we've already submitted up the chain the requests that might make it into the President's Budget. So I think, yes, it is actually helpful to have that kind of information on a regular basis. And I think the one thing in this, I think a little bit with you was, yeah, maybe digging into the budget subcommittee about how to do that.

One of the things that I think is helpful is also having that consistency. So I don't think it's necessarily necessary to have sort of a new budget memo every year that highlights different things. And in fact, you

know, being able to sort of refine some of the things that you were pushing for in this, the one that you did last year.

And really sort of focusing on, I think, having people explain how the work that we're doing affects them and their communities. A lot of the information that we explained today and making that a bit more real. And it could be within the administration.

It could also potentially be folks outside, you know, on the Hill that see that information from another perspective. So it's hard to say exactly when. You know, in terms of potentially influencing the President's Budget, that would be like a spring, late winter, spring kind of input.

If there's opportunities to influence the Hill, that would be kind of late spring, summer, over their work. But, yeah, happy to talk more about how we could kind of build upon what you all did last year.

Chair Runnebaum: Great. Thank you. I think that's in Brett's wheelhouse.

Okay. So, Christina. The cards that I had come up -- okay, not Christina. We have a hangover card here.

Brett, you're first up. Sorry.

Mr. Veerhusen: No, all good. Thank you. That was helpful. And I did hear that some of our recommendations are being used within the, you know, programmatic plans.

And I think the intent of the letter that we put together was for it to be a useful external -- internal versus external communications has been occasional for me to understand the limitations of the agency on how you communicate your needs through the budget and to Congress.

And what I'm hearing throughout this meeting is a lack of awareness, appreciation, and cheerleaders in Congress when the budgets are batted back and forth

between both chambers and coincide with the President's Budget.

And so, and then what I haven't heard this meeting was another strong focus of our letter was around the NAPA report and next steps, especially around congressional communications and external communications that were outlined in the NAPA report.

And so, the NAPA report. I'm going to be, sorry, using some -- just to move kind of quickly, I'll send the letter to new members after this. But the NAPA report had some clear kind of gaps for the agency around devising and implementing a more robust and comprehensive congressional engagement strategy and then around external communications of developing and implementing a comprehensive external budgetary communications strategy.

So, the NAPA report was helpful as a tool to kind of outline what the agency kind of needs, can do better. And, but the agency is also hamstrung by maybe being able to do that super well to Congress, but Congress holds the purse strings.

And so, I'm still confused. You know, that part is -- and so, I'm going to say that we are kind of your cheerleaders, but also sort of like your annoying kind of angry coach of like, yes, I get it, but the job still isn't being done right or as right as it could be. And that's the piece that I keep struggling with. And this isn't, this is kind of just me talking out loud and kind of walk myself through the process that we're in so that we can find a really helpful solution together.

This is not a, you know, sword of Damocles thing here, because it's consistent with getting the attention of decision makers, making a budgetary decision over a billion dollars for an agency that oversees all the different resources that we all care about, that is stagnant, that budget is naturally lower because of inflation and other needs.

And I just have, and these program plans are being

developed, hopefully with a forward thinking strategy, which I'm hearing, and that's the part that I really like, is like, if you don't fund this, this is what you're going to lose.

Or if you miss out on funding extra, this is what you're saying you're okay giving up, something that we heard from Dr. Spinrad as a way to communicate is, if you don't fund this, what you're telling me is that you're okay giving up this really critical strategy or this really critical component.

So it kind of backs, it's sort of an if-then sort of statement, and it puts people in a position to answer difficult questions. And so my difficult question still remains around the budgetary process and what our abilities as a FACA, and then giving advice to the Secretary of Commerce that can be useful for the agency in communicating what is difficult through ledge affairs. Do you have any suggestions?

Ms. Menashes: I think you've articulated very well what's very hard about working in the federal budget process that is just as challenging kind of from an internal perspective as it can be from an external perspective.

And I think, as you said, to me that's one of the strengths, potential strengths of the program plans. And again, these are just sort of five relatively discreet areas of the work that we're doing. And, you know, is being able to have that conversation about, well, what you could buy with a little bit more and what you're not going to, what we just can't deliver. And how do you manage those expectations and get people externally to understand that if they want to influence those expectations, you know, there's a way to do that without, you know, necessarily talking about specific budget asks because we're not allowed to do that unless it's part of the President's Budget. So I would love to kind of dig into this more with you and figure out how to do that.

And I'll have to admit I'm not as familiar with what a FACA can or can't do. Also, in terms of that, you

know, in terms of, I mean, obviously you can write letters to the Secretary, but, you know, can you write a letter to the Hill? I don't know. I'd have to turn to Heidi, but I don't think so. There's rules there that you all have, too. There's so many rules.

So, yeah, I think, but you've exactly articulated a lot of the challenges. There's so many needs across the agency. And that's just within the fishery service.

And you look at NOAA and you look at all of this, and it's really hard to figure out how to have a good, clear message about how we should be moving forward. So, yeah. Sorry for a non-answer to that angry cheerleader kind of thing, yeah.

Mr. Veerhusen: I just needed to be sure I'm processing correctly.

Ms. Menashes: You are.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you. Okay. I have Meredith, then Bobby, then Pat, then Jim. Ms. Moore: Hello. I have a few things. I'll do them quickly. So the first one is, I think on the, I do really love when you all innovated, like, the multi-timeline slide and sort of showing that. That's been so helpful ever since. I think it would be interesting to figure out how to overlay where the IRA funds start to end on that timeline so that we could see.

And also, I will say, I think since you all experienced such unfortunate delays getting those funds out, I think a lot of folks are confused about when they actually do go away, if it is the sort of statutory deadline or if there's sort of a tail, and you don't have to answer that now. But I'm just saying, like, I don't think we know. And filling us in on that, I think, would be helpful.

That's thing one. Thing two is that I do appreciate why the agency is so focused on the President's Budget. I think it's been really difficult for a lot of folks to figure out how to successfully engage in the President's Budget externally.

One idea that I had is that it might be interesting to think about, certainly the OMB and OSTP have had major priorities that they have been interested in doing.

I think it might be interesting to consider whether inviting someone from one of those offices to a MAFAC meeting to share about their ocean priorities might give us an opportunity to also share with them about our concerns around budget and that sort of thing.

So an agenda, possible suggestion for the future to make that connection a little bit more robust. It will also obviously depend upon administration transition and priorities and that sort of thing. But just sort of putting a pin in there as an idea, that's thing two.

Thing three, again, given the disconnect with Congress and the President's Budget, they do not fund the things that you ask them to fund and they tell you a bunch of things that you have to do very specifically and that's very challenging for all of you.

So I hope that the agency takes things like the program plans really seriously as far as a jumping off point to provide those of us or those members of the public who can advocate to Congress more freely opportunities to show the priority needs of the agency outside of your existing timelines.

I have found in the past, I think you guys are hoping to do better, but I've found that you are more focused or so overwhelmed with working on Prez Bud stuff that you don't always give us what we need to explain agency successes and needs outside of that timeline.

And I do like that you're creating these program plans to do that. But I will also note that the program plans are not addressing core programmatic needs yet in many ways. They're like, you know, things that you want to do, but it's not like we've spent three days here talking about, you know, a lot of things that are profoundly lacking.

It's certainly the survey one I think is really important and looking forward to seeing that. But there's a lot of work that you all do that needs to be articulated as far as the need as well. Emily, I've talked about this with you separately, like what does fisheries like what does it mean to do sustainable fisheries?

Well, maybe you can do one around climate ready fisheries or something like that. I do think we need to find a way to queue up some of these big systematic fundamental issues as well as you're working through the program plans. Those are my comments. Thank you.

Ms. Menashes: Just one thing I'll say in terms of the IRA tail. And so we have, I think, until the end of FY 26 to obligate all of the IRA funds in terms of expenditure. It kind of depends on how it's obligated.

So if it's money we're spending internally, there's that clock. If it's, you know, grant contracts, sometimes those have longer tails. So a lot of the grant money has more time to spend. It doesn't have to be done by FY 26. So a lot of our big push has been getting the grants out so that that work can start. But that will extend.

But you're right. And a lot of us are, you know, have been thinking about how do you how you expend the IRA money in a way that it has the longer term benefits and all of that. So but just to give you a sense of that. And it's a very gross level. But, yeah, we can look at also adding another piece to the table.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you. Bobbi.

Ms. Hudson: Thank you, Emily. Yeah. So our last MAFAC meeting, which was virtual, was my first meeting, and we got to see the line items of different programs that were proposed for additions and cuts.

And I was particularly keyed into one of them that has been very important to my organization. So I run the Pacific Shellfish Institute. We've been around for 30 years. And I've been running the organization for



10 years. I've been there for 18 years.

During that 18 years, one of our most important sources of income has been Saltonstall-Kennedy program grants. And we use those grants to support shellfish producers and their research needs for, you know, applied science related to growing methods, diseases, harmful algal blooms.

But we also support regulators for shellfish producers in filling information gaps related to habitat. So my question is, what is the status of S-K right now? There was an RFP for pre-proposals that went out and people applied.

But the research community didn't seem to be broadly aware that that program is proposed for cutting. So where are we at now? Obviously, you don't know what is going to be in the final budget. But any comments on that?

Ms. Menashes: I actually think we'll have to get back to you on that. I don't have -- I mean, that's a, it's a complicated program in the sense of how it kind of interacts with -- I think Linda was explaining this. You know, how it interacts with USDA and the tariffs and what we actually get.

And then also Congress can sort of use some of those funds and decide how much from that fund overall they kind of use for the agency budget and then how much is left over for the grant program itself. And that's what sort of varies every year.

And so I know that the review, you know, the folks reviewing the grants that was over the summer in the last month or two. But I don't have a specific information. So we could get back to you on kind of exactly where that is in the process unless you --

Ms. Coit: I might be a bit, but I just want to emphasize the bottom line, which is that is a very popular program with many, many more needs than the money we get. In the end, Congress decides how much money is in that.

So there is often a dynamic where things, as pointed out, are not funded in the President's Budget. But if Congress thinks cooperative research is important, they'll fund it. If Congress thinks S-K grants are important, they'll fund it.

So even when internally we're frustrated or externally folks are frustrated, the rubber meets the road in what Congress appropriates. And that is the place where that can be influenced. Now, Heidi wanted to say that MAFAC cannot lobby. However, as individuals or through your organizations, you have other opportunities.

Ms. Menashes: Thanks for that clarification. That's what I thought, but I was like, oh, yeah.

Chair Runnebaum: If you need advice on how to stay within the FACA regulations on advocating to Congress, Heidi will advise you on that.

Ms. Lovett: Hi. So the MAFAC as a body cannot -- none of you individually can go and say, I represent MAFAC and this is what we have said and done. You can use the information that MAFAC has published and is on the website, your recommendations. You can share those and it's available to the public and it's available to members of Congress equally.

But you can't represent and say you can't go before a member of Congress and say you represent this body or that you represent our agency in any fashion. But as individuals, you have the full opportunity to do whatever grassroots lobbying you might normally do.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you.

Jim. No, Pat, you were next. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Dr. Sullivan: So Emily, thank you very much for the presentation. And it's always good to get these things. And I'm going to ask about a specific element because it was part of our strategic planning and budget request.

And last year at this time, I was aware that surveys were at 70 percent of coverage overall. And I was curious what the funding set aside for surveys is this time around.

And one of the things, I know I've talked with Cisco about this too, but I'm just sort of echoing what I've been hearing around the room. We just heard from Bob Beal about not having some survey information there. We talked about the survey that was missing here that resulted in us being unaware of what was happening with the crab collapse.

And in many ways, it's the baseline information for what we're doing. I understand we're in transition in terms of trying to modernize the fleet and other alternative ways of actually gathering information.

But we're kind of flying blind. And I know that surveys are not very glamorous in some sense, but they're the baseline of what we're doing. So if we could talk about that a little bit, that would be great. Thanks.

Ms. Menashes: I mean, I think in the overall budget, actually, that's an activity that generally has pretty good support. I mean, not necessarily. We might all think about what we would ideally like in that line to be able to cover everything at the rate that we would like to cover it.

But it's a budget line that is relatively consistent. And I think we also have areas that have received support for increases. That kind of is one. Because I do think people understand the foundational nature of that information.

It doesn't necessarily mean it's coming at the level and the granularity that we would all like or you all might like as well. But I'm not quite sure. So I don't know if that exactly answers your question. I'm not sure what you mean by the 70 percent.

Dr. Sullivan: My understanding was last year that coverage, survey coverage was 70 percent of what is

expected. And obviously, right, right? And then, of course, one of the other things that was raised was that we used to have a higher coverage in Alaska than we have in the past. So hearing consistent funding means to me not enough coverage for the survey, which is the baseline of what we gather for making decisions.

Dr. Werner: Yeah, if I could -- may I? If I could jump in. Yeah, that 70 percent number for a couple of years, if not more, there were issues having to do with being able to staff the ships from actual OMAO, having issues having to do with wage mariners and other issues that have been overcome largely.

So this year, for example, I think we're much better than we're aiming at higher than that 70 percent. So there's been a good deal of effort to try to overcome some of that from OMAO's side. And so they, you know, they deserve, you know, good kudos for that.

You know, we're -- as I've also -- as I also mentioned, perhaps in previous meetings, we're also anticipating going into this period of the midlife repairs, which is going to challenge us in terms of being able to keep up with the ways that we need to do.

We're juggling things. And I talked a little bit about that yesterday and how we're consolidating or integrating surveys so that ships do become available to come up to Alaska.

But it's something that we watch quite closely to make sure that we keep up the tempo that we need. Thanks.

Dr. Sullivan: How much coverage do you have?

Dr. Werner: Coverage this year?

Dr. Sullivan: Yeah.

Dr. Werner: I think, you know, it's -- we're almost done with this year. I'm estimating that it'll be in the high 80 percent, close to 90 percent. So, again, it

was a very good year in terms of being able to make up some of the things that we did in the past.

Dr. Sullivan: That's a useful message. Thanks.

Chair Runnebaum: Okay. I'm going to, Jennifer, I'm going to have Jennifer go first since Fred's already spoken and Jamie is

-- Jennifer.

Ms. Hagen: I'm just a little confused because I heard Bob say survey coverage was down by 80 percent. No? Okay. This is something that is very dear to my heart, this coverage of getting the survey work done when you're hearing that it's decreasing.

So you're saying this year looked good. The ships are in good shape. We've got new ships coming online in the future, right? There's some ships being built.

Dr. Werner: Yeah. So first, yes. So in terms of where we are in coverage, as I said, we're above 80 percent this year. It was actually, like I said, a lot of, you know, a lot of progress was made. In terms of new ships for fisheries, the current plan has new ships for fisheries sometime after 2030.

So there are new ships being built that are going to be ocean-going vessels, so further offshore that are not fisheries vessels. There's charting vessels, hydrographic vessels that are being built. So there's basically a fleet recapitalization that's happening right now.

And the schedule has the fisheries vessels coming online after 2030. What will happen starting in 2026 is what we refer to as a midlife repair of the Alaska vessel, the Dyson.

And that's the one that we're making sure that we can back up or provide a backup to by bringing one of the vessels from the west coast up to Alaska to do the work that the Dyson would have done.

Ms. Hagen: So is that the Shimada will come --

Dr. Werner: Yes.

Ms. Hagen: -- further north and working off --

Dr. Werner: Correct. So the Shimada will come up and do the work that the Dyson would have done starting in 2026 and possibly 2026-2027. So possibly two years, which means then that the Lasker will have to do the combined work of the Shimada and the Lasker along the west coast.

Ms. Hagen: So I know they're doing some of this combining and then doing some vessel contractual work to try to fill in some of the gaps, at least further to the south.

Dr. Werner: Yeah, absolutely. Yes. So we -- yeah, thanks. So Emily's reminding me that under the IRA support that we received, we have under the essential data acquisition component, we have an element that's called data mitigation or survey mitigation.

And we're using some of that already to do some charter support for vessels in the North Pacific involving several science centers. So, yeah, so the IRA mining is helping us bridge some of those challenges.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you. Natasha, did you have something to contribute on that survey aspect before we --

Ms. Hayden: Thank you. I think Cisco covered it, but I know that my understanding is is that because of the -- there was three vessels, one of the vessels went offline.

And so the question about even at 100 percent funding would not provide 100 percent coverage because we don't have enough vessels to have gotten to get 100 percent coverage. And I think that there's you know, so you mentioned that there's vessels that are in process of being constructed.

But I think because of the -- because of the aging infrastructure vessels and personnel and increased costs that even if you've got static funding that you're not going to get the same level of surveys, and then, you know, because of those other factors, it's just significantly lower than what Alaska needs for effective fisheries management.

Dr. Werner: Yeah. And so, for example, Bob talked yesterday a little bit about the survey modernization. That survey modernization is, again, partly to offset and to redesign surveys that were used, that used to be done with more than one survey or more than one vessel with one vessel, understanding how we can sample better, how we can use better instruments and so on and so forth.

So that, that is part of trying to, again, make up for some of the perhaps, as you say, net loss and how many vessels we would have had otherwise. So the modernization is another aspect of this data mitigation that we're using to try to make up for that.

But there definitely is, you know, some loss of vessel capability that we're trying to make up through either additional ways of doing surveys or through moving vessels around.

Chair Runnebaum: Great. Thank you. Brett.

Mr. Veerhusen: Yeah, thank you. I'm going to just channel my inner Natasha and just say, while we have you, I want to use this time the best we can, so excuse me for taking up extra time for another question. So my request, it's kind of a question as well, but while developing the program plans, if there's an opportunity for MAFAC to have any chance to review and provide input prior to their public release, or if there's a way to provide input, I think that that would be fantastic. I understand some sensitivity potentially around those, so I'm just going to put that request out there as a hope.

And then around, going back to the NAPA report recommendations around communications, both

externally and to Congress, it seems like those program plans would be great tools for both internal and external communications, and so making sure that those are being distributed to the right people through the agency, but also making sure that the public understands what those are, and kind of understands the value of those tools. We as MAFAC members can do that as well, we may be able to think about how to make public letters of support that are within our FACA guidelines to elevate that. So I'm just kind of thinking out loud, but I do want to make sure that the hard work you're developing, and like that fiscally informed budget planning, I want to make sure that that is used internally of course, but understood externally, for all your kind of external parties, and I want to help, and I want to help do that and think that through.

And I also want -- a lot of what MAFAC puts out, it is sent to the secretary, and we do hear eventually when it's sent, and hopefully some reactions. I would love to think of ways in which the work that we do is also, I know it's publicly available, but quite frankly, most people, a lot of people in Kodiak didn't know what MAFAC was. But a lot of work goes in, and there's a lot of great expertise around the room across all different sectors, and I would love to think of ways in which we can have MAFAC's work be shared and understood externally, because if those are tools that can be used externally to lots of other stakeholders, and they are developed by trusted people within all of our respective communities, that should be known, and I'd love to see that.

So I'm just kind of thinking through some ways in which we can work together on meeting those NAPA report requests, I'd love an update at the next meetings as to kind of how the NAPA report implementation recommendations are being done within the Agency. I know that was a request last meeting and I haven't heard any mention of the NAPA report, on just getting updates on how that's going within the agency, so I'd love a request for that next meeting, and especially around the -- I am



particularly interested around the communications part of communicating to the public and to Congress, especially with your program plans. So, thanks.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you. Okay, Jaime, I think I might let you have the last word before break, so no pressure. Sorry.

Ms. Diamond: I get it, thank you. I just want to kind of bring it up that most of the survey work and the funding for those surveys is geared towards commercial fisheries, at least on the West Coast, and we have had a huge problem with getting appropriate surveys done for the recreationally important groundfish species on the West Coast because they're in the near shore, however it is not determined wholly or in part or what the makeup is of inside outside state waters, so we have some pretty severe management measures that are in place because of that. And so I know that I just would like to see a little more opportunity for recreationally important surveys, have a seat at the table. That's it, thank you. And the schedule and the timeline of when we can engage to get that out there, thank you.

Chair Runnebaum: Okay, let's take a 10 minute break as we have scheduled, so let's come back at 3:40, and I think that directly following our break is an opportunity for public comment. So we'll be a little bit ahead of schedule for public comment, we'll have that start around 3:40. Thanks everybody.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 3:31 p.m. and returned at 3:47 p.m.)

#### Public Comment

Chair Runnebaum: Okay, thank you all. Okay so we are going to open up for public comment, I think we have three commenters, and I think we're starting with Clayton, then Rebecca, then Patty, and if there's anybody online that would like to comment, go ahead and indicate your interests and we can get that situated. So Clayton, are you ready my friend? Okay. There's a podium up here, we'll get you a

microphone, and I just want to say thank you to members of the public who have been participating and are interested in commenting, so thank you.

Mr. Hevly: Can you guys hear me okay? So I'm passing around my public comments, because I'm expecting to mess this up here. So my name is Clayton Hevly, I work here in Kodiak for Alaska Pacific Seafoods, and I've heard a lot of really good questions here the last few days, I really wanted to take a second to say thank you to everyone for your time traveling. Some of you came from a really long ways away, and I realize you might not necessarily be experts in Alaska, but you are all experts in your own regions, so I think some of the questions that you ask here are especially important, because we kind of become nose blind sometimes to the things right in front of us, so it is really helpful to have you guys here.

One of the questions that I keep hearing is what is a climate ready fishery? So for me, climate ready fisheries are supported by climate ready communities that are balanced and adaptable. I believe Kodiak is a real life example of a functioning, climate resilient community. Using Kodiak to model a climate ready community, we see a diverse portfolio of species, gear types, and sustainable infrastructure, too. This unique fishing community has weathered many challenging market conditions over the last several years as it has seen major changes in processing facilities, shipping challenges, and labor shortages.

As a primary processor in this community, we have adopted an inward thinking strategy for the future direction of our operation in Kodiak, take care of our local workforce and our fishermen to the best we can. We can't control all the variables out in the world market, but we can control what we do in house, we can focus on taking care of the people who come to work every day, whether it's in our processing plant or on the water. We have had to make tough choices, like knowing that we're going to lose money, but understanding that we need to continue operating to

support our staff, fishermen, and customers. Living on a rock really makes you think about your neighbors and the community.

Alaska Pacific Seafoods offers health insurance and 401k for our full-time employees. Our work force is about 200 strong. The families are covered with health insurance and their kids benefit from the education system here in Kodiak. It's not just a seasonal port, this is a home. I believe more social science can help us identify indicators that will shed light on community wellbeing. For instance, we can look at education in fishing communities, average household income, and health insurance coverage. We should be able to assign a score and a scale that helps us track inclines or declines in community wellbeing and understand how our policy actions trickle down to communities. We often think about protecting fish, but we also need to think about protecting people.

Kodiak has been forward thinking in efforts to develop sustainable energy. We process fish with almost 100% green energy, and yet we continue to struggle with processing innovations and market challenges. The department can help identify and scale green energy usage and help promote sustainably process seafood products that domestic customers will be proud to buy. I believe if a customer has a decision between a protein source with a high carbon footprint versus a protein source with a low one, they're going to choose the lower carbon footprint protein, even if it's a little more expensive.

American is not the best quality in global seafood, and I don't think that we should assume that we have things figured out or what we're doing is the right way. We should remain humble, we should remain curious, and we should look at sustainable practices in other places. Climate change is bringing new protein sources to our waterfronts, and we need to be able to adapt and use what we're presented with tomorrow. We can never go back to the way things

were. Some fish species might not be here tomorrow, they might not be able to survive future ocean conditions, so I think our policy needs to be able to adapt to the way things are, not the way things were. I like this quote, 'we are being asked to make hard decisions with imperfect information.' It was in a movie I was watching the other night, an admiral was trying to tell a submarine captain how he can never say 'I don't know,' because you're never going to have perfect information, but you have to make real decisions. So we're kind of like admirals and submarine captains here.

So how can the department and you guys here around the table make a difference? I've got one idea. I said to understand our impact on resources and minimize bycatch, we can be using our assets for in season management, like the pollock fishery that we're doing right now, we can be directing fishing on good, clean schools of fish where bycatch is minimal, we can be monitoring bottom contact in real time and studying effects on sea floor. This could all be happening with vessels already in Alaska.

This management tool will allow directed fishing on good, clean fish. Harvester vessels would burn less fuel looking for fish if they're directed to targeted species, and processors would benefit from increased fish quality. The science community would benefit from real time data and the ability to pause a fisher if the in-season data shows that the stocks are behaving abnormally. I believe that we need this balancing flexibility to help strengthen our industry's resilience to climate change. Thank you, I'll take any questions.

(Applause.)

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you, Clayton for pulling together such really thoughtful comments, and I like how today and yesterday people have been prompted to answer what is climate ready fisheries for us, so thank you for taking that initiative. I think we're going to hold on questions, we're going to allow for

public comment. Okay, hold on Clayton, hold on, hold on. If people have a couple of questions, I saw Brett and Pat both had some -- no Pat, okay. We're going to give you one question, I'm sorry.

Dr. Sullivan: Hi. So thank, Clayton, I appreciate this. So I was just curious on this last suggestion that you made about using your own fleet to kind of look at this exploration of clean fishing and bottom time and all that kind of stuff. Do you actually have a sort of proposal on how to do that?

Mr. Hevly: I was kind of thinking of using the professionals that we already have, like the Oscan Dyson or other boats like that, that would be equipped to actually do this. That was my thought, it's just an idea, I don't know if it's the right idea, but it's all I got.

Dr. Sullivan: Maybe we can talk about it a little bit later, but thanks for that, and thanks for the presentation.

Chair Runnebaum: Great, thank you. Oh, okay, Kristina's going to ask a question.

Ms. Alexander: What was the movie?

Mr. Hevly: It's that one with Matthew McConaughey when he's a young captain on the submarine. Oh shoot, it's U-something, I forget what it is.

Chair Runnebaum: Okay, he'll look it up and get back to you. Thank you, Clayton. Thank you. I think next up was Rebecca?

Ms. Skinner: Well I wished I had the well intention of typing out what I was going to say. So you guys have a big job and there's a lot of stuff that's been covered so it's kind of challenging to think about what to say in public comment, but I've made a few notes here. So a little about me, my name is Rebecca Skinner, I was born and raised here in Kodiak, I'm a member of the Chinook tribe of Kodiak, I currently work with Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association, which is

Kodiak-based trawl industry association. As part of that, I've participated in the seafood harvesters of America board, and I'm the Vice President of United Fishermen of Alaska, I'm also the Chair of the Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Advisory Council to the Federal Subsistence Board, and I spent six years on the borough assembly. So I want you to understand my background and my diverse ties within the community.

Because of my involvement with the things I've been involved with, I have had the opportunity to travel to fishing communities throughout Alaska and throughout the lower 48, and so my observations is that fishing communities are very different from each other, and from within a community, there's a lot of complexity and a lot of different voices, and I think that Kodiak is a really good example of that. So drawing from my experience on the assembly, I know how challenging it is to think about all of the voices and all of the perspectives when you're trying to make decisions or recommendations.

So I am glad that you came to Kodiak, again I do think we are a very diverse fishing community with a heavy reliance on multiple kinds of fisheries, commercial fisheries, recreational fisheries, and subsistence fisheries, and the fishing footprint is very visible. When you're coming into town you see the boat harbor, and of course you see all the processing plants down on Shelikof. And this is a lot different from many of the other fishing communities throughout the lower 48 that I visited, you just don't see the fishing presence quite as strongly.

So in this meeting, I was glad to hear discussion, I think most recently from Brett about how to really bring awareness of MAFAC and MAFAC's work to the public. You guys are making recommendations to NOAA fisheries on policy, these policies impact people, they impact our businesses and our communities, and I think it is really important for the public to have visibility to that and to have the opportunity to be involved. And I am, I guess, really

disappointed that there aren't a lot of public here the last three days. That being said, I didn't even know MAFAC was meeting in Kodiak until somebody mentioned it last week, so I do think there's opportunities as far as growing the public awareness. I wanted to note, I really appreciated the virtual option, so the ability to dial in online or via phone, and this is really important, because it does help the transparency, it helps people understand what kinds of things you're talking about, and gives people a better opportunity to let their voice be heard in a way that's going to be meaningful for this group and for the work that this group does.

From a policy perspective, I think that seafood really needs a champion, I think we need Congressional champions, we need more of those, and we also need administrative champions. So here I think about things like, when ARPA passed there was money that became available, so this was one time, unexpected funding, and I was able to work on some USDA grants, where USDA created a grant program to support processing infrastructure for meat, it could also apply to seafood, and it was specific to tribes, and I was very, I think that's a great program, I was very grateful to be involved in it, but I kept thinking, why didn't someone do something for seafood? Why isn't there some pot of ARPA money that's being geared toward revamping or improving our seafood processing facilities in the U.S.? And I think that if we had a champion somewhere on the administrative side, for the business of seafood, that maybe we'd have a better chance of taking advantage of those opportunities when they come up.

The other example is the 301 tariff issue, I think it was mentioned earlier today, there are still five flatfish codes that have not been permanently exempted from the tariff, so the issue is not fixed. And I know there's multiple stakeholders, including myself, that have spoken directly with Ambassador Tai, the U.S. Trade Representative, trying to get that fixed, but it involves international trade, it's complex, you can't just say okay, we'll get rid of these five

tariffs or fix the five codes without impacting a lot of other things. But again, that's where I think having a seafood champion who is in the middle of all the nuts and bolts that could maybe push and get things done at the right time. If you don't have that presence, it's really hard to take advantage of those opportunities.

My final comment is that managing not just the seafood industry but marine resources is very complex. So you have multiple regulatory systems and regulatory bodies. So just within Alaska for things that I'm directly involved in, we have the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Board of Fish, the Federal Subsistence Board, and then the International Pacific Halibut Commission, and those are things that I'm just personally involved in with my work. None of those regulatory bodies have meaningful communication with each other, while some of them have a formalized mechanism like joint working groups or committees, those committees aren't used to talk about substantive management issues.

So what I've seen is you end up with a lot of frustration, because the fish aren't paying attention to whose jurisdiction they're swimming through, and people get really frustrated because they'll go to one forum, and it ends up not being the right forum. They'll go to another forum, maybe that forum is very receptive, but they don't have control of it either, nobody has control of every aspect of the resource, which I don't think is going to completely change, but I do think that at a policy level it would be helpful to really push to try to bridge those gaps in a meaningful way where possible. I don't think that we can really make meaningful progress on a lot of the challenges that we're facing unless we do that, and I can say very strongly that's not happening right now. And that is all I had, thank you.

(Applause.)

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you, Rebecca, I really appreciate you coming and speaking with us today, I



really appreciate the words that you offered. No questions. Paddy O'Donnell, did you also have? Great. And Katie, as he's making his way up, was there anybody online that was interested in providing public comment? Okay.

Mr. O'Donnell: And somebody said that Paddy wanted to talk, are you crazy? So I don't have a lot to say, which in itself as an Irishman is unusual, but anyhow. I spoke yesterday, probably too long, but I said what I had to say yesterday. There's a lot of brain power around this table, and I'm glad you guys got here to Kodiak. I am a little frustrated that I heard on the radio four days prior to the meeting that this was taking place, and this was not on my radar, and I think Rebecca got to that, a means of advertising, get it out to the public, maybe through the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, or some process would be beneficial to the public. I was planning on doing something different on these sunny and rainy days, but here we are. But it's all good.

I'm glad you all took the OBI tour, I'm glad some of you got to go on the Pacific Star, John McCarthy there, he's a brilliant fisherman, I've been trying to hire him for years but he won't work for me, he's my best friend. Mr. Prewitt over there, I hope you can educate the public on how to cook fish, because most people overcook it, and I say this all the time, three to four to five minutes and finish it on the counter while it's cooling down. That's the key to fish, I've been eating it all my life, and will continue to eat. Four, five days a week I eat it.

Two other things, and I spoke to this, I think. The U.S. government has to step up to the plate and supplement and promote U.S. seafood domestically and get out there and educate the public. 340 million people in this country, why are exporting? And can we absolve the abundance of fish in this country? I think we can. We have the lowest per capital consumption of seafood globally, it's like 14 to 15 pounds, something like that. I probably do a couple

of hundred, three, four, I don't know, a lot, but we need to get out there, promote this, advertise it, and again, teach. I think it's imperative that you teach how to fish it. So I'll labor to go on there, this is how you cook it, and not overcook it.

We heard lots about surveys and funding, and I know what it costs for funding for vessels in Alaska, and it's very, very little in the scheme of things, and I get frustrated to no end that we can't get enough funding to add an additional vessel, I think we need to move towards collaborative research, employ vessels, put data recorders on them, like I said yesterday. I did an EFP for salmon excluders here in Alaska, I did an EFP for modified sweeps to cut down on bottom contact interactions and Tanner crab interactions in the Gulf of Alaska here, did a crab vitality study under the same EFP, and I also did the halibut excluders that are in use today in the bottom trawl fishery for cod, I was part of that program. So I think we haven't done too much of that in gulf in the last 10 years, and I think that's the key to moving forward, and include the professionals in industry and get the ball rolling. But the bottom line is funding, funding, funding, and funding. Thank you.

(Applause.)

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you, Paddy, I'm expecting to see you on Instagram with your account on how to cook seafood regularly, coming up.

Mr. O'Donnell: I'm not on social media.

Chair Runnebaum: Missed opportunity. Thank you all, thank you so much. Was there anybody else from the public that -- please, Scott, thank you.

Mr. Arndt: Once again, my name's Scott Arndt, Kodiak Island Borough Mayor. I want to thank all of you for coming here, it's been a pleasure. I've had to run to another conference that was going on the last two days, which was the rural leadership forum that was going on that Janet and some of the staff was able to attend on there. But I think we shared with

you a little bit of all of our weather except for the snow, but thank you for coming, and thank you for seeing what we do with the research facility that NOAA has here, it's top class. We're trying to figure out and have been for years how to try and make things work, so thank you very much and I hope you enjoyed your stay, and please come back sometime in the future. Thank you.

(Applause.)

Chair Runnebaum: Yeah, we have one more. Scott, thank you for your hospitality, we have one more.

Mr. Stephan: Well good afternoon, and I'd like just to join with -- can you hear me? Is it on? Thank you very much, I'd just to join the other folks that spoke, and we thank you very much for coming to Kodiak, it was very interesting to participate and listen. I will also comment, I wouldn't have said anything, except it was brought up before, I don't think I was aware until about a week ago that you folks were coming, so I don't know, I probably missed something very obvious, but I just thought maybe you might think about that in the future. I'd like to thank Natasha for her service and contribution, and to MAFAC here, we're very happy to have her as a member, and I think as some of you know, I served on MAFAC many years ago and chaired it for a couple terms, and I think it's a very valuable organization, and thank you for coming, appreciate your contribution and everything you did, it's an honor to have you here, thank you.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you. Before you step away, can you state your name, just for the record please?

Mr. Stephan: Oh, my name is Jeffrey Stephan.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you. I need to speak up, apparently.

(Applause.)

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you so much, it's been a

real honor to be here, and so thank you all for participating and listening, and point taken, we need to do a better job with our outreach and communication, I don't know what that means. So thank you for that. Okay, yes, Brett?

Mr. Veerhusen: Yes, Brett again. What a pain in the -- I just want to thank especially Paddy and Rebecca for coming for almost this entire meeting, and thank the other members of the public as well for your testimony and not as -- I will own some of the missteps in not getting the communication out better. For that, I apologize, as somebody from Alaska, that is inexcusable that this community did not know, and I would like to ask, and I've seen, though, as we as members of MAFAC fan out at breakfast, lunch, dinner, I have seen Pat strike up conversation with multiple people at Henry's and people talk with many folks on the ground here to ask inquisitive questions.

But point well taken, and for that I apologize for not doing my job better at getting the word out better to fellow Alaskans, as somebody who was born in a neighboring community. Natasha was adamant about getting the word out weeks ago, we did our best, and some of the resources that we have available for MAFAC are a lot less than I think what other resources are available to other kind of councils and committees, but I think we can do a better job of institutionalizing getting the word out so the public is here. Which, sadly, this is the most public comments we've had as my term as a MAFAC member, and I just don't think -- yeah, this is kind of towards the end of my first term, so I'm still learning about what was and what is now, and I think MAFAC has a lot of horsepower right now and I'm not sure we know what to do with it, and I will put some of my energies into getting the word out better to local fishermen, local commercial, recreational, subsistence fishermen in our next community. So thank you for pointing that out, I'll take some of the onus on myself.

## MAFAC Committee Reflections and Discussion

Chair Runnebaum: Great, thank you. Not great. Thank you, Brett, for that. Okay, we are going to move into our MAFAC committee reflections and discussion portion of the agenda, and what that means now is that we are going to have the committee chairs facilitate about a 15 minute conversation each, and I believe, I can't find my notes, but I believe Linda was going to go first. And before Linda takes over the mic, any -- ? Okay, so how this is going to work, I think, is that Linda's going to get about 15 minutes to sort of have -- well, every subcommittee chair is going to take the mic, facilitate a conversation, and we're hopefully going to be talking about how what we have heard during this comment period relates to our work plans and can be operationalized or made action oriented. So I'm going to just hand it over, thank you.

Ms. O'Dierno: Okay, first of all, I'd like to commend the committee members who put this member together, the panelists, the public comments that we had, I think they did a really phenomenal job of explaining what the problems are with the seafood industry, and I really have to commend them for their efforts in this direction. To reiterate what Bob Foy said this morning, lot of American fisheries are in crisis, and unless we take some action, there may be no fish for the future, and that message came through loud and clear from the panelists, other guests, Natasha made an impassioned speech about the future of seafood.

One of the things we have to consider is, when we talk about fishing communities, sometimes we have tunnel vision. Actually, there have been a lot of studies done that in many fishing communities, the dollars earned in those communities go to support the entire community, they support grocery stores, and they support gas stations, restaurants, so they are important in the entire fabric of the economy. And as Mayor Scott said, the taxes go to support public schools and other public service ventures. As a

matter of fact, the first public school in the 13 colonies was funded by the Massachusetts cod industry. So it's really critical to a lot of these communities, especially rural, underserved communities. So we have to take that broader.

Then, if we look at the nation as a whole, the ability of a nation to provide an affordable, nutritious food supply for its citizens is actually the cornerstone of national security. Port and national security considerations. Our fleets and our infrastructure are aging. Patty reminded us that the Chinese and the Russians and other nations are out there investing money in modernizing fleets, modernizing processing equipment, some of those nations don't use sustainable methods, they fish in environmentally sensitive areas, they use forced labor, so there are a lot of considerations and problems with those products. They come in, and we can't be competitive. Currently, we import about 85% of the seafood that we consume in this country. That supply may not be there in the future. A lot of the countries that we import from have rising middle class populations that are keeping more of those products at home, so that could be problematic as we move to the future.

Now, to those considerations, the natural, perfect storm that we've had with climate change and the pandemic, about 60% of all the seafood in this country is consumed in restaurants or sourced from other food service outlets, and when that industry collapsed, so did a lot of our fisheries. To meet these challenges, NOAA developed a seafood strategy. And if I could figure out how to get down this page, we'd be in good shape. To meet those challenges we have the National Seafood Strategy. Now, one of the charges for the commerce subcommittee was to make recommendations for that seafood strategy. We got kind of side tracked to do the seafood port monitoring program to make recommendations for that particular program, and I think that's kind of ahead of the curve, because there's traceability coming down for all food products.

So now that we've completed that work, we can go back to the National Seafood Strategy, and that has four goals. Number one, increase wild, sustainable capture. That's going to be difficult, because a lot of wild stocks are at maximum sustainable yield, so we have to be really creative with that. Number two, develop aquaculture, third goal is domestic and international marketing, and the fourth is to strengthen the entire sector. Actually, NOAA has moved forward and in the implementation plan for that seafood strategy will be out by the end of the month, and I urge you all to read through that, think about what kind of comments that you have.

Now we've been asked two specific questions. Question number one, which existing NOAA fisheries programs and actions, other than surveys and allocations, perhaps with modest adjustments, might provide the greatest benefit to the U.S. seafood sector? So that's question one, it's a prioritization question. Question number two is if NOAA could allocate 10 million dollars to implementing the national seafood strategy, what industry service should it focus on? And I think NOAA has shallow pockets, unfortunately, but there are a lot of other agencies that do have more clout and more money, and Janet mentioned this morning that Alexa Cole from International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce, is working actively with the U.S. Trade Representative and USDA to try to work through some of these issues, like the 301 tariff concerns. So this reaching out to others in the agency, and outside the agency is really important, and that's a direction that has to be taken.

To give an example of trying to leverage things, Alaska seafood marketing got one million dollars in SK grants for 2024, but they got four million from USDA, an agency with much deeper pockets, so I think we have to be creative. So I challenge you all to come up with some suggestions and thoughts, I know we had a lot of robust conversations when we went over to the processing plant, and we need your input on this subcommittee. So I guess I can open it

up to anybody who wants to jump in and make a comment. Well, I expect you all to come to the next subcommittee meeting with your comments. You think about this, we'll send out homework assignments. Jocelyn.

Chair Runnebaum: Oh, thank you. I guess one of the things that I sort of took away from this week was a need for interagency coordination, and I was wondering how that -- I'm wondering if that fits into the national seafood strategy and the work that your subcommittee is taking on, and how we might be able to think about providing some recommendations around that topic.

Ms. O'Dierno: I think that's a very important topic. In addition to national seafood strategy there is a national export strategy that as a chapter that is devoted to seafood, but if you look at the agencies that put that together, it's an alphabet soup of over 20 different agencies, so I think that's a very good suggestion for how can we better coordinate with other agencies? I heard a lot of conversation when we were going to the processing plant, and now everyone's quiet. I know it's late in the day, but -- okay.

Ms. Coit: I don't know, in this history of -- thank you, Linda. And we had a lot, our fingerprints are all over that export strategy, but you're right, the action agencies involved in pursuing it are the International Trade Administration, the USDA, state department, others. Have we ever, MAFAC, when it's in D.C. had a panel of folks from other agencies? Because I think as we're working to put together this working group on trade, and we've had many, many meetings with USDA about elevating U.S. seafood and their programs, a whole variety of their programs are pressing them hard, including with a fact sheet that we were going to be able to hand out to fishing communities about the USDA programs with eligibility for seafood. Just a thought that the next time you have a meeting in the D.C. area, perhaps your committee could put together an influence and



hear from some of the other agencies we're working with, perhaps working with Alexa or Michael Rubino, or others.

Chair Runnebaum: We're just going to pass the mic back and forth here, I guess. I think one of the things that could be really helpful is understanding what agencies are involved in the seafood industry, and how NOAA relates to those different agencies in trying to figure out what those relationships are and how we might be able to interact in those spaces to provide maybe better recommendations. So that could be a useful tool for us to sort of work through as well.

Ms. Lovett: This is Heidi, I'll just note that as an example, we've had joint panels with members from our Aquaculture Office and USDA leadership, talking about the various aquaculture policies, strategic plans that are interagency focused, not just from NOAA. We've had members of USDA and their agricultural marketing service who manage the check-off programs, when MAFAC was looking at the Fish and Seafood Promotion Act and how that is analogous to a law that the USDA manages, related to check-off programs, and so the development of the large national seafood report that MAFAC did draft and finished a few years ago now, pre national seafood strategy, was definitely engaged with Agricultural Marketing Service folks a lot, from USDA. So it's just because some of you are new and you weren't here, but some of the folks about to step off probably remember those presentations, so obviously over time we just have to remember to bring those people back. Because of the turnover.

Chair Runnebaum: Okay thank you Linda I appreciate it and we're going to transition to Brett's subcommittee.

Mr. Veerhusen: I think I've taken up plenty of time with Emily's presentation and kind of getting some Q&A and so I don't -- I probably will yield most of my time to other subcommittees that I've heard from,

but one of the questions that I am trying to figure out, thank you, is this is the Strategic Planning and Budget Subcommittee, so if you haven't fallen asleep yet, you might in a second. But to hopefully awaken you, this is to provide advice to the Agency on its over billion dollar budget, how to increase it, and then some of the strategy for the Agency to implement its core functions and what those are. That's just my loose term, I do a terrible job of reading notes, taking notes, and talking, so I'm going to totally rely on the excellent staff to help me with any of the notes and feedback we get from this, because I can't do both and I'm really bad at multitasking that way.

So one of the main issues last year that I worked with Stefanie Moreland on, is sending a letter that I was referencing earlier to the Secretary of Commerce, asking the Agency for long term, fiscally informed budget planning, and we heard a great update from Emily on that, and I appreciate that that long term planning is going to be included in some of the upcoming program plans. So one of the -- and I want to be very inclusive in this conversation, as this is not meant to be simply around commercial fisheries, this is an all-inclusive stakeholder conversation around NOAA's budget and its strategy, whether it's recreational fishing, subsistence, commercial, and others in the seafood supply chain. So I think the committee is wrestling with timing around the release of these program plans, which are in the works, but we want to be able to react to them and maybe provide advice to inform future iterations of them, and while we wait, what else can we do? What else can this committee provide to advice to the secretary? And that's kind of where we're at.

What I've been hearing this whole meeting is to be more proactive and to be less reactive, and this is -- I don't expect people to come here with all the answers, if you have any, I'm going to open up the floor, but what I want to do is really welcome people to the subcommittee, we have a lot of new members around the table. It's certainly been informative, and

I'm a little bit over my skis trying to fill Stefanie's shoes, but doing my best. But I'm going to buy a couple of minutes here if people have any thoughts around this committee's work, please let me know. But since I see Teresa here, I wanted to thank you for providing the salmon that we ate a few things ago, and make sure that Julie and Ron also received warm thanks for not only the crab that they caught and we ate, to make sure that we are acknowledging where that food came from, but also thank you for all of your efforts in welcoming us. I see you, and thank you very much.

(Applause.)

Our bellies were full and it was a couple buses full of smiles and just a couple queasy faces. So I'll just open it up, anybody have thoughts on where you would like to see this subcommittee work on regarding budget and strategy for the Agency? Amy's hot off the gate.

Dr. Green: I'm sensitive that this might come off as a rookie kind of suggestion, but one of the things -- so as you all know, I'm kind of unique because this committee doesn't directly impact my career or life, so I've been looking for ways that I can contribute. One of the things I'm sort of thinking that I'm hearing is a potential need for some strategic outreach in the form of, I've heard of calls for education for different communities, I've heard the call for outreach to communities, even for simple things like there's a meeting here. I don't know if that would be part of your committee but maybe part of -- I don't even know if a new outreach committee could come about.

One of the things that I've been thinking about and I've spoken with some of the members about this, I'm in education, teacher education, in-service, pre-service, and, in general, undergraduate climate science education. And I was thinking what an amazing opportunity it could be for my university and the University of Maryland to partner with MAFAC on behalf of fisheries to offer a course for students. Most

universities offer something called alternative break, which are supposed to be social justice-focused sort of like what used to be study abroad. Typically, they're domestic, but they're outside of campus, and there's a lot of funding for them and you have a strategic partner. And I was thinking about this on our tour of the plant that this whole trip has been so transformative to me, and I assure you it's going to be so transformative to my students, but how important it is that we know that the journey that our food takes from, in this case, the ocean to the plate and all of the intricate relationships from, like, the fishers to the companies, corporations, processes, communities, everything, how important it is that not just fishery people, like my colleagues here, understand that, but that everyone does. And what better way to access it than to students and teachers.

Anyway, so that, I was thinking, like, MAFAC could have an outreach kind of sector that would bring visibility, that would be a really good, like, PR marketing, providing education opportunities around what fisheries is, what they do, and how MAFAC is a part of it and outreach, and maybe, that way maybe and, like, have specific people on the committee whose job it is to reach out to the community around these things.

Mr. Veerhusen: Thank you. One thing I was thinking of that's connecting some dots between committees, and that's a thought I had is making sure that some of the committee work is aware of what other committees are doing so that we're aligned. We don't have to be reading upon, like, a specific direction but making sure that, on communication and outreach, you need to tell people what you're going to say, you need to say it, and then you need to tell them what you said ten times for people to kind of understand. And if we can be working towards some of those similar communications, both to the people that we represent but also to Congress, that would be helpful.

But I want to make sure that we don't duplicate efforts that have been done already. I'm hearing we

need to do outreach around where our food comes from and be increasing domestic consumption of our own seafood, but I know there's a lot of organizations and efforts that have been trying to do that. And I'd love to know if any audits have been done, any kind of landscape analyses of what's worked and what hasn't so that we are clear, if we're going to be trying to do that, that we are doing it strategically where resources are tight.

So I agree that that's a great goal. I just want to make sure that it's done aligned with what has and currently is being done and also put a plug in aligning some of the committee chair's work. I'd love to hear from Kristina.

Ms. Alexander: Yes, Brett. I didn't get the tone right. So as you know, I work with a bunch of researchers, and I asked them what they would like me to ask MAFAC while I'm here. And one of the suggestions was to say that the research money that is coming or that is leaving the agency is not as great and that the agency is performing the research itself. This is the perception. I don't know because none of the research money comes to me. So the research money is being used within NOAA, rather than going to institutions to perform the research. Arguably, those institutions, having to meet a smaller administrative fee, are more efficient at performing that research than NOAA, and so that might be something to look into on your committee.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you. Okay. We're going to move right along to Climate and Ecosystems Subcommittee, and we're going to find a microphone.

Ms. Moore: Hello. So the Climate and Ecosystems Subcommittee has currently two tasks that they're working on, and I'm going to talk a little bit of how I propose maybe it's three tasks based on some of what we've heard here this very special week that we've been in, and the first thing that we've been focused on is really addressing what we've called the science-to-management gap on the issue of making

our fishery management, like the management -- I'm going to underscore that word -- system more adaptive and proactive in response to the information, the scientific information that we're seeing. And in that case, I think we're really looking at, like, the challenge between getting from NOAA Fisheries to council action and then back to NOAA Fisheries and improving that loop. So that's kind of what we've been focused on.

I think it's validating to have heard from folks around the table and the audience members that, like, proactive is a key direction we should still be heading in. I think that's still a productive place for us to be thinking. One thing that jumped out at me is that I think we've been focused on getting it into, like I said, underscored management issue. I think there's an interesting thing we should be thinking about here about the right way to also help the industry be more proactive and reactive to that science that's coming in.

So I would just say I think we have the right sort of work plan there, and I would suggest that making our recommendations also more inclusive of how we bridge the science or, well, I'll just say the science to, like, advisory body or community or industry gap, as well, so they have better information and can act on it, I think, will be really interesting because I think there's some skepticism among folks that the management system will ever be sufficiently proactive and reactive, how do we make the management system still precautionary but allow for and enhance more adaptation from the community, as well. So I think that's kind of a slightly tweaked bucket one, task one.

Then I have a proposed new either task two or task three, however you want to suggest it, but it made sense to walk through it in this order, so new thing, which is that we've sort of only heard about the critical importance of community well-being in climate-ready fisheries pervasive in our conversations throughout. So I would suggest that

the subcommittee, thinking about how to characterize community well-being and include it in management, given that there are more ways than we're taking advantage of now to consider and manage for community well-being and how critical that's going to be for fisheries and communities as they face climate change.

I also recognize that our thinking around this, I think, while we've been struggling with it for batting it around in subcommittee, I would propose that our thinking around this has been deeply enriched by the conversations we've had this week and that also today and other times we've heard about how MAFAC should make more space for the community and let them know we're coming a little bit more readily. And so I would suggest one of the challenges to the subcommittee is going to be figuring out the right way to bring others into our conversation so that our workaround community well-being can be really inclusive of other perspectives than our own, although I want to also just take a second to deeply appreciate the many perspectives that we have in the subcommittee. It's one of our larger subcommittees, I think, and I just want to acknowledge and appreciate all of the work that all of you put in to that subcommittee.

We had batted around a little bit internally whether, like, is this MAFAC empaneling a task force, is it subcommittee, is it a working group, is it et cetera? I do not think we've come to a conclusion there, so I think the subcommittee is going to take that up as one of the things we're going to think about as we head into our next set of subgroup meetings. And I think that when we come back all together in April-ish, we'll have a better idea of whether we want to take a more formal step to bring people into that conversation. And so that's mystery number task two or three.

And then the second task, formally second task that the subcommittee had identified was really thinking largely outside of routine fishery management type

questions. We've talked so much, and we've heard again this week how having climate-ready fisheries or thinking about ecosystem impacts on the fisheries also means we have to think about issues like trade in the industry, jurisdiction issues that we just heard about today, meetings, champions, all that sort of stuff. There's a whole host of other things that we know are part of the structural ecosystem, I will say, that will make our fisheries more prepared for climate and ecosystem change and other stresses, and so we've tried to make space for that in sort of our task two. I think it's been bolstered by a lot of the conversations we've had here.

I'm not going to immediately propose how we might want to change that task because one of our leaders in the subcommittee on our thinking around that is Sarah Schumann. She's only been able to be, like, remote for this meeting, so we want to make sure she also has a lot of space to help us figure out the right way to structure that.

So I'm happy to take a lot of people's feedback on these ideas and how I'm responding to what we've heard, but I also want to acknowledge, like, we need to also make space for Sarah when we can make that space and adapt our work plan accordingly. So that's my reflections.

Oh, and I'm supposed to formally invite you to ask me questions or offer things. Spectacular. Great. I love it. Next person. Back to you, Jocelyn.

Chair Runnebaum: Okay. Thank you. So now I'm going to turn it over to Jim and Jaime, our new co-chairs for the Recreational Subcommittee.

Ms. Diamond: Okay. So this is our first kind of moment as chairing this. Thank you, Pat, for your service and those before Kellie. Wait, where is Kellie? Oh, anyways, and all those who paved the way for us.

We had our first meeting just last week, I think it was, or the week before since we joined MAFAC, so I



think we were talking the four kind of topics or bullets that we were given. And in my mind, of the four, the first one kind of I guess I would see as the mission statement and these other points fall under that and help support the goal of the first. So beginning with a primary goal of NOAA's National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy is to promote inclusive and sustainable saltwater recreational and non-commercial fishing for the social, cultural, and economic benefit of the nation and what does this mean to MAFAC and the recreational and non-commercial fishing communities and how can NOAA better achieve this goal in partnership with these communities?

And the next bullets, I believe, are ways to achieve that. I also think that Russ has been working on something, but the idea of a rec policy and associated implementation plans, kind of think along the lines of the seafood strategy but for recreational fishing. And he and I were looking at it the other day, and we were talking during class, but let me find the note on it, which was -- sorry -- yes, like, like an Eat U.S. Seafood campaign but for recreational fishing. In my mind, there's a lot of things that, I think, for us are really important as far as getting data, you know, doing the electronic reporting and all of those things are important, but, unless they grew up in a fishing family, their first engagement in the fishing world is through the lens of recreational fishing. And it's a really important thing because it's where most things become level across the board no matter what your background is, what you look like, what your economic status is, fishing is kind of that thing that everybody is equal at the rail when you're fishing.

And so there's so many other things. It's therapeutic. There's a lot of different things that come through recreational fishing, and it's very important. But in order to have that available, we need to be looking at these other things, like multiparty engagement to strengthen partnerships and promote angler stewardship and approving our ability to address challenges in fisheries, science, and management.

The recreational fishing in the U.S., this is 2021 numbers, it was a \$66 billion, it drew \$66 billion in economic revenue in 2021. It represented 231,422 jobs that year. And that's a lot, and it's not necessarily just that much in charter boat staff, but there's the tackle manufacturers, there's hospitality, there's the restaurants, there's the communities for the people that come to do the thing at the place. And so I think this is really crucial that we take the time to look at how we can ensure equitable access and sustainable fisheries for recreation for the benefit of our people.

Mr. Green: Yes. And I'll keep it short, so me and Jaime aren't battling over time or anything. I agree with everything Jaime just said. I think, looking at the two things and dissecting the four points that were given to us for potential topics, I agree with her that the first one is pretty much like the mission statement, like that should be, like, the goal, the focus.

Going down to the third one, the 2023 NOAA Fisheries Recreational Fisheries Economic Constituent Workshop Report, it spoke about the seven key needs, and I looked up those seven key needs and it's all of these points and all of the seven key needs all kind of have an encompassing effect, more timely and proactive collection of data, identification of a system to prioritize what species to evaluate, need for systemic guidelines regarding how to incorporate recreational economic information into management decisions, estimating optimal yield in the recreational fisheries, knowledge-base of past economic analysis, partnership with recreational community leaders.

And me and Jaime kind of bounced back and forth a couple of times, and I didn't know really how, I mean, I've worked on work plans before, but I didn't know how to really come out with this because there's so much information here and all of it seems like we need, like, 20 tasks. Don't freak out, Miss Heidi. She just kind shook her head.

I didn't mean that that's what we needed to do, but, like, I've got 20 tasks is what I was saying. So I think really, you know, stewardship, data collection, economic analysis, how to collect these things, how to incorporate it into management really should be what this subcommittee is looking at. Like, to me, that's the bigger, higher-level stuff.

And I think that I did get to read over some of that 40-page report. I fell asleep reading that, no offense. But I think that it's all pretty valid, and I think that we might not be -- I'd like to hear some input from everybody here and maybe we pick out what those tasks are in our next subcommittee meeting because I think there's just a lot to chew on there.

So I would like, since Brett really didn't give us any more than his 15 minutes, I'd like to go around and see what everybody else had to say. I'm just messing with you, Brett.

Ms. Diamond: I just want to point out the fourth bullet -- sorry. Before we go around. And this is a conversation that is being had in a few difficult arenas I am in is the rapidly-emerging long-term challenge of the three-way intersection of advancing technology, rising effort, and angler satisfaction. And that goes for, I think, all fisheries really, if you can translate that to commercial, as well.

The equipment with which we are fishing with today, I mean, it far surpasses Loran, right. So, I mean, you can see not just a fish, you can tell what that fish is practically. I mean, in my area, you can tell the difference between vermilion rockfish on there versus chili pepper. And not just that, but you can tell if they're going to get all fired up and bite. And with advances like Livescope, which was originally kind of started for freshwater fisheries, they are now turning that into saltwater equipment. I joke because my husband has this on his book that he takes to the lake, but it takes the sport out of it. You can literally see the fish eat your hook before you even feel it, and so, you know, there's technology, but at what

cost? But then there's the aspect of you can then be more selective in how you fish. You can fish cleaner in a lot of ways.

And so it's how do we negotiate this new technological world of fisheries and leverage that, so we can have satisfied anglers, especially when we're at reduced bags or, you know, stocks that we need to avoid. I think that's important.

Mr. Green: Yes. And if I could elaborate. Being from a different part of the world, I also had -- we'll get to you in just one minute, Meredith. Another positioning, being able to use trolling motors and Skyhook and Spot-Lock, and the technology advances of faster boats, better equipment, allows anglers to be far more efficient than they have been in the past, which has also been a challenge in the regulatory, which is what I think was the intent of this, too, was also that the advancement in technology is making the fishermen more efficient and it's making it to where the data collection, the science isn't keeping up with the advancement of the angler. And that is also, while it does what Jaime says, it can make you more selective, it can also make you more dangerous, too, the angler more dangerous.

Ms. Moore: You may have just covered what some of my comments were. I've been thinking about the fourth bullet that was here, and it says it's a three-way challenge or a three-way intersection, but I think also, like, sustainability, figuring out where that is in that is really core. And I'm reflecting on your comments, Jim, about needing to, like, find that conservation ethic and get people involved in that. And I think maybe there's a place for that in that fourth bullet, and I just wanted to, like, that to be said out loud. Looking forward to working with you all on that.

Chair Runnebaum: Clay or, sorry, Tom.

Mr. Fote: Yes. First question. Are we having a meeting next Thursday? I see it was on my agenda.

It's supposed to be on Thursdays.

Ms. Diamond: Wednesday. It's next Wednesday.

Mr. Fote: Next Wednesday. Okay.

Ms. Diamond: Yes. It got changed. It will be on the calendar.

Mr. Fote: Okay.

Ms. Diamond: Yes. This coming Wednesday.

Mr. Fote: When we look at recreational fishing in the -- are you hearing me?

Ms. Diamond: Go ahead.

Mr. Fote: When we look at recreational fishing in New Jersey, it's about 800,000 anglers in New Jersey, recreational anglers. It's worth, according to the statistics, over a billion dollars in the state of New Jersey, and that's down from where it used to be, \$1.3 billion and 1.3 million anglers. But we've lost charter boats, we've lost tackle stores in the last 15 to 20 years, and some of the regulatory that we put in place that has basically changed the whole outlook of how we fish.

Now, one of my biggest concerns, and Bob put it up before, the United States Marine Fisheries Initiative, summer flounder has a hook-and-release mortality. A lot of that is put because of regulatory discards. Striped bass with NOAA is like bonefish and carp, there is a lot of hook-and-release mortality. But when the hook-and-release mortality is basically 50 percent of the overall mortality on recreational fishing because of catfish, both commercial and recreational, there's something that needs to be done with that, and we're trying to figure out how you do it. How do you inform the angler with good stewardship and he'll go out and catch a hundred fish and say, well, I'll catch and release and I know how to do this, and no matter how you know (audio interference) about 8 percent of those fish are going

to die anyway. Now, that's one of the concerns that I've had, and I've been trying to deal with that for a long time, especially on striped bass. And Bob Beal and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission are looking at the same thing, and I know that's true with other species.

Ms. Diamond: Thanks, Tom. Okay. Anybody else have any comments? We're kind of, we're just throwing it all out there because we're just trying to get going honestly. But there's a lot to do I feel like.

Mr. Green: I think we'd be happy to inform everybody on MAFAC about how our next meeting goes, too, and we'll have more time to deal out all these. Russ.

Mr. Dunn: Yes, just a couple of quick things. I mean, I think there is really, there are a plethora of potential directions, productive directions to go, some of which are on that paper that we shared with the subcommittee for potential ideas. Others are probably yet to be identified.

What Jaime was referring to is other things I've been working on. I haven't actually been working on anything. I realized, sitting here right beforehand, there are so many similarities between the issues and benefits, et cetera, between rec fishing and commercial relative to the seafood strategy, like looking at the first page, climate change affecting both, Coronavirus affected for-hire in particular, new technologies we just talked about, labor shortages affects the for-hire, et cetera, et cetera, that there could be potential to sort of take the policy and shape it in a way or implementation plans.

What I really wanted to do was actually just correct, not correct but give you updated some of your numbers you mentioned. In '22, according to our data, there are 12.7 million saltwater anglers generating \$138 billion in sales impacts and contributed \$74.8 billion to the U.S. GDP and 691,000 of full-time jobs. So there are just some new stats available.

But I think there's a whole bunch of opportunities out there. It would be great if we can all explore and find a productive engagement for this subcommittee.

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you, Russ, for that. And thank you, Jaime and Jim, for just really jumping in, and I know that I threw this at you really late yesterday. So I appreciate your willingness to step up.

Pat is going to give us a really quick update on the Protected Resources Subcommittee, and then we're going to go into our final session.

Dr. Sullivan: Great. Thank you, Madam Chair. So I'm the interim chair of the Protected Resources Subcommittee, and Sara McDonald, who cycled out last year from South Carolina Aquarium, was the chair. And we spent several years putting a survey together in order to assess a couple of things. So the purpose of the survey was to capture knowledge and perceptions about the nature of marine mammal interactions and use of deterrents.

It was also indicated, which is a little bit more difficult to arrive at, the rank of relative risk of expected losses from the interactions from marine mammals in this area. So we're thinking that this information can help prioritize the effective testing of various methods of deterring interactions with marine mammals.

So you may or may not know that there are a list of deterrents that are approved for use in deterring marine mammals; but, frankly, the scientific basis for whether those actually work or not doesn't really exist. So what part of our survey is really looking at is what are people using out there. We're not asking whether what they're doing is legal or illegal, but we're just asking what people are doing and how effective it is. We're also hoping to see where in the world our nation, these interactions are actually happening.

So that's what's taking place. It took us about a year

to put the survey together and then two years to get it passed through all the administration hurdles to kind of get it approved, and it's getting ready to be released late next week. So we'll see where that goes.

So that's what we're up to. We haven't had any meetings recently because that was our task, and we're waiting for it to happen. And then, after it's done, I'm involved with analyzing the data to kind of see where it takes us.

Ms. Zanowicz: I'll also add that we'll be asking for all of your help in distributing the survey far and wide, so just thank you in advance for helping with that.

Chair Runnebaum: Great. Thank you, Pat. Thanks for sticking with the survey and being persistent; and thank you, Katie, for shepherding it through the OMB process.

So I think Katie has a message to convey from Clay.

Ms. Zanowicz: Clay had to jump off, but he did write a nice message in the chat that I'll read out. So he just says: Thank you, Jocelyn, Brett, and Natasha for assembling the great panels; also to all NOAA staff and associates for their hard work in support of this meeting. Hope you all have safe travels home from this meeting. I apologize I could not be there in person. Perhaps we'll be there the next time and meet all the new MAFAC members.

And he had to step off for a doctor's appointment, so he just said thank you for everything.

Close Out: Review of Action Items, Next Steps, and  
Next Meeting

Chair Runnebaum: Great. I also want to convey my extreme thanks to Natasha and Brett and Jamie Goen for helping coordinate this meeting and Kristina for joining those calls and really planning a really great agenda. So thank you so much. Your hospitality, your family ties, and the personal reflections and



perspectives is just really appreciated.

I really want to thank members of the public for coming and sticking with us and providing some really important input, and I'm going to -- I know. I'm going to turn it over to Janet if that is okay for a few words while I plan with Heidi. Heidi is correcting me in my procedures, and so thank you very much. We're going to let Janet go last, so we're going to first do a recap and I'm going to try and get this computer.

Okay. We're coordinated. So, thankfully, I have some really great notes here that have been captured from our live conversations. So some of the key takeaways was just the extreme amount of appreciation from the community for our presence, and then we had a virtual option. There was a suggestion to focus on climate-ready communities, small, medium, and large, compared to climate-ready fisheries. Economies of local communities can be largely dependent on sustainable fisheries, and this has an impact on schools and infrastructure, and that there are government actions are mostly reactionary, still in need to be more proactive if possible.

Another key takeaway is that there has been and likely will continue to be tremendous changes in climate and fisheries. There's still many infrastructure needs that exist, and seafood really needs more champions throughout the process.

But we've heard a lot of really great and creative ideas that exist within the Kodiak community, as well as communities around the nation. One of the ones that we heard here that people seemed to really like was this job-sharing and workforce development.

Domestic seafood production and consumption, both need to be ramped up. And there's a real need to tell this story, a better story of wild-caught seafood and sustainability, and there may be a greater role for NOAA fisheries to play in this realm.

We've had a pretty frank discussion earlier about, a

frank discussion in transparency and FES. It needed improvements, and that has been greatly appreciated. So thank you, Russ, for coming.

The major takeaway for this week was what is climate-ready fisheries and a need to better define that. So I appreciate the public's input. It's been really helpful to hear how other people think about it. And when I've asked that question of other fishermen and harvesters in my community or in Maine, I don't think I've gotten quite as thoughtful of a response, so I really appreciate hearing that.

I think it's really important to acknowledge and recognize that some of the issues facing the industry are global in nature and really need some interagency coordination to resolve them. So as a few action items, I think MAFAC really wants to see some improvements to the programs when they are ready, engaging with those plans and being able to provide as much support as appropriate. I think that there's some real interest in considering how to improve communications about MAFAC, particularly when a regional meeting is held. I might expand this to just harness and say better communication full-stop.

Some potential topics that might exist for MAFAC to consider, I think community well-being is a really important topic for us to consider. And I really appreciate Meredith bringing up a need to add a task of community well-being to the Climate and Ecosystem Subcommittee. And then there were some new ideas that were related to workforce development.

Brett really kind of raised the point about updates to the NAPA report at our next MAFAC meeting and how that could be really, really helpful and especially around communications for public and Congress.

So I think there's a lot of questions about how interagency coordination can be improved and coordinated and probably needs a little bit further conversation with one of the subcommittee and the policy staff about how we do that. And as a part of

that, maybe identifying multiple agency roles and responsibilities in the seafood chain would be really helpful.

I think one thing that I'd just offer is that, as I've been listening to the conversations Tuesday and yesterday and really getting to hear a lot of public comment, I've been trying to distill down everything that we have been hearing and how we can bring some greater focus to the work that we're doing here on MAFAC. So just know that there's some things spinning in my head that I'm trying to sort out, and, eventually, I think it will be helpful to figure out how we can take what we've heard and really move forward with meaningful recommendations for the agency that are maybe comprehensive and show the interconnectedness of all of these subcommittees because I think there's a connection.

Amy, I think your point about communication was a really strong one, and I agree.

So there's going to be another meeting in the spring. Heidi is going to give us a brief update on where things stand with that.

Ms. Coit: Heidi is correcting me in my

Ms. Lovett: So, currently, on your calendars, we have set aside some dates in April, April 22nd, 23rd, 24th as a tentative meeting date. We also found a couple of weeks in March that are optional. I know there's a few people who are shaking their heads already who don't like those dates, but we might be sending out a Doodle poll to just see which is the best date for the most people. And the other dates were March 18 through the 20th or March 25 through the 27th. Those two March dates and the April date are good for our leadership at the moment, and so we do want to nail it down soon. So you should be seeing a Doodle poll, and we'll be nailing that down.

Normally, the spring meeting is in a region and, obviously, this past spring we did a virtual meeting with lots of new members coming on. But we're going

to try to go back and have the spring meeting in a region outside of D.C. and then the fall meeting sometime in October or November of next year will be a meeting in the D.C. area.

So tentatively, just because we have not been in the region in a really long time, I've been suggesting the Gulf of Mexico or South Atlantic region. We don't have any particular location directly in mind yet, but we welcome suggestions.

That's all I wanted to share. I didn't know if anybody else --

Mr. Green: I didn't really get on this panel to have a meeting in my hometown. I want to go see other places.

Chair Runnebaum: Okay. I'm going to hand it over to Janet before we really wrap up this meeting.

Ms. Coit: Thank you. Thank you. I've written a lot of notes, but I'm not sure what I'm going to say. First, thank you, Mayor Scott Arndt. Thank you, Natasha. Thanks for everyone involved in making this I think the best MAFAC meeting I've ever attended, so the planning team, Heidi, Katie, just I'll probably say thank you again at the end. But, honestly, so much has gone into this. The members of the public who have participated have added so much value, so I just want to say thank you.

The leadership of NOAA has been here. We've been trying very hard to be present and participate even while things are swirling around in D.C. It's a very uncertain time, and I'm just keeping it real like I always do. I probably won't be at your next meeting. I would love to be, but I just don't know. None of know what's going to happen, and I certainly don't know what's going to happen with my appointed position.

This is an amazing group, and the different perspectives around the table enrich us so much, so I'm so glad for the participation and I will very much

remember multiple things that were said either around this table or in the side conversations.

I caution everybody: you know that old chestnut, if you have too many priorities, you have no priorities. So I think the give and take that we have between NOAA leadership, the policy office that Jenni has that works with you is so important because I listen to all the ideas that you have. I think, for your sake, you need to narrow things; and, for our sake, we need to get some feedback about what would be most actionable and what would be most influential and what would be things that would have an impact that we could sustain and grow from.

I do want to caution people that for almost three and a half years I've tried to understand surveys. So if you want to dig in more, it's very complicated all the different ways that we do that, cooperative research, charter vessels, gliders, our big white ships, our small ships that we own, the vagaries of the budget, the things out of our control. So I think, you know, working on improving science and data that goes into our decision-making and understanding that's the basis for our decision-making are all totally appropriate for MAFAC, but I know it's been a very difficult part of our science enterprise to get my arms around. And I think, like with anything in life, things that are out of your control are much more anxiety-producing and there are a lot of factors around our budget and our surveys that are out of our control and, particularly here in Alaska, that the delegations' prioritize them, understand how important they are and particularly with climate change and the rapidly-changing ecosystems, we need to keep driving and keeping our core surveys and expanding our work. And you guys do play an important role there, but I would caution you about trying to get too much in the weeds.

I just wanted to briefly comment that Brett is right. We didn't talk about NAPA, but we have taken that report really seriously and we have followed through on every element truly. So I think maybe at the next

meeting reporting on that from congressional, improving congressional interactions to the program plans that are intended to have a more cross-NOAA strategy and a longer-term look at the funding to prioritizing our surveys and understanding how much they cost and then communicating that with Congress. One by one, we have gone through that and really taken it seriously. We just haven't talked about it at this meeting, and so I think it would be worthwhile.

I don't want to recap the meeting at all. I just want to say, again, that just looking out at the sea and thinking about the stewardship that we've been talking about and the whales and the sea turtles and our tropical corals and the fisheries that are so critical for subsistence and recreational fisheries and the incredible economic boon they are and commercial fisheries delivering food, like, what a privilege it is to be on MAFAC, to be in my position to work on these consequential issues. And the scope of what we do is so huge that just having people who represent different parts of marine mammals and marine resources around this table and working to try to better align and connect what we're doing with the realities in your communities is a mountain to climb. So I appreciate you all for taking the steps with us.

And I do want to say I think we're moving in the right direction. I like what Marissa said. Things take too long. Bureaucracies are ponderous. But I think we're moving in the right direction on many, many things, and I'm very proud of that. And a lot of people around this table have influenced that.

I think the last thing I'll say before again saying thank you, I can't get my mind totally around this, but I think it is right what so many people have said that fisheries just are not well organized to have a really high-profile set of champions in Congress, in the White House. And we have a U.S. Department of Agriculture that's working every day, you know, for farmers and cultivation, and we don't have a U.S. Department of Fisheries. We have NOAA Fisheries,

which is one-tenth of NOAA which is a small part of a big Commerce Department. And so anything that we want to accomplish is hampered by that, and so I think, looking for a rising tide, lift all boats, mean we really do need to improve communications, we need to find more champions, we need to talk about food and, you know, food security and cultural relevance in a way that grabs people where we get more traction because we have people who are fighting, as Amy said on the panel, like, fight for us. But it's hard navigating the halls of Congress. We don't have a ton of champions for these issues, and I think the internecine sort of rivalries as we look at the different parts of fisheries, you know, arguing against one another, I think maybe sometimes is in the way of the bigger messages around the importance for jobs, for communities, for wellbeing.

So let's just think about how MAFAC, with your outreach and with your voice, can help increase the reputation, the importance of fisheries and our oceans and the work that we're doing for decision-makers.

This has been just a wonderful meeting. And, again, Natasha, thank you for encouraging us and for your service on MAFAC. Jocelyn, I think you've been an amazing chair, really a great job and brought so much heart, as well as intellect to this. Bob, thank you for the tour from your team. They've done umpteen tours recently, and they were so fresh and positive, and we could see what a community, how integral they are to this community, as to well as this science that we depend on. And I'm really glad Emily, Cisco, and Sam had to leave for a flight. We're here. They're, you know, the key leaders of the organization. Cisco and I were talking about how our heads were kind of just spinning with trying to integrate everything that we've learned and that you've said at this meeting, and I think all of us probably will go away and process this a little bit more and come back maybe smarter.

So thank you. I think that MAFAC has an invaluable,

unique role, and this is just the group to make it achieve the things that we need from MAFAC. So I can't tell you -- can't say it any better. Thank you.

(Applause.)

### Adjourn

Chair Runnebaum: Thank you for your leadership to NOAA. Okay. I don't know if there's anybody else to thank. You've said all the thank yous, and I just want to say ditto. And, Bob, really, thank you for being here. That lab is awesome. And, Emily, thanks for your presentation today. The budget conversation always gets people jazzed up, so it's ironic to say maybe but yes.

So thank you, everybody. Thank you for traveling here. There are two final announcements. If you are interested in buying Wild Alaska seafood, please talk to Brett. He will tell you how to do it. Chris from Wild Source can help you procure seafood to take on the plane frozen probably in dry ice. I've taken it on the plane before. You can just shove it in your overhead compartment.

Keep your name tags. Leave them. Leave your name tags. And then if anybody is around tomorrow, Stephanie Moreland at Trident Seafood has offered a tour to folks at 1 p.m. if you would like to see a different facility. So I think come to talk to Brett if you're interested in doing that.

And please take snacks with you for your plane rides. Safe travels, everybody, and we'll see you on Zoom.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 5:26 p.m.)