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6	Marriott Beachside Hotel Key West, Florida
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11	VOTING MEMBERS
12	John GreeneAlabama
13	Doug BoydTexas
14	Roy CrabtreeNMFS, Florida
15	Dave DonaldsonGSMFC
16	Myron Fischer (designee for Randy Pausina)Louisiana
17	Harlon PearceLouisiana
18	Greg StunzTexas
19	David WalkerAlabama
20	
21	NON-VOTING MEMBERS
22	Kevin Anson
23	Martha Bademan (designee for Nick Wiley)Florida
24 25	Leann BosargeMississippi Jason Brand
25 26	Pamela DanaFlorida
27	Dale Diaz (designee for Jamie Miller)
28	Campo MatensLouisiana
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30	Lance Robinson (designee for Robin Riechers)Texas
31	John SanchezFlorida
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38	Doug GregoryExecutive Director
39	Karen HoakAdministrative and Financial Assistant
40 41	Ava LasseterAnthropologist
41 42	Mara LevyNOAA General Counsel
±∠ 43	Emily MuehlsteinFisheries Outreach Specialist Charlene Ponce
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Adam Dailorr

The Data Collection Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at the Marriott Beachside Hotel, Key West, Florida, Monday afternoon, June 8, 2015, and was called to order at 1:20 p.m. by Chairman Johnny Greene.

## ADOPTION OF AGENDA APPROVAL MINUTES ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN JOHNNY GREENE: If you will find your way to your seats, we're going to go ahead and start the Data Collection Committee. Chairman Pearce is not here, as many of you are aware, and so I won't attempt to take his place, but I will attempt to run the committee for him.

With that, I believe all the council members are present, with the exception of Mr. Boyd. With that, we will move into Adoption of the Agenda and do I hear a motion to adopt?

MR. DAVE DONALDSON: So moved.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: It's moved by Mr. Donaldson and seconded by Mr. Walker. Approval of the Minutes, any changes to the minutes? Is there a motion to adopt the minutes as written? We have a motion to adopt the minutes as written by Mr. Walker. Thank you, Mr. Walker. It's seconded by Dave Donaldson.

The next item on the agenda, Item Number III, is Action Guide and Next Steps, Tab F, Number 3, for your review. It is so noted on there and available for you. Number IV is Draft

Options Paper for Joint Electronic Charter Vessel Reporting Amendment, Tab F, Number 4(a) and Mr. Froeschke, if you're ready.

## DRAFT OPTIONS PAPER - JOINT ELECTRONIC CHARTER VESSEL REPORTING AMENDMENT

DR. JOHN FROESCHKE: Yes, I am ready. Good afternoon, everybody.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Hold on just a second. I hear Harlon chiming in and so I guess at this point I need to recognize him and is that the correct procedure?

MR. HARLON PEARCE: Johnny, I would like to say a few words. I am not there today and maybe I can help give you guys some of my thoughts on this particular amendment and what's going on, if that's okay with you.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Yes, sir. Go ahead.

MR. PEARCE: Okay. Thanks, everybody, for putting up with me being on the webinar. I appreciate it a lot. These meetings are important to me and I sure wish I could be there to aggravate all of you all together, but I guess I will have to do it by webinar.

As far as the electronic reporting programs go, you know how dear it is to my heart. Listening to Corky at the last Mackerel meeting this morning, the differences between the Gulf and South Atlantic and the Gulf -- Whether they be subtle, they are still there and there's just definitely some differences there.

I'm concerned that running the two together might create problems and that the possibility of splitting it between the Gulf and the South Atlantic as two separate programs -- In talking with Dr. Froeschke, he is concerned that the different mackerel regimes on the east coast could be really affected by some of the things that we're doing here today with this charter amendment.

With that said, also the possibility in this amendment of having two sets of parameters for the Gulf and the South Atlantic in the same amendment for situations that we don't seem to agree on, whether it be VMS versus GPS or whatever. It doesn't matter what is it and I'm not saying we need to agree on all that, but whatever it is we don't agree on, possibly we could have different parameters for the different sides of the Gulf and the South Atlantic.

The other thing I want to hear some discussion on today too is, besides everything I just said, is I think it might be prudent to split the headboats out completely, so that we don't slow their growth down by what we're doing with this joint amendment.

The headboats seem like we could get those guys going pretty quickly with their own amendment that would work right away and could run concurrently with what we're trying to do right now with these amendments that we're looking at with this joint amendment.

With that said, those are the things I would like to hear some discussion on and those are the things I would like you guys to think about as you go through this amendment and as Corky said, sometimes it's just very difficult for us to get the South Atlantic and us on the same page and I can understand why. We're two different worlds, but with that, Mr. Chairman, I will give it back to you.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Thank you, Harlon. We certainly miss you being here and we wish you a speedy, quick recovery and we appreciate your continued enthusiasm in working towards this and so we certainly all heard your comments and it worked out real well and so thanks to the staff for going through all that to make that possible for Harlon to weigh in on his committee that he's put a lot of effort into over the last nine years. With that, Dr. Froeschke, if you're ready, we will pick up and move forward.

 DR. FROESCHKE: Okay and so what I would like to do -- This is going to be covering Tab F, Number 4. There are three documents in here and so I will just make sure that we're all oriented. What I want to guide you through is Tab F, Number 4(a). Included for your review is Tab F, Number 4(b) and this is a technical subcommittee report that you all reviewed in January that we worked on last year. We used some of this as supplementary or guiding principles, if you will, and Tab F, Number 4(c) is the South Atlantic Council decision document. That's sort of their process and their iteration of this document that they will be reviewing at their meeting.

 Within Tab F, Number 4(a), this document, there are four actions which I will go over and a purpose and need, which I would like for us to discuss. What seems to make sense to me is to discuss the actions first, with kind of a feel of if we're going in the right direction collectively, and then we can circle back and

review if the purpose and need is adequate to address what we've envisioned in the actions.

Unless that's problematic, I am going to move to page 15, Action 1. I will give you a little bit of overview of what's changed in the document since you saw it last time. Last time, there were three actions in this document and really it was, in summary, one action to modify the reporting mechanism, e.g., paper to electronic. A second one would specify the location reporting requirements and a third action for the data flow kind of thing.

What we realized after we discussed this at the IPT level is that given that the charter vessels and the headboats have very different no action alternatives, if you will, it was problematic to include those in a single action and so the Action 1 will refer to the frequency and reporting for the charter vessels and Action 2 will refer to the headboats. I will stop there. I think there was a question.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Yes, sir, Mr. Fischer.

MR. MYRON FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think before we get into this that I would like to address the definition of a headboat and a charter boat, which is on pages 9 and 10, 1.3 and I guess 1.4.

 That's going to make a grave difference as we go through the document and whatever this council chooses as the definition is fine, but what we list is -- It seems to me that charter boats are all six-pack boats and headboats are anyone who carries over six and that's not necessarily the standard definition that's been used through time to define what a headboat is and this may make a grave difference if we separate a management plan for headboats and charter boats.

Now what we're going to have is a six-pack plan and anyone over six-pack in a different plan and so I think we have to start up here.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: We went through that with the Sustainable Fisheries meetings back in Houston several meetings back and that was a lot of my hang-up, is I didn't feel that it matched. However, in sitting through some of the AP meetings that just went on and how they handled it, it seems like they have kind of moved past that.

I agree with you 100 percent that the definitions are not where

they should be, but as we came through all the findings of the other committee, I guess we'll just move on and all, but your point is duly noted.

MR. FISCHER: Where I'm going with this is -- I don't know your business, but are you strictly what we would call a charter boat?

CHAIRMAN GREENE: That is correct.

MR. FISCHER: But this would define you as a headboat and I don't think you want to be fishing on that very small quota. I think you would like to bring some fish with you.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: That is correct, except for the fact that I do not charge per person and that has been the definition. That's where they went down the road and that's one of those things and it's not a large number of vessels that carry over seven that are not a headboat, but there is a number of vessels and that's correct. I want to say a hundred or 200 boats and that's just right off the top of my head.

MR. FISCHER: I just think this is something somewhere in the document we have to get straight and then therefore we have to see what's the quota that adjoins to that group of people.

DR. FROESCHKE: To further confuse the matter, in practice, the way this works is you're a headboat essentially if you're selected to participate in the headboat survey and so that could differ slightly from what's in the regulations, but that's the way -- If you're a headboat and you participate in the survey, you're a headboat and if not, you're surveyed through the charter MRIP survey and you're not and so I agree this is greatly confusing to myself and others, but that's -- We tried to reflect what's in the regulations and that's what is in document, but there is this caveat that in practice it is a little different.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. Any other comments to Mr. Fischer's point? Dr. Crabtree.

DR. ROY CRABTREE: It does seem to me though, because this amendment is about electronic reporting, that the key feature is whether the vessel participates in the Beaufort Headboat Survey or not and so if they do, then that's one reporting requirement and if they don't though, then they have to participate in whatever we decide the charter boat reporting is and I know that's not quite consistent with how the regulations define

them, but it seems to me for the purposes of these reporting requirements that that's the key feature and we're going to have to figure out a way to deal with that.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I agree with you, because we certainly don't want to leave anyone out and have a loophole where some group of vessels does not have to report and so either you're in the headboat reporting program and have been selected by the SRD or you're not. Mr. Anson.

 MR. KEVIN ANSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on your committee and to that particular point, something that we ought to consider is that right now when the states participate in the for-hire telephone survey -- Dave, if I am speaking off-base here, let me know, but the states routinely review the permit list that the agency maintains for the permits and then they contact the person that's on the permit and basically ask them what the status of that vessel is and whether or not they charter and if they do, they kind of ask some questions about their business and that kind of determines whether or not they get placed in the headboat Beaufort survey or the charter boat survey.

Right now, we've got a situation that if they're not using that for charter purposes, whether it's head or charter fishing, as it's defined there, then they just don't get included on the survey and so any of the trips that are being made there, assuming they are not being chartered, they are just making those trips and they're supposed to be captured in the private portion of the effort survey and the dockside survey and so maybe some clarifications to that as we go forward in time to somehow designate in that initial contact as to, well, they're not a charter vessel, but yet they are still using that to access the resource, particularly as we've got separate sectors now, because they may not being captured effectively or appropriately in the private recreational survey.

 CHAIRMAN GREENE: I agree with you and in looking through the document, I noticed Mississippi -- You know when you look at the number of headboats in Table 1.4.1, you notice the number of headboats throughout the Gulf and so on and so forth and Mississippi grew to five here several years back and I just would like to ask Mr. Diaz, if he's willing to answer, are there five partyboats in town or are some of them charter boats that are reporting to the Beaufort survey or do you know, Mr. Diaz?

MR. DALE DIAZ: I am not sure I can answer that question, Johnny. I could do some checking and maybe answer it at a later

time. I think this whole issue is confusing and some multipassenger vessels may be considering themselves headboats, but I would have to check on that. Do you have an answer, Joe?

MR. JOE JEWELL: I think we have four, but we don't have any boat that meets that definition of a headboat. We have four boats that have multiple passengers, sometimes between six and fifteen. We have none that meet that definition and so if that definition is the one that we adopt, then we have none in Mississippi.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I didn't hear anything he said and if there was an answer there and if you don't want to answer, I respect that as well.

 MR. JEWELL: We have no headboats that meet this definition. We have headboats that will vary in passengers at certain times between six and less than fifteen, but we have none that meet this definition right now and so if currently this is the definition of a headboat, Mississippi would have none.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Thank you. I just was reading through the document and so we'll move on there, unless there is any other comments relative to this point. Okay, Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: Thank you. What I would like to do is if you turn to page 15, Action 1, this refers to the mechanism and data reporting for charter vessels in the Gulf and South Atlantic and there really are three action alternatives and I will just summarize them briefly and then we can go over the finer points.

The Alternative 2 is a weekly permit submitted to the SRD and it's really what we have in the headboat now and so it's weekly or shorter than weekly if notified by the SRD and it would be electronic reporting via NMFS software, which is language we added at the last meeting.

It would be a weekly report due Tuesday the following or due Tuesday following the weekend. Currently in the headboat, you have seven days to report and what we've heard is that that can be problematic in that a shorter delay similar -- This mirrors what we have for the federally-permitted seafood dealers, this two-day lag, and so that's one option. It would be one report per week.

46 Alternative 3 is a daily reporting and it's the same idea, but 47 the reports would be due each day by noon of the following day 48 and then Alternative 4 is new. Last time we had an alternative with a subalternative in it, it was a daily reporting such that your trip information had to be submitted prior to returning to the dock.

We talked about this and there are some seasons, some vessels, that do multiple trips per day and so that really wouldn't work in that confine and so what we did is Alternative 4 is a trip level -- It would be a trip level reporting as we envisioned it, such that your information would be submitted prior to arriving at the dock.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Any discussion? Ms. Levy.

MS. MARA LEVY: Just a suggestion that given the prior discussion about headboat versus charter boat that one thing you could possibly do in this action for the different alternatives other than Alternative 1 is to specify that for the purposes of this reporting requirement that charter vessels are those that are not part of the headboat survey and so then you're capturing ones that are part of the headboat survey and throwing them all into this one regardless of whether they meet the definition of a headboat or charter in the definitions section. If that's the way that you want to go, that's an option for doing that.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I absolutely agree with you, because my whole intent with the earlier conversation is just to make sure that you are reporting to someone somehow, because I just don't want there to be a loophole. I think that's well taken and we will make a note of that, unless someone wants to make a -- Seeing nobody, Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: Just to go over the key points, the key difference to me between Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 is that Alternative 4 the information would have to be submitted prior to returning to the dock and so it would be submitted prior to that person knowing whether they were going to be intercepted or not and so that would be a different level of burden on the vessel operator, perhaps, but it would also permit more robust ways of validating the catch and so I guess some discussion on whether that's appropriate or necessary would be helpful.

**CHAIRMAN GREENE:** I certainly agree that it would eliminate recall bias to look at Alternative 4. However, Dr. Stunz.

DR. GREG STUNZ: Johnny, you hit on recall bias and I was going to point out that I think it's Alternative 4 that captures some of the concerns that I would have had of being heavily involved in this electronic reporting.

The technology is getting there in many aspects and it's just not so much of a burden anymore to do this. You can do it while you're idling back into the harbor almost. It's becoming so simple and this validation is going to be key for a successful program like this and just piloting what's going on right now, today, during the snapper season, this Alternative 4 is going to make a big difference for the success of that program, in my opinion.

 MR. PEARCE: Mr. Chairman, I agree with Dr. Stunz completely. We were fortunate enough, with Bonnie's help, to get a grant that's going to be putting VMS on some charter vessels, up to 350, to begin practicing exactly what Alternative 4 says, daily reporting at sea before you arrive at the dock.

There is a lot of things in motion right now that is leading us down that path and with this particular grant proposal, we'll get a really clear idea of how it works and will it work with the charter vessels in the Gulf and so I agree with Dr. Stunz that that's the direction we need to go and we are going to be practicing that as we move into the next three or four or five months. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Any further comments? Okay, Dr. Froeschke, go ahead.

 DR. FROESCHKE: My comment on this is, circling back to Harlon's earlier point, I think the South Atlantic, in terms of these alternatives, is gravitating to something like Alternative 2, which is quite different, and so when we have the joint meeting on Thursday I guess this will be something we either have to figure out if we can reconcile the differences or if we can't and if we can go down a separate path.

That's just something for you all to think about and I don't know if you want to provide some sort of formal endorsement of an alternative or something to allow us to bring that forward in a decision document for consideration on Thursday. I don't think we're really at a point to pick preferred alternatives or something, but I guess any guidance might help facilitate that meeting on Thursday.

 CHAIRMAN GREENE: It certainly seems that the conversation around the table points directly at Alternative 4, or that's my interpretation of it. I understand you saying we're not ready to make preferred alternatives at this point. I don't know that anything necessarily stops us from doing that, unless someone

tells me no, but if somebody wants to offer up a motion or something to select a preferred then go for it and if not, we will certainly leave it where it is. It's your call. Dr. Stunz.

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DR. STUNZ: I would be happy to make that motion for a preferred, Johnny, if you think that's appropriate now or if we need to wait, but I don't know how else we would do that to send a message that this is kind of where we're going. We can always change that I suppose, right?

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DR. FROESCHKE: We usually don't do those without the analyses and things, but, to me, it at least provides clarity for your perspective and so, like you say, I don't see a problem with that and I think it could be helpful, unless someone else has a problem with it.

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CHAIRMAN GREENE: I don't know if there's another avenue other than a potential preferred alternative or some other wording, just to kind of send a message to the South Atlantic of what our intent is, unless --

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DR. FROESCHKE: I say we do that.

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CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. That sounds fine to me.

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Chairman, Dr. Froeschke, PEARCE: Mr. back differences between the South Atlantic and the Gulf. way to fashion this amendment that there are two alternatives, one for the Gulf and one for the South Atlantic? That would help me considerably and I agree with this motion and don't get me wrong, but I am just trying to think past this motion as to where we're going and maybe this isn't germane discussion, but I would like you to think about how we might be able to do that in this same action and that's all.

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DR. FROESCHKE: I'm not sure. I suppose we could craft it. What concerns me is in developing the rationale for the document as to why one way would be appropriate in the South Atlantic but yet a quite different way would be appropriate in the Gulf, but I guess that's probably a legal question.

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MS. LEVY: I don't know that that's a legal question. I mean either way you're going to have to explain why what you're doing is appropriate or the rationale for the decision. I mean you could potentially have different preferreds. We've done that before, where the different councils have had different preferreds. I guess ultimately it's your decision about how you

want to structure it.

I suspect that the Science Center is going to have something to say about having different reporting methods for these very similar fisheries or sectors.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Good point. Dr. Crabtree.

DR. CRABTREE: I mean I think ultimately -- One, I think it is correct that the South Atlantic Council, in the discussions that I've heard, are envisioning something closer to Alternative 2, but I think this is all a balance between our data needs and the amount of burden we are willing to put on those who are reporting the data.

I think different councils can come to different judgment calls about that based on their experiences in their region and we've certainly had more issues with trying to track red snapper and closing the fishery. We have different legal constraints on us right now with red snapper, in that we're required to have a quota by the statute and required to close the fishery when it's caught.

The South Atlantic doesn't have any specific language like that and so I think we could probably come to a rationale that would allow you to make different judgement calls and I guess there are ways you could restructure this to indicate one preferred in one region and another -- They're separate permits and so I think we could come to that.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. It almost seems like it's maybe two different programs with everything going on, but, with that, I will go back to Dr. Stunz, if he wants to carry on.

DR. STUNZ: Well, I was just going to make a motion that we select a preferred alternative, but am I hearing from you, Roy, that we don't want to do that now?

DR. CRABTREE: I think you can or somebody mentioned a potential preferred. I mean I think there are ways we can indicate to the South Atlantic Council that this is what our intent is, but I don't know if there's really a difference between a preliminary preferred and just a preferred.

DR. STUNZ: I will make it simple. I move to make Alternative 4 our preferred alternative under 2.1, Action 1.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: We have a motion on the floor and they're

going to get it on the board. David Walker seconds it. While she's getting it up there on the board, is there any other discussion or any other points that anyone would like to make?

MR. ROY WILLIAMS: Just anticipating that there's going to be resistance from the South Atlantic, could we be more explicit and say for the Gulf of Mexico or for vessels in the Gulf or something like that, just so we do right away have that alternative the way we're going to do it and then they can do it a different way, so we don't end up with a stalemate?

DR. STUNZ: That's fine and so is that coming as a friendly amendment or just to add for the Gulf of Mexico?

DR. FROESCHKE: I think what we could do for the alternatives is we could just put a Subalternative a and b and then Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic and note that more than one could be selected.

**CHAIRMAN GREENE:** That seems reasonable either way. You are 21 basically accomplishing the same thing by doing either item and 22 I don't really have a preference and whichever you prefer, Dr. 23 Stunz. It's your motion.

DR. STUNZ: I am just for what's going to make it simple and clean.

DR. FROESCHKE: That will work and just next time you see it we might restructure it in that way to capture your intent and that's all.

DR. STUNZ: Okay. That's fine.

MR. FISCHER: I don't know who to direct the question to and Roy may answer for the Center, but is this what the Science Center would be looking for, would be daily reporting?

DR. CRABTREE: I don't know if they're going to have a hard and fast rule on that, but you know if we have very short red snapper seasons that weekly reporting is going to be potentially a problem, but I think this really gets at the validation aspects of it and all that and so I don't know that that's something the Center is going to take a hard-over position.

I think it seems to me that having them report before they hit the dock clearly has advantages in terms of validation, but that's not to say it couldn't be done in other ways and so, like I said, I think it's kind of a judgment call of is the reporting burden of doing this justified by the increase in the quality of the data and I think the Center can give you advice on that, but ultimately it's going to be your call.

MR. FISCHER: I anticipated the logbooks would encompass a lot more species than just red snapper and therefore stretch outside the bounds of the snapper season and I was looking to maybe morph Alternative 2 to where you could have a weekly reporting and maybe morph 2 and 3. I am trying to come up with something else where fishermen aren't required all year long to have daily reports, especially during the slower times or during the non-snapper seasons.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. We have a motion on the floor and is there any further discussion? All right. Anybody in opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. With that, we'll go back to Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: Okay. Next I would like to move to Action 2, which is going to look very similar in terms of the alternatives, except that this will refer to the headboats instead of the charter and so if you recall, Harlon mentioned one option would be to split the charter and headboat into different amendments if we thought that was necessary.

 A bit of history is in the dealer reporting -- That was sort of our first stab at these kind of generic joint amendments and we ran into all kinds of problems. I am not suggesting that we would here, but one concern I have is if something unanticipated comes up later with either the headboat or the charter sector in particular, it would be unfortunate if that delayed the entire thing and so that was one thing I was thinking about.

In terms of the alternatives, it's really 2, 3, and 4. It's the daily reporting due Tuesday after -- Excuse me. The once a week due Tuesday after, which is Alternative 2, and the daily reporting due noon the following day is Alternative 3 and then the trip level reporting is Alternative 4.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I understand your point is that having the charter boats and headboats lumped together is if one was to slow down that it could potentially affect the other and so there certainly could be the need to split those if necessary. Okay. We have a couple of alternatives in front of us and any further discussion by the committee on this? Mr. Donaldson.

MR. DONALDSON: Roy, what's the required reporting period now with the Beaufort headboat or John?

DR. FROESCHKE: As of last year, it's once per week and the key difference is now the week ends on Sunday and you have an additional seven days to complete the report and so Alternative 2 would be still once per week, but it would be due the Tuesday after instead of the Sunday and so you just have five days fewer to turn it in.

MR. DONALDSON: So essentially Alternative 2 is the closest to what's currently being done.

DR. FROESCHKE: That's correct.

MS. LEVY: One thing I wanted to point out with respect to these alternatives is currently the no action is if selected by the SRD and so headboats, like we talked about before, regardless of how they're defined in the definition section, they are only required to report in the headboat survey if they're selected.

If you look at Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, that language is gone and so it just says require that headboats do X, Y, and Z. If the intent is still to allow the Science Center to select what headboats it wants for the headboat reporting system and capture everyone else in the charter piece, we need to make that clear and you just need to know that the language that's in here right now doesn't really reflect that with respect to the other alternatives.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I certainly understand and agree with you. Now, I believe there is some electronic reporting by the headboats currently and is that part of the collaborative? Is that correct or no? Am I misunderstanding?

MS. LEVY: All the headboats that are selected report electronically now, but, like John was saying, they have a week lag in which they can report, but the key is that they're actually selected and it's not the fact that you're a headboat as defined. You're a headboat that's chosen by the Science Center. Alternative 2, 3, and 4 don't have that "if selected" language and it just says headboats shall do this.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I understand. I just wanted to make absolute sure I understood what you're saying. Any further comments? Dr. Froeschke, did you have a comment?

**DR. FROESCHKE:** No, not at this time. I guess the one thing to think about in terms of the alternatives -- Since you selected 48 Alternative 4 for the charter, it would seem odd to have less

restrictive requirements for the larger vessels.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I certainly can understand where you're coming from on that. Now, I would assume that the headboats in the Gulf and the South Atlantic report to the Beaufort deal and so that's not anything new. They have both been doing it through the jurisdiction of both councils, correct?

DR. FROESCHKE: That's correct.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. Just making sure I understand. Any comments on this? There's been some good points made. Dr. Stunz.

DR. STUNZ: To Mara's point and forming my opinion on these alternatives, I am working under the assumption that this would be a full census and that everyone is going to be doing that and so I don't know where that comes into the document. I just read it that way with that intent and so if we need to make that more clear, John, or whatever -- Maybe that's not the intent of other folks around the table, but for me, for this or the other components if we're talking about it being successful, it's going to need to be a full census-type activity.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: That's a good point, because I was reading it thinking a full census, because you are selected by the SRD and I would assume that all of the ones they want are. Dr. Froeschke.

 DR. FROESCHKE: This is another layer of confusion and so the headboat is called a survey, but in practice it is really operated as a nearly complete census and so this sort of circles back to Mara's point earlier that would this Action 2 apply to vessels that were selected by the SRD if we put that "if selected" language back in there and then every other for-hire vessel would go for the other one.

The only other thing is if they selected both, for example, Alternative 4 for both the charter and the headboats would it even matter, because they would have the same obligations.

MR. PEARCE: Johnny, I tend to agree with Alternative 4 too, to make it simplified for both headboats and charter boats. I think that that way the requirements are for everyone and everyone does it the same way and it's easier for the Science Center and it's easier for everybody else involved and I think that -- I believe that the headboats would not have a problem doing it that way. I think they're really aiming and going in

1 that direction anyway and so I believe that Alternative 4, 2 making it exactly the same as the charter vessels, helps us move 3 this document along as a unified document for the charter and 4 the headboats.

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CHAIRMAN GREENE: Good point. Any more comments bу the committee?

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DR. FROESCHKE: I guess the question is would you want the "if language in there and essentially that would be carrying forward the discretion of the SRD as it is now or would you want something slightly different? It seems to me the simplest approach would probably be to add that in, but perhaps I am missing something.

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18 19 CHAIRMAN GREENE: I don't know that the SRD would choose Alternative 4 and I guess that the SRD would be a little unique in the sense of this action item, because they're the ones that are going to choose or mandate when that is done, as opposed to us as a council.

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Now, I may be way out of line and over my head here, but that was the intent. I do agree that having both of them the same and having -- If you're carrying passengers for hire of any nature that you are going to report equally the same throughout the fishery, whether you're carrying one passenger or a hundred passengers.

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it a whole lot simpler, I would makes imagine, enforcement and everyone else, but that's just my opinion and are there any other comments? Okay. Seeing none, I guess we'll go back to Dr. Froeschke.

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Did we make a motion for this for a preferred 34 DR. FROESCHKE: Alternative 4? Did that happen? 35

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37 MR. PEARCE: Johnny, I can do that. 38

39 CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay, Mr. Pearce. Go ahead.

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Let's make the same motion we did with the charter boats and the past action, but using -- I can't see as well on this, but choosing Alternative 4 for the headboats and add in for the Gulf of Mexico.

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I guess I need to see if you get a second first. 46 DR. CRABTREE:

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48 CHAIRMAN GREENE: I thought you were the second. Dr. Stunz, did you --

DR. STUNZ: I second it.

**CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Stunz did second it. It's been seconded and go ahead, Dr. Crabtree.

 DR. CRABTREE: Some of these headboats carry a lot of people, right, sixty or seventy people. It's one thing if you're on a six-pack to say you're going to report everything before you hit the dock, but if you're on a headboat with that many people onboard, does that then become overly burdensome to do? I don't know the answer to that.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I don't operate a headboat, but I would imagine that if you have a week to do it and you do carry sixty or seventy people that your recall bias is going to be through the roof. If I were operating a sixty or seventy or a hundred-passenger headboat, I would want to do it right then, so I wouldn't forget or make a mistake that could ultimately come back and affect me or the landings or anything else.

Now, as I said, I am not a headboat operator, but I do operate boats and I do carry twenty or twenty-five people or up to thirty or forty and if I was to have to report and make sure I got it correct, I would want to do it right then. Now, would it be burdensome? Potentially, but the outcome of not doing it may be far greater, but it's one of those things.

 DR. CRABTREE: I agree with you that the recall bias is an issue. I just want to be careful that we don't get into a situation where the boat has to sit away from the dock for some unreasonable period of time while they do all their paperwork and all and so I am not saying this isn't a good idea and maybe it works, but I would like to have some notion of how long it takes and how they would actually do it and who would do it on these boats.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I don't disagree with you, because you certainly don't want a boat to sit in the water waiting on a report to be filed. I had a couple of hands go up. Dr. Stunz.

DR. STUNZ: Maybe we could hear from some of the headboat operators, Roy, because I have thought a lot about exactly what you were saying and that's why I didn't quite put forth the preferred here, but maybe a little perspective.

Back when we piloted the original iSnapper back in 2011, we had

headboats in that and they did it no problem for many species, but what made me think about this was that they have to keep track of how many fish they're catching to meet -- How many snapper onboard and how many certain species and so somehow that must occur and I just don't know how problematic that is to get it input by the time they hit the dock. My assumption is that it could be done.

MR. PEARCE: Give me a reference on how long these boats have to steam out and steam in time-wise. I know that these are slower boats, most of the bigger ones, and so they should have adequate time steaming back home to take care of their business and I don't think it's -- Like a charter boat that's very close to inshore and coming in and out quickly and I think these guys actually take a little bit longer to go out and longer to come in and maybe I'm wrong, but I do think that they have the time to do it and I do think they have to do it anyway and so if we're going to do it, let's do it right.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I don't disagree and I don't know about steaming or travel times for different parts of the Gulf, but if it's something they have to do, I think they will do it, but I would hope that we would get some public comment and maybe some direction from the public as to how we handle this. I had Mr. Donaldson next.

 MR. DONALDSON: I would just kind of reiterate what Greg and Harlon said. I don't have firsthand knowledge on the steam time or how long it would take to enter it, but with the technology there, with iSnapper and some of the other apps, I think it would be fairly doable to accomplish it, but I agree that I think we need to get some comment during public testimony to get some real-world experience.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I agree with you. Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Thank you and one small point might be to at least It would help in providing a little bit more time to the captain is prior to landing the fish rather than just arriving at the dock. The anglers have to get ready and everything and gather all their stuff and that might provide a little bit more time for them as well.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Good point and good discussion. Anybody else?

MR. FISCHER: What data fields are we trying to capture prior to arrival?

 CHAIRMAN GREENE: I believe that will come a little bit later in the document and am I correct?

MR. FISCHER: It may, but that might make a difference on how you feel about when they get this data in.

MR. DONALDSON: I would think that we would want -- Whatever we determine is required to be reported would be -- We would require everything, but you're right that we could say we only need the number of fish and by species and that could -- If it turns out to be a problem and it may not be a problem.

MR. FISCHER: I was just going to comment that that's right and we don't want a captain getting into the biological and you might just want a head count, but you would still need someone dockside not only to validate, but to get into the bio profile.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I agree with you. I thought we were talking about the stuff we're going to come up to in Action 3. Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: This is actually something that the elements that are currently required are in the document, but I think some discussion on whether this is something that the council will provide guidance as to what elements they want the headboats to supply or if, in discussions, the Science Center said these are the elements that we need in order to provide the science and so I was hoping Bonnie was going to be here, but we could get some input from the Science Center on what they feel the need is and so we could have a dialogue about how to do this, because this is part of the document that hasn't been fleshed out as much as the other parts, partly for this reason. We want to know what's possible in terms of time and then what sort of elements we feel are necessary and reasonable to give.

 CHAIRMAN GREENE: I would assume that they've been doing Beaufort Headboat Surveys for years and years and years and that they have a pretty good idea of what they already want in mind for the headboats and I would think this would be a whole lot simpler than what we're doing with the for-hire, because it's already there, but I certainly do not wish to speak for the Center and go from there. Any other comments?

We have a motion on the floor and I'm fixing to bring it to a vote. Anybody else? Okay. The motion is on the board. Anybody opposed to the motion as written? One in opposition. The motion carries. Moving on, Dr. Froeschke.

 DR. FROESCHKE: For your reference on that, Table 2.2.1 has the list of current data elements. Now I would like to move on to Action 3 and this is changing gears a little bit and it's sort of another area where we've had, at least at the IPT level and staff level, long discussions with the South Atlantic Council and maybe we have different visions.

What this is referring to is the catch location reporting, if you will, for specific trips and there is really two different things to think about. One is in the past it's been something where a vessel self-reported the fishing area within a box or a grid or something and it wasn't the specific spot down to a tenmeter radius or something like that.

Alternatives 2 and 3 would have location collected from a device, either some sort of tablet sort of device or a VMS, but the key difference between Alternative 1 is that the location information would be collected passively by a device and it wouldn't be something that someone self reported, which I'm sure you could think of both pros and cons for that.

That part, from the councils' perspective, I think we agree on those kinds of ideas and the choices made and we don't provide guidance on what choice is made, but that concept. What we've talked about differently are what level of specificity is necessary.

When I was working on this, it didn't seem to me that we would need -- We would want precise, but not ultra precise. You could sort of round off and get in a reasonable ballpark, such that we would know what area you're fishing and it could be used for depth range associations and things, but it wouldn't be mapping locations.

The South Atlantic I think feels that a little more precision is necessary in that level of reporting and so, again, I think this would be an opportunity to get feedback from the Science Center on how they envision using this information and if it's something where we just want to use the information to determine if a trip occurred or not, then I don't see that much specificity is necessary.

If it's to be used more in the stock assessment in saying these are the depths that it was caught and these are the fish that were caught at that depth and this is the bycatch mortality associated with this species caught at this depth and refining that process, then perhaps we could make use of that and so I think those are the elements that are worth considering.

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The difference between Alternative 2 and 3 is really the VMS for Alternative 3. The South Atlantic has indicated they do not want to use that technology in their region and so the alternatives are just reflective for the Gulf and this one includes both the headboats and the charter vessels as suboptions and so I will stop there.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. Any comments or questions? Leann

MS. LEANN BOSARGE: I am not on your committee, but I had a question about this. Alternative 2 is a NMFS approved electronic device that automatically records the vessel location at a specified time and I assume that there will be some sort of formula that will then convert that into the boat was fishing here and these were transiting points, sort of like we have our electronic logbooks on the shrimp boats.

That is mainly for effort collection, it seems to me, to find out where you're fishing and how hard you're fishing in those areas, whereas Alternative 3 typically the VMS is more of an enforcement tool, so you can track that boat so you know that that boat has hailed in and hailed out and he's out fishing or I see this VMS out here and this guy has not hailed in or hailed out and what's going on here. Do you see what I'm saying?

It's more of an enforcement tool and so I guess my question is can we have -- I am not on the committee, but when it gets to full council, can we have two preferred alternatives on this, because they address two different things? Could we possibly implement both?

DR. FROESCHKE: I think we could have two preferreds in the sense that the Gulf could have a preferred and the South Atlantic could have a different preferred. One thing that I think is a little bit different is it seems to me that the VMS and the electronic device technology have converged, in that both are capable of doing very similar, if not identical things, now.

The concept of converting the points into an activity kind of algorithm that is done with the VMS now for -- I think both of those could be done with either method if that is the desired use of the data.

**CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Good point. Any more conversation or comments?

 MR. FISCHER: I understand some of the needs in having a precise location or fairly precise location as it relates to water depth and possibly trying to enter in release mortality, but I do -- We have to remember two important factors that -- One, unless it's entered at the time, you don't know what the boat was fishing for and, secondly, you don't know what water depth they were fishing.

I maybe have to get better educated on charter boats around the Gulf and the 105 Louisiana active boats fish multiple species all day long and just because they're at these different dots on the map doesn't mean -- I might have caught my snapper in a hundred foot of water fishing fifty foot down, but then I went to fish amberjack during the open season for amberjack in a different water depth.

We just have to be cautious on how this data is used down the road and it's not quite as empirical as it seems on the surface and maybe there is a solution out there other than entering in fish per location, per site location, as you catch them.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Thank you, Mr. Fischer. Anyone else? Seeing no action out of the committee, Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: Do you want to provide some guidance on if you have a preferred direction on this? Two things I guess I'm interested in and one is if we wanted to change the language such that we -- When we say the location could be reported in degrees and minutes but not seconds or something like that, if you were concerned about the precision.

Two is could Alternatives 2 and 3 be -- Could there be like a multiple choice option, where if it was a NMFS-approved device that they could use either VMS or whatever the device was and so if they had some app kind of device and they're collecting the same data -- Could we do something like that?

CHAIRMAN GREENE: I don't see why we couldn't. I mean it's pretty well laid out that it's a NMFS-approved electronic device. It seemed like the South Atlantic was more toward a tablet or GPS-based deal and then the Gulf seemed like it was more of a VMS type of thing as well, but I think you're correct when you spoke earlier that the technologies have almost merged and integrated and become one and so you could ask -- The council wants this tablet to do this set of parameters and this council wants this tablet to do another set and I don't see it being an issue.

 I think that you can get information from one-mile squares if you want to get down to that and I don't think many fishermen would have a problem with that, but if it's not necessarily that it needs to be that precise -- Maybe it's ten-mile squares or hundred-mile squares. I don't know and that would be something for the Science Center to speak on.

I am certainly not trying to push my own items here in leading us through this committee, but if there is any other committee members that have any comments on this, I would sure like for you to speak now, before we hand it back over.

DR. STUNZ: I will just make a quick comment. I think my point is captured within these alternatives. I just don't know where we would be at a point for really any preferred or anything like that, because I think we need to hear some more public comment.

I am not sure that the charter captains have fully bought into the VMS or not and maybe some really have and maybe some haven't and there is a big difference in what VMS will do in terms of when you're out at sea versus what another device might do, which you can still go fishing and necessarily not hail out on an approved electronic device that you wouldn't necessarily be able to do that with a VMS and then there's the whole cost issue going on and other things.

I mean I guess I would recommend everything that's captured here, but we probably need to have a lot more discussion before we move further.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Certainly with two different councils and trying to go in two different directions, it complicates it. Mr. Pearce.

MR. PEARCE: Johnny, I agree with Dr. Stunz that we need to listen to some public testimony and I favor the VMS. I think it just gets a better job done for us, but I think we do need to listen to some other people, listen to some of the charter guys, and see exactly how they feel about this and take into consideration what the South Atlantic wants to do as well, but I don't think we could pick a preferred right now either. I think we've just got to have a little more discussion.

**CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Any more comments? Okay, Dr. Froeschke.

**DR. FROESCHKE:** Okay. The last action in the document is Action 48 4 and this action -- This is primarily a South Atlantic idea,

but really what this concept is, it's a data flow specifying where the data would be transmitted from when the data are reported by the vessel operator to ultimately where it's housed and made use of.

The idea of this is that it could -- If there was a specified flow, it would be faster. The specifics in the alternatives are based on the technical subcommittee document that we produced last year that you reviewed in January.

The rationale for the specific alternatives were that that was the recommendation of the technical subcommittee and I am going to take -- That was the South Atlantic's -- That is their rationale, is my understanding of that. I am going to take a little bit of liberty and speak on behalf of the technical subcommittee, because I was on there.

My recollection of how this was, in looking at the document, is the subcommittee did recommend a flow like this, but really what they recommended is coordination between the FINs and the Science Center to develop something like this. I don't recall that something as prescriptive as this was recommended and the concern that I have is that if we have it hard-coded in the regulation and some unanticipated problem comes up that it's going to make it much slower in response to that. It would also it more difficult to respond and incorporate technologies as they become available.

 I don't see where, in my view, where having this improves the quality of the product, because this is what's going to be done anyway and so the IPT and many of the IPT members recommend just removing this action from the document. I don't think this would degrade the quality of the product in any way, but it would give us more flexibility in meeting changing needs or opportunities.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. I certainly understand. Dr. Crabtree.

DR. CRABTREE: It does seem to me this is far too into the minutia and the details of it that really need to be worked out by the Center and GulfFIN and those that we work with and so it seems overly prescriptive to me. I would make a motion that we remove Action 4 to considered but rejected at this point.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. We have a motion to remove Action 4. Is there a second for this motion? Dr. Stunz seconds the motion. We'll take just a second to get it on the board.

 DR. CRABTREE: I think we're trying to remove Action 4 in its entirety. I think you could just say motion to remove Action 4 to considered but rejected.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. I believe we've got the motion straight on the board now and any opposition to doing so? With no opposition, the motion carries. All right, Dr. Froeschke, does that complete your --

 DR. FROESCHKE: Yes, that completes my review of the document and so what I plan to do, in working with Carrie and whomever else, is we're going to compile your discussion into our committee report and decision document and this is going to be provided to the South Atlantic Council and so we're going to have to coordinate this for the joint council meeting on Thursday, but that's what I plan.

MR. FISCHER: Could John explain, if you don't mind, late in the game, what species this covers for the Gulf Council? Would it be just reef fish or would it also include coastal migratory pelagics?

DR. FROESCHKE: It would include reef fish and CMP.

MR. FISCHER: Okay, because just the way the title -- It's just minor housekeeping, but okay. To me, it was not totally evident in reading the titles of each amendment.

DR. FROESCHKE: Yes, we've had a long discussion about that and normally the way that we do that is we just put the affected FMPs in the title and we don't include them in each subheading like this and so that probably is how you'll see it in the future. I think it's a little easier to discern what's going on.

**CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. That concludes your portion of it, Dr. Froeschke, and is that correct?

39 DR. FROESCHKE: Yes.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Next up, Item 5, is MRIP Fishing Effort Survey Transition Plan Presentation and are we ready for that? Next up is going to be a presentation and I believe it was emailed out to you earlier this morning. I believe that's correct.

MRIP FISHING EFFORT SURVEY TRANSITION PLAN PRESENTATION

MR. DAVE VAN VOORHEES: Thank you for the opportunity to address

the Data Collection Committee today. I am going to do a very brief overview of the Marine Recreational Information Program and an update on its status, but, most importantly, I'm going to be presenting today on the design of a new mail survey that we've developed to monitor recreational private boat and shore fishing effort and I'm going to describe our plans to transition from the historical telephone survey design that we've been using for over thirty-five years to implementation of this new approach.

Estimating recreational fishery catch is not easy, but catch statistics are essential to management decisions that lead to sustainable fisheries.

The NRC report produced back in 2006 acknowledged that, quote, recreational fisheries surveys may be the most complex national surveys currently conducted, unquote. This slide just illustrates the major sources of data that go into recreational fishing catch estimates.

Effort estimates, or the number of angler trips, or it could be the number of boat trips, are combined with estimates of catch rate. A catch rate is measured as the mean number of fish caught per angler trip or it could be the mean number of fish caught per boat trip, depending on your design.

These two components are usually estimated through two independent, but complementary, survey approaches. We have already implemented an improved method to estimate catch rate on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts with the new access point angler intercept survey design that was put in place in 2013. We are now embarking on improvements to the effort component of the total catch estimate for shore and private boat fishing and that's what I will be talking about today.

This map just illustrates that we have a variety of different types of recreational fishery survey programs in the different regions of the U.S. and the mail survey that I'm going to be discussing today will replace the current telephone survey that's represented in the circled area.

This little circle here represents the survey approach that we're using on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. In particular, the access point angler intercept survey, or APAIS/CHTS, the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, that's the part that we're talking about today. The new mail survey will replace this Coastal Household Telephone Survey.

 The Marine Recreational Information Program was designed as a partnership among NOAA Fisheries, regional fishery management councils, interstate fisheries commissions, state natural resource agencies, and recreational fishing stakeholder groups.

This partnership, through a clearly defined governance structure, establishes program priorities and coordinates the development and administration of research projects and oversees implementation of improved survey methods and data management tools.

 Initially, MRIP priorities focused on identifying and addressing fundamental survey design issues, many of which were identified by the National Research Council in their 2006 review of recreational fisheries survey methods.

More recently, as improved survey methods have been designed and tested, our priorities have begun to shift towards broad implementation of the improvements that we've developed. As new methods are being introduced, priorities will continue to shift toward addressing regional needs for better precision, timeliness, and resolution of survey estimates.

I am not going to go over these milestones for the MRIP Program in detail today, but this just maps out sort of the progress we've been making in MRIP from the start in 2008, following the NRC report and directions from the Reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act on how to improve recreational fishery survey methods.

We've been doing research and pilot studies since 2008. The National Saltwater Angler Registry was launched in 2010 and we implemented an improved estimation method for onsite surveys of catch in many different regions, starting with the Atlantic and Gulf, in 2011 and then we implemented the new onsite catch survey design in 2013 for the Atlantic and Gulf.

The new mail survey was developed over a period of years and I'll be talking more about that in later slides. I do want to point out that we are planning to do another National Research Council review in 2016 and we'll be getting the Marine Recreational Information Program reviewed to see if we've actually been doing it appropriately and we're making sufficient progress.

On the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, we've now addressed the major NRC recommendations for improving catch estimates for shore and private boat fishing. I want to point out that we're also very concerned about improving estimates for the for-hire sector, but

for-hire, charter boat and headboat fishing, but I'm only talking today about improvements for estimates for private boat and shore fishing.

The new fishing effort survey, which uses a mail survey design, will address the NRC recommendations for improving estimates of numbers of shore and private boat fishing Transitioning to this new survey will take three years require continuing collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

The initiative to develop a more accurate fishing effort survey for shore and private boat fishing was launched in response to concerns about the ongoing telephone survey, which I mentioned earlier that we've been using for over thirty-five years. Over the past eight years, we've explored a variety of sample frames, including saltwater license frames, postal address frames, and combinations of the two, as well as different data collection modes, including telephone, mail, and mixed mode designs that include both telephone and mail data collection.

This testing has resulted in the design of the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey, or FES, as we've abbreviated it, which was finally tested in 2012 to 2014 and recommended based on a report of that pilot study for implementation. Subsequently, we had it peer reviewed and the peer reviews recommended that this is an appropriate method to put in place for taking the place of the telephone survey.

This testing has resulted in recommendations to make a fundamental change from the current telephone survey design to a mail survey design. It might sound a little strange to some people and we've heard comments of why are you going back to a mail survey and that sounds like going back into the past and I will tell you more about it.

We did extensive pilot testing validated through independent peer reviews, indicating that the mail survey approach results in, number one, significantly higher response rates that the telephone survey design. Number two, it can be conducted within the timeframe of the telephone survey and so it will not have a negative impact on the timeliness of survey estimates. Finally, it is likely to result in more accurate reporting of recreational fishing activity by survey responders.

There are a few problems that most of you are aware of with the current telephone survey. It's a random digit dialing survey of households and, as NRC pointed out, it's a relatively

inefficient way to contact people who fish recreationally in saltwater. We end up contacting many households with no fishing participation at all. Only 5 to 10 percent of the households contacted in the survey actually report recreational fishing.

It only covers coastal zone households and so it doesn't reach anglers who live more than twenty-five to fifty miles from the coast and industry-wide, the response rates for telephone surveys are dropping precipitously in recent years and most of you are well aware of the fact that nowadays very few or far fewer households actually have landline telephones or use them. With the incidence of cell phones and many people now using cell phones only, this survey doesn't really have the ability to contact a lot of households.

There are many advantages to using a mail survey contact method. As I mentioned earlier, the response rates, we're getting 40 percent and higher, or nearly three times greater than the current phone survey response rates, about 14 percent. I should point out that nationwide our random digit dialing telephone surveys are now getting response rates under 20 percent pretty typically. People just don't answer their phone that much anymore, not like they used to.

Getting responses by mail, as I pointed out, does not negatively impact the timeliness. We found out that the returns coming back from the mail survey come back quick enough that the majority of the responses are received within the same timeframe that we normally get telephone survey data delivered from the current telephone survey and we've seen that the later responses that come back through the mail are not significantly different in terms of the level of effort reported than the early returns have come back and so it will be possible to still produce estimates on the same sort of timeframe.

Also, we can reach a lot more households now by mail than you can by phone and that's a very important thing, because the people who you can't reach, that have cell phones only, through a phone survey could fish very differently than the people who actually do have landline phones.

Also, the response rates are declining so much that we could find out that the people who aren't responding, aren't answering the phone, could have very different fishing behavior than the people who are answering the phone. These are potential sources of bias that we need to worry about.

In contrast to the telephone survey, the mail survey samples

from the U.S. Postal Service delivery sequence file, which is a database that includes every valid postal address in the U.S. Sampling from this database essentially eliminates the risk of under coverage. It can reach households with cell phones only and households with both types of phones but they only answer their cell phone, et cetera.

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To increase the efficiency of the survey, address samples from the postal database are matched with the National Saltwater Angler Registry, the mailing addresses that we have there, based on state licensing programs and state registry programs.

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This allows us to identify households that are actually likely to have licensed anglers or registered anglers that fish in saltwater. In fact, what we actually do is in the pilot study is we drew the addresses from the delivery sequence file and matched them up against the license frame, or Saltwater Angler Registry, and the ones that matched, we kept all of those in the sample, but the ones that did not match, only a third of those were kept in the sample and so we can vary the level of sampling for the unmatched addresses, decreasing it more or increasing it or whatever, but we can always focus more of our sampling effort on the households with mailing addresses that match to the definitely Saltwater Angler Registry. That increases efficiency.

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In summary, looking at the pilot study results -- This is based on doing the mail survey in four different states for one whole year, one in each of the subregions of the Atlantic and Gulf. This was New York and Massachusetts and North Carolina and Florida.

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35 36 We found that, on average, the estimates for fishing effort for private boat fishing were about two-and-a-half times higher in the mail survey then they were in the current coastal household telephone survey. For shore fishing, the estimates were quite a bit higher, as much as six times higher.

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Therefore, it's pretty clear that using this new mail survey method will produce higher catch estimates, because there will be higher effort estimates for private boat and shore fishing and that's the multiplier that's used for the catch rates that we get from the onsite catch survey.

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This increase is driven by a higher proportion of households reporting fishing in the mail survey than in the phone survey. The average number of trips per household is really not very different between the mail and telephone and so what are the

## implications?

Higher estimates and you might react and think that means we're catching a lot more fish and it indicates that we're overfishing and that's not necessarily the case, because it's very important to recognize that the new estimates that would come out of this mail survey cannot be directly compared to catch limits that have been based on assessments that used the legacy survey estimates. In other words, that used the phone survey estimates

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The annual catch limits that are set right now are not in the same currency as the estimates that would come out of this new survey and so it's important that we actually measure the differences between the two survey designs and get a good handle on how to calibrate that through time to adjust past catch statistics to better match what the mail survey would have produced instead of the phone survey.

There are potentially significant impacts on historical data time series and assessments, management decisions, such as allocation decisions, cannot really be made immediately based on this new mail survey design, because we need to be able to convert the past statistics to better match what we get with the new approach.

In order to address the implications, recognizing that the new estimates and the historical time series would not be in the same currency and therefore annual catch limits would not be comparable to the estimates coming out for the new design, we felt it was important to develop a transition team that would actually figure out how we should transition to the new survey design.

We formed a transition team that has members including folks from NOAA Fisheries, from the Science Centers, Regional Offices, and Headquarters, but also from the fishery management councils, the interstate marine fisheries commissions, and a number of different state natural resource agencies.

That team worked together over a period of three months with weekly conference calls to develop a timeline for a transition to this new mail survey approach and it's important that there is specified transition period so that everybody knows exactly when the new survey design would be put in place and used for management purposes.

I must say when we started out that there were a lot of

differing opinions about how long we should wait before implementing the new approach and how many years do we need to have side-by-side comparing the phone survey with the mail survey before we feel confident we know what the differences are and how those differences would translate into past years, but we ended up, after three months, all agreeing on a three-year timeline.

I want to point out that a number of members of this transition team are in the room today and I am not going to name everybody, but there is quite a few here and they contributed greatly to the development of this plan.

The phone survey estimates will be used for science and management over the next three years until the calibration models that are needed to revise past statistics have been developed and peer reviewed and adopted to revise those historical catch estimates. At that point, the revised estimates can then be incorporated into rerun stock assessments for key stocks and ultimately be used to set annual catch limits.

As I mentioned, this was an effort, extensive effort, involving a lot of input from a lot of different stakeholders. In this transition, this is really sort of an example of the ideal way we should move to any sort of new survey design.

 We started out by engaging external experts and we reviewed the current survey designs, much like NRC did. We had to go in and look in more detail than NRC did at all of our current surveys and figure out where the problems lie and what we needed to do to improve.

We developed those improved designs with the help of the experts and we developed pilot studies to test those new designs and then, based on the results, we came up with recommendations as to whether we would move forward to implement the improvements. We need to get an external peer review to endorse that you've come with an appropriate approach and then you begin a transition and the transition itself includes a few steps.

First all, benchmarking the differences between the method you're replacing and the new method that you're going to put in place. In this case, we decided on a three-year benchmarking period for the new mail survey design. During those three years, we will be doing both surveys and we actually started the new mail survey in 2015 and so it's ongoing right now alongside of the Coastal Household Telephone Survey.

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Based on the comparisons, we're going to develop an appropriate calibration, but we'll look at the differences -- Not only just the differences today, but we'll have to project backward and hindcast what the differences would have been in previous years. That's the tricky part and that's going to take a bit of work with help from expert consultants to help us figure that out.

 Once we have that, then we can incorporate -- We can revise the past statistics using the calibration model that's approved and we can then incorporate revised catch statistics into assessments and management decision making.

The transition we've developed in this case has basically five steps. For 2015 to 2017, we will be doing both surveys side-by-side for the benchmarking. At the end of the first two years, in 2017, we are hoping to have a calibration model developed based on the first two years of comparisons and that calibration model would be peer reviewed and approved for use to produce revised historical catch statistics in mid-2017.

Those revised statistics can then be incorporated into stock assessments for key stocks in late 2017 and when I say key stocks, we're only looking at the most important stocks in terms of the recreational fishery catch component. These will be the stocks that have a high proportion of catch taken from recreational fishing versus commercial.

That's going to require some rescheduling of assessments and it's going to be very important to stack up the key stocks for new assessments in late 2017 and that will allow us then to move forward in 2018 with ACLs that have been based on catch statistics that are now in the currency of the new mail survey design and it will allow us to move forward then with management measures, reference points, for 2018. Projections could be made based on the revised historical catch statistics to set management regulations for 2018.

 We will have that third year of side-by-side comparisons that we can fall back on for revising the calibration based on three years, but we don't expect that that will be very much different from what we generate from the two years.

What does this mean on the ground? The phone survey will be used for management purposes until 2018 and at that point, we would be pulling the plug on the phone survey and going forward with just the mail survey approach. We will be working with the states, councils, and commissions over the next three years to

understand the new mail survey estimates and incorporate them into management and assessments.

Progress and findings will be shared publicly throughout the transition process. The impacts are likely to vary from species to species and are difficult to predict, because we're not absolutely sure at this point what the curve is going to look like in the hindcasting portion of the calibration.

 It's possible that the differences will be relatively constant back through time, but it's also possible that the differences we're seeing today are greater than the differences would have been in earlier years in comparing the results of a mail survey versus a telephone survey.

I have one last slide here and that's just to point out that there a few other important improvements that MRIP is still working on, some of which was discussed here today. We are working with a number of partners here in the Gulf of Mexico to develop, test, and certify specialized survey methods focused on red snapper and other rare event or pulse fisheries.

A number of you are involved in that effort and so I think that's fairly familiar to a number of you, but if you have any questions about that, I would be glad to field them.

Also, we're working closely with some our state agency partners to develop, test, and certify for-hire electronic logbook reporting and validation designs. I know there's a couple of references in the document that we looked at earlier to using MRIP validation designs.

We have currently a project ongoing with the states of North Carolina and South Carolina. They are both interested in implementing logbook reporting for the charter boats and headboats in their state using electronic reporting mechanisms and using validation components based on dockside sampling and potentially at-sea sampling.

Finally, we're working with all of our regional partners to develop strategic implementation plans for each of the regions that will help us make key decisions on what methods to implement for recreational fishing surveys and what levels of investment we're going to make in terms of sample sizes moving forward for the regional programs. With that, I will be glad to take any questions.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Thank you for your presentation. Any

questions? Corky.

MR. CORKY PERRET: I just wonder is the transition team and the people involved with this -- They are setting the priorities with species and naturally I think around this table, if we ever had a unanimous vote, it would probably be unanimous on red snapper and is red snapper one of the top-priority species for this?

MR. VAN VOORHEES: Yes, indeed and yes, Corky, the transition team will be making the decisions as to what stocks are the high-priority stocks to be addressed in 2017.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Thank you. Dr. Crabtree.

DR. CRABTREE: When you look at this and if it actually comes to pass that after the benchmarking is done and the side-by-side in the Gulf -- If there is a difference as much as twofold in the magnitude of the recreational catches for all of the species we manage in the Gulf, you can see that this going to have a huge impact and it means virtually every allocation we have will have to change and all of our catch limits will change and the estimates of stock productivity would change.

The estimates of how much catch is in the eastern Gulf versus the western Gulf would change and so this has the potential to have huge impacts on everything we're doing and just we need to be aware of that and at some point when we have a better idea of how this is playing out, we really need to start thinking about how we're going to put all those pieces together, because we're going to need to take actions to deal with this relatively quickly and as we've all seen when we start touching on allocations and things like that, it's very difficult to move forward sometimes.

**CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any other comments? Harlon, if you're still there, I'll give you an opportunity to speak.

MR. PEARCE: Thank you, Johnny. Mr. Van Voorhees, I sure appreciate the discussion you just gave us. I also appreciate all the hard work you put into helping us get this volunteer 350 charter boats electronic reporting off the ground that we're going to be starting in a couple of months, working in conjunction with MRIP.

I think that's a very important step for us moving forward in a lot of things that you talked about today as well as the electronic reporting programs that we're putting together, but I

really want to thank you and your team for working very hard with us to get this program with the 350 vessels we're going to put in the water with VMS off the ground. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. Mr. Anson.

 MR. ANSON: A follow-up on Dr. Crabtree's point and, Dr. Crabtree, is that something that maybe the IPT can start -- I guess now that there's this timeline that the MRIP transition team has come out with that kind of outlines landmarks or points in time when certain things would be completed and is there any way that the IPT maybe could come together and provide some feedback to the councils, or at least to this council, as to, hey, this is what we might be able to do to kind of get ahead of the curve, so to speak, as much as possible?

DR. CRABTREE: Yes, I think that's something that Steve and Carrie and maybe someone from the Science Center could sit down and at least think about timing and the steps that we would have to go through. For example, if it affects allocations, it's going to have to be done through a plan amendment rather than a framework action and so I think this probably would be a wise thing to start planning towards.

MR. ANSON: Of course, the SSC and the Science Center will be integral with this as well and of course Bonnie is not here, but when I see her next, I will mention it to her and let her know that that's going to be occurring. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREENE: Okay. Any other comments? Thank you. We appreciate the presentation. There was no other business noted when we adopted the agenda earlier and so with that, we are complete and done.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m., June 8, 2015.)