NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

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COUNCIL COORDINATION COMMITTEE

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MEETING

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WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 18, 2015

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The Committee met in the Holiday Inn Capitol, Capitol Ballroom, 550 C Street, S.W., Washington, D.C., at 9:00 a.m., Kevin Anson, Chair, presiding.

PRESENT
KEVIN ANSON, Gulf of Mexico Council, Chair
LEE ANDERSON, Mid-Atlantic Council
JOHN BULLARD, Greater Atlantic Region
ROY CRABTREE, Southeast Region
MICHELLE DUVAL, South Atlantic Council *
ED EBISUI, Western Pacific Council
CARLOS FARCHETTE, Caribbean Council
DOUGLAS GREGORY, Gulf of Mexico Council
JOHN GOURLEY, Western Pacific Council
DON HANSEN, Pacific Council
JOHN HENDERSCHEDT, North Pacific Council
DAN HULL, North Pacific Council
BILL KARP, New England Council
DOROTHY LOWMAN, Pacific Council
BOB MAHOOD, South Atlantic Council *
DON McISAAC, Pacific Council
GLENN MERRILL, Alaska Region
CHRIS MOORE, Mid-Atlantic Council
TOM NIES, New England Council

CHRIS OLIVER, North Pacific Council
MICHAEL PENTONY, Greater Atlantic Region
GENO PINEIRO-SOLER, Caribbean Council
HERB POLLARD, Pacific Council
JOHN QUINN, New England Council
RICK ROBINS, Mid-Atlantic Council
MIGUEL ROLON, Caribbean Council
KITTY SIMONDS, Western Pacific Council
TERRY STOCKWELL, New England Council *
MIKE TOSATTO, Pacific Islands Region
BOB TURNER, West Coast Region
DAVID WITHERELL, North Pacific Council

ALSO PRESENT
EILEEN SOBECK, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
PAUL DOREMUS, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Operations
SAM RAUCH, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regional Programs
BILL CHAPPELL, Sustainable Fisheries
SARA DECKER, Senator Marco Rubio
BRIAN FREDIEU, Sustainable Fisheries
ADAM ISSENBERG, General Counsel
MARIAN MACPHERSON, Sustainable Fisheries
ROB MOLLER
CAROLINE PARK, General Counsel for Fisheries
WES PATRICK, Sustainable Fisheries
ALAN RISENHOOVER, Director, Sustainable Fisheries
MATT STRICKLER, House Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water, Power, & Oceans (minority)
KIEL WEAVER, House Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water, Power, & Oceans (Majority)

* Present via telephone

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9:06 a.m.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Good morning again. My name is Kevin Anson. I'm the Chair for the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. And welcome to the CCC meeting. I'll be Chair for this meeting.

Just a couple of things before we get started. As you're all aware, we have had some weather issues here in the last couple of days. And that's prevented a few of the folks that would normally attend from coming to the meeting.

So, they -- there's been a telephone number that's been set up for those folks to participate. And I certainly look forward to them participating.

But due to that issue with using the telephone, if everyone can kind of keep the background conversations to a minimum so that it is as clear on the other end of the telephone as possible. And then also, to help with those that are listening in as well as any of those that might be taking transcriptions of the meeting, if you could state your name, at least for the first couple of times that you make comments, so that the persons listening in can maybe recognize you.

So, with that, there -- we're going to go ahead and start with introductions. To my left --

MR. GREGORY: Douglas Gregory, Gulf Council ED.

MR. NIES: Tom Nies, New England Council, the Executive Director.

MR. KARP: Bill Karp, Science and Research Director for the Northeast Fishery Science Center.

MR. BULLARD: John Bullard, Regional Administrator, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office.

MR. PINEIRO: Good morning, Geno Pineiro, Vice Chair from the warm and sunny Caribbean Council.

MR. FARCHETTE: Carlos Farchette, Caribbean Council Chair.

MR. ROLON: Miguel Rolon, Caribbean Council, Executive Director.

MR. CRABTREE: Roy Crabtree, Regional Administrator, sunny Southeast.

MR. EBISUI: Good morning, Ed Ebisui, Chair of Western Pacific Council.

MS. SIMONDS: Kitty Simonds, the Executive Director.

MR. GOURLEY: John Gourley, Vice Chair.

MR. TOSATTO: Mike Tosatto, Pacific Islands, Regional Administrator.

MS. LOWMAN: Dorothy Lowman, Chair of Pacific Fishery Management Council.

MR. McISAAC: Don McIsaac, Executive Director, Pacific Council.

MR. POLLARD: Herb Pollard, Vice Chair of Pacific Council.

MR. TURNER: Bob Turner, Sustainable Fisheries, West Coast Region.

MR. MERRILL: Glenn Merrill, Sustainable Fisheries, Alaska Region.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: John Henderschedt, Vice Chair, North Pacific Council.

MR. HULL: Dan Hull, North Pacific Council, Chairman.

MR. OLIVER: Chris Oliver, North Pacific Council, Executive Director from the relatively warm Anchorage, Alaska.

MR. ANDERSON: Lee Anderson, Vice Chair, Mid Atlantic Council.

MR. MOORE: Chris Moore, Executive Director, Mid Atlantic Council.

MR. ROBINS: Rick Robins, Chair, Mid Atlantic Council.

MS. PARK: Caroline Park, Deputy Section Chief, Fisheries Protective Resources Section, OGC.

MR. RISENHOOVER: Alan Risenhoover, Office of Sustainable Fisheries.

DR. DOREMUS: Paul Doremus, Deputy AA for Operations.

MS. SOBECK: Eileen Sobeck, Assistant Administrator, Fisheries.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: And so if -- do you have the ability Brian or Bill to go ahead and recognize any of the folks that are on the phone? Or they can chime in?

All right, so those that are on the phone from the Councils, could you state your name?

MR. STOCKWELL: Terry Stockwell,

snowbound in Maine.

MS. DUVAL: Michelle Duval, South Atlantic Council, Vice Chair, sunny North Carolina.

MR. MAHOOD: Bob Mahood, Executive Director down here and we're kind of snowbound in Charleston also. But not by our own devices. Only by the devices up north.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Anyone else on the phone?

MR. MAHOOD: I don't believe Ben is going to -- he might be on and off. But I don't believe he's on right now.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Well thank you all. Sorry you couldn't be here. But hopefully we'll be able to incorporate any of your comments in the discussion here.

Just a couple more things before I pass it over to Ms. Sobeck. Everyone has the agenda. Of course you got your flash drives as well. So between those two items, that's where all the presentations are. You can find those and go to the website.

So, Ms. Sobeck?

MS. SOBECK: Great, thank you. Thank you Kevin and good morning everyone. It's great to be here today. It's been -- I've been on the job for almost exactly a year and I do remember when I first came to this meeting. I think it was maybe my first week on the job. And I really had no idea what was going on. And now I -- at least I know all the things that I don't know.

So, I feel like I've made a lot of progress this last year. But no, it feels very different to be up here after a year. I've met most of you several times and have a sense of some of the accomplishments and challenges that are in all of our Councils. And I really appreciate the ability to be here today.

Sam Rauch is on kid duty for at least part of the morning. He will be joining us later today. And maybe he'll be able to call in if he can't make it.

I'm going to apologize ahead of time for not being able to be here tomorrow as I need to co-chair another all-day meeting. But Kitty's aware of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. But Sam and Paul and Richard, Allen, the rest of the team

will all be here to report back to me on how things go tomorrow.

So I wanted to just have -- give you a couple of minutes of remarks on highlights from the past year and a perspective look at what's coming up this year. But I'm going to keep it short.

It has been a busy year as usual. And I don't know if there's any -- if there's ever been not a busy year in the history of NOAA Fisheries. A lot of challenges and issues that you guys are all aware of.

Everything from Bigeye Amendment 7 in the Western Pacific, deep sea coral work in the Mid Atlantic, Sector separation in the Gulf, Steller sea lions in the North Pacific. Every council and every region has its challenges that we are working through.

But there's still a lot of good news. Over 90 percent of the regulated stocks have catch below their annual catch limits. Additional stocks have come off the over fishing and over fished lists. And several more stocks are now being rebuilt. Total landings and values continue to remain high.

So, I'm interested to hear about progress from a few of our working groups in the upcoming two days. Including the Subcommittee on Allocation and the working group on Operational Guidelines.

I wanted to let you know a couple of my priorities and milestones over the last -- you know, the last year and the coming year. One of the things we don't talk about too much in this group, but I want to make sure that everybody knows that one of our two areas of priority and focus is on the -- focusing on recovery of protected species.

I think that when it comes to protected species under the Endangered Species Act and the MMPA, we tend to focus on listings and Section 7 consultations and the obstacles and slowdowns that are attributable to our responsibilities toward protected species. And that is as it should be.

On the other hand, I think we have -- we at Fisheries really want to focus on the fact that some species are recovered or recovering.

And we need to make sure that when we have successes that we get the word out. A lot of times these successes are due to hard work by the fishing community. As in the reducing right whale takes attributable to fishing gear.

And I think that we have decided that we do want to focus on some priority species where a concerted effort can stop declines or turn around a species population to make it be less of a burden on the community. And we will be -- we will be working on fleshing out this priority and identifying a few priority species where we think that some concerned attention can really -- if we really focus on those species, we can really help turn them around or keep them stable rather than allowing them to remain in steep decline where they actually place more of a burden on the other communities that they touch.

Last week, let's see, what day of the week was it? Thursday, we rolled out our National Saltwater Recreational Fishing Policy. That was done with the help of all of you. There were meetings -- public meetings associated with at least one council meeting.

We announced that we were going to undertake to come up with such a policy at the Second Annual Recreational Fishing Summit last April. And we really pushed through with the help of all of our council partners and the rec fishing community had an extensive outreach cycle. Published a draft policy and then came out with a final policy that we rolled out last Thursday.

We've also -- I also announced last Thursday that we will have an implementation plan that will be out in the next 60 days. So the policy is the top line document that basically says that throughout our NOAA Fisheries decision making processes, whenever recreational fishing interests are touched, that we will at all levels from the beginning through the final decision, make sure that we consider recreational -- the views of recreational fishing partners and stakeholders.

Does that mean that we're always going -- that we're going to put our thumb on the scale in favor of recreational fishing interests? No, it does not. It means that we're going to give

them the -- just make sure that we don't come in at the end of the day and at the end of the day say, and what will the recreational fishing community think about this? We're going to just make sure that they are included in our engagement from the get go.

Really look forward to getting input from everyone about the implementation plan. And how things are going. And I -- if anybody needs a link to the final policy, happy to provide that.

Last week I was at the Seafood Summit in New Orleans on a panel focused on bycatch. I think it's going to be -- I think we've done a lot of -- we as a community have done a lot of work on reducing bycatch.

I think that the word has not really gotten out and I think that's going to be an area of focus in the upcoming year or so to make sure that we continue the good work that we've all done in reducing bycatch. And to make sure that that word gets out.

So, we -- that's something that we'll be looking at internally in NOAA Fisheries about exploring ways to be more strategic about approaches that we use to minimize bycatch. And to reaching out into communities to make sure that we get everybody's idea. And that the work that we are doing is recognized.

MAFAC continues to be a productive group. There have been two new working groups formed. One focused on climate and one on aquaculture. And we will keep you updated on the work of those groups.

Two IUU related items that you might have been hearing about. We released last week the biennial IUU report to Congress. This report identifies and certifies countries engaged in IUU fishing and bycatch -- IUU fishing and bycatch on protected species or sharks.

So there was basic -- there was some good news in this report. All of the countries that were identified as having vessels engaged in IUU fishing in 2013 came into compliance and were positively certified.

So the sequence if you recall in this process is if a country had vessels engaged in IUU fishing, they're identified in one year. And

then they have two years to work with us to demonstrate that they've dealt with those problems.

And if they have, they receive a positive certification. That's a good thing. That means that you have brought yourself into compliance.

However, in 2013 we had identified Mexico as having a fishery that was -- had problems regarding bycatch of protected species. And we were unable to make a positive certification. So we are continuing to work with Mexico. We've had certain assures from them that they are likely to be in compliance in a few months.

And we will be making a certification decision. We've delayed our certification decision of Mexico. So at this point they are in a position of having no certification.

We did identify Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Nigeria, Nicaragua and Portugal this year as countries that we will be working with over the next two years to improve management measures. So we will be reporting back in two years about whether they have addressed the IUU problems that were identified in this report.

I'm going to give you a little bit later in more detail an update on where we are on the Presidential Task Force on IUU, which is co-chaired by NOAA and the State Department. And I want to just make sure that you guys have -- we're not going to bore you with all of the details of that report. But I do want to fill you in on a couple of recommendations that might affect all of us. And that you might want to be thinking about.

I wanted to update you on some changes in NOAA Fisheries' leadership. So, Jennifer Lukens has been named the head of our Office of Policy. Jennifer? So you will be working with Jennifer. She will be helping us coordinate a lot of policy and interagency work and MAFAC.

Is Brian here? Brian Pawlak? Oh, okay. Brian has a -- Brian Pawlak is the new head of our Management and Budget Office. He works for Paul Doremus. He's in another briefing. I don't know if he'll -- might be here tomorrow? I don't know.

But Brian is -- it's great to finally have this position filled. And I think it's really going to help us with our budget strategy and implementation. Brian is -- has a long history of working with NOAA Fisheries. Knows our -- both our budget process and our programs extremely well. And I think this is going to be a great fit.

Mike Seki has been named the Director of the Pacific Island Science Center. Not a surprise, but really great to have Mike in that job on a permanent basis.

And our Office of Law Enforcement is really the one senior office that we have not yet filled. We are almost ready. We are in the process. It should only be a few more weeks or months before we get that filled.

And at that point we will have a full senior leadership team at headquarters and in the region. And I think that that really -- that kind of stability really will help us move forward on a lot of our priorities.

My one last announcement, which is probably no secret now, is that one of our own here at the table, John Henderschedt will be joining us in a few weeks as the new head of our merged International Affairs and Seafood Inspection Office. And I really couldn't be happier.

I think it's just going to be a fabulous transition. Nobody understands the council process better then somebody who's been on that council himself. And really knows the fishery service from the outside. Incredible amount of industry and NGO experience.

This is an office that one of the few changes that I've made in the NOAA Fisheries organizational structure has been to merge these two offices. And we really want to create sort of a new vision of what does Fisheries -- what do we want to get out of some of our RFMOs? Our international arrangements with other countries?

How can we help reward U.S. industry, which is the most sustainable industry -- fishing industry in the world? How can we help promote that in a responsible way?

How can we coordinate our efforts across these two parts of NOAA Fisheries with

related but often differently managed programs together? And I really think that somebody with John's skill and vision is the absolute right person to fill the job. So congratulations John. Can hardly wait until you come aboard.

So, we're going to hear details from our -- from our leg affairs office later. We're all trying to get to know the new members and the new committee structures. And a lot of the same people, but sitting in different seats. Some new folks.

So it's going to -- it's not all I think in place yet. Or I'm not exactly sure how it's all going to work. But we're going to have our leg affairs folks make a presentation and a couple of Hill staffers to help start us on our road to understanding our new -- the new committee structures and the new players in their new roles on the Hill.

And lastly, the President's '16 budget. This is -- it's great to have this rolled out before you guys came into town so we can actually talk about something concrete and not speculate at this meeting.

Of course this is just the beginning. And Paul is going to help walk us through where we are in the President's budget later today and take any questions, talk in more detail about the lines that concern you all the most.

We all know that this is just step one in a lengthy process. I think even though it's just step one, I guess the last -- the only thing I'll say about the President's budget is I think it's started in a pretty healthy place for NOAA Fisheries.

We got overall a pretty significant bump up in the ask. And although we know there's a lot of bargaining yet to come, I think it shows a lot of confidence in the organization on the part of NOAA and the Department of Commerce and the Administration that they wanted us to start this process in a fairly healthy position.

So, I think without more ado, that we should get on. We have a meaty agenda. And it's great to see everybody. And I'm going to turn it back to you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you everyone.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you Eileen. Were there any questions for Eileen?

(No response)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. That takes us to our next agenda item, the Council Reports. And what I'd like to do is follow at least a little bit the agenda that's on the website. There's three councils that are listed. I'd like to go through those first.

And then the kind of going off the tracks, and finish up with the Gulf Council. So, that said, I'd like to do, if Brian and Bill you're ready? That would take us to the Northeast. Tom?

MR. NIES: Good morning. I'm not Terry Stockwell. Terry's on the phone and if I say anything wrong, I'm sure he'll correct me. Here we go.

We never follow directions, so rather than give you three priorities, we're giving you five. I think that really the last two I'm only going to touch on very briefly. I'm going to spend most of my time on the first three.

And some of these are things that we've been working on for quite some time. Some of these are developing issues. So, it's a little bit of a mix.

And I just want to comment that this does not in any way cover everything that we're dealing with. But these are just the things that we expect to occupy a lot of our time in the near future.

Probably the biggest one that's going to keep us busy for the next few months is finishing up our Omnibus Habitat Amendment. We've been working on this Amendment for well over ten years. We are expecting a final vote in the next few months. Tentatively scheduled for April. But a potential that it might slide until June.

We've done a lot of work over the ten years. From developing a model that analyzes the impacts of fishing on habitat. A very detailed model which identifies sensitive areas to identifying EFH.

This action could dramatically change the suite of closed areas used in New England to mitigate fishing's impacts on EFH to the extent practicable. There's a wide range of alternatives. I'm not going to go over all of

them obviously. But this is just the alternatives on Georges Bank that I've shown on the screen here. So you can see that it's extremely complicated.

The Amendment has drawn considerable interest from the public. We've received over 150,000 organized petition comments. We've received nearly 200 individual detail comment letters from various organizations and individuals.

It's going to be quite an effort to sort through all these comments from the public comment period which ended in early January. Which is why there's a little doubt whether we'll be actually voting in April.

It's going to be a very difficult decision for the council. Unlike a lot of habitat amendments that have been adopted in other regions, this is addressing areas that are actively fished by the fishing industry and could change their access to very productive grounds depending on what choices are made. And so it's become very controversial.

I think at the heart of the question is what is the best way to protect habitat? There's differences of opinion whether the best way to protect habitat is by large closed areas or by reducing bottom contact by allowing fishermen to fish where they are most productive. And I think striking that balance is going to be very difficult for the council as they make their choices.

We're having increasing difficulty with fisheries monitoring issues that stretches across a number of our plans. Not only the groundfish plan, but the Atlantic herring plan as well, a sea scallop plan. We have a standardized bycatch reporting methodology amendment that we adopted a number of years ago. We were sued on it and lost.

And in a nutshell, we're revising the SBRM so that it will take away just about any discretion that we have to assign observer coverage to meet management needs. The SBRM amendment will specify exactly how certain budget line items need to be spent and that's where nearly all of our observer money has come from.

So, this creates a problem when you're

trying to deal with issues such as bycatch by herring vessels or the groundfish monitoring plan. At the same time as this is going to come across, we're working on an industry-funded monitoring amendment which will try and delineate what is the responsibility of industry? What is the responsibility of government? How can those funds be obtained? And we're having great difficulty.

We're having extreme difficulty trying to construct legal, cost-sharing mechanisms. And frankly we're befuddled by this because we look at other regions around the country where they have significant cost sharing mechanisms.

For example, Pacific groundfish where they cost share at sea monitoring. And yet in our region, the legal guidance is that this is illegal. And so we struggle to understand why there's this difference between the two regions.

In any case, it's not clear that NEC is going to have any money available to fund the industry portion of any cost sharing program anyway. Because in part of the SBRM and budget limitations. So this is all coming to a head very soon.

The regional office has told our groundfish industry that it must assume the cost of at sea monitoring in August. This is not at 100 percent of the trips. We don't know what the exact number is going to be.

Groundfish revenues are probably at an all-time low right now. There are a lot of vessels whose net revenues on a daily basis cannot afford the cost of an observer. So it's going to be difficult to see how the industry is going to afford this.

In the same time, we're proceeding very slowly on electronic monitoring. Bluntly, we don't see that being the solution to these monitoring problems in the near future.

We are continuing to try and move forward on ecosystem-based fisheries management. We're at the stage now, an early stage, we had a number of stops and starts on this program over the years where we're trying to decide what is the appropriate approach to take.

Gulf of Maine water temperatures are some of the fastest rising water temperatures in

the world. So we need to get this going. But at the same times, we have to make sure that the approach we take is going to be compatible with the approach taken by other management bodies like the Mid Atlantic. Because the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in the region support both of us. So, we have to be trying to coordinate this.

We are also modifying or considering a modification to our herring ABC control rule. We'll take into account the role of herring as forage. So between bycatch, habitat, herring as forage, we've made some strides towards EBFM, but it's not a real formal program yet. And that's what we hope to work forward.

There was a couple of other issues that I mentioned. The first is that we expect to get assessments for all our groundfish stock later this year. If any of you have paid any attention to New England, you know every time that we get assessments, something comes out that surprises the hell out of us.

So, we're very nervous about the assessments this year. Our most recent assessments for many of these stocks are based on data only through 2010. Given the changes we've seen in the ecosystem since 2010, the warming of the Gulf of Maine, there's a lot of us that are very nervous about what's going to come out of these assessments at the end of the year.

We are not expecting that our two major cod stocks are going to show much signs of improvement. And this is a problem because it's one of our key species up here. And then of course we will follow whatever goes on with the Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization and the National Standard 1 Guidelines changes.

Thank you. I can answer any questions at the subject of the Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any questions for Tom?

(No response)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you Tom. Next we have the South Atlantic's report. And Michelle, you're going to give that report?

MS. DUVAL: I am. Can you guys hear me okay? Do I need to yell more?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: If you could speak up

just a little bit more.

MS. DUVAL: How's this? Is this better?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: That's much better.

MS. DUVAL: Okay. So I think Brian's going to run through the slides for me. So if we could go onto the second slide please.

I think the biggest priority that we have in the South Atlantic is our Snapper Grouper Visioning Project, which is planning for the future of the Snapper Grouper fishery. Next slide.

So just a little bit of background about the project. We kicked this off in December 2012 and we invited Chairman Robins down so you'd give us the benefit of the lessons learned in the Mid Atlantic from their experience.

But basically you know, we'd like to develop a proactive plan for the management of the fishery that addresses stakeholder concerns that incorporates new ideas and solutions from our stakeholders. So that we can end up with just a long term roadmap for how we want to see things move forward. Next slide.

So we had a lot of work. In the spring of 2014 we conducted 26 board meetings in all four States. And staff had their work cut out for them to synthesize all this information that we received both by State and by sector. We had a special council visioning meeting that occurred in the fall so that council members themselves could review all the input we've received.

And started looking at developing some draft strategies and actions. And we began review of our different strategic goal documents in December 2014. We have four strategic goals, management, science, communication, and governance. Next slide.

And the timeline for 2015 is just as ambitious. We're going to finish reviewing those in the spring. Take us out for the draft blueprint out for public comment in June, between June and September. And then we're hopeful that by our December meeting, we will have a final vision blueprint approved and prioritized action to include for an upcoming amendment. Next

slide.

As always, snapper grouper tends to suck up the most amount of time for our council. We have several other ongoing management activities including the use of spawning special management zones to try to continue to find ways to provide protection for species such as speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. Trying to work in conjunction with the industry to find where some of these special areas are.

One of the biggest things that we deal with, challenges we deal within the South Atlantic, is trying to track the ACLs of our species that have exceptionally low recreational ACLs. We've tossed around the idea of some kind of recreational harvest tag program.

Unfortunately, it's gotten a little wrapped around the axle on that. So I'm hopeful that we can move forward. We just need a different alternative because that survey was just not designed to accurately capture these species.

We've also been working through our South Florida Work Group to remove some species from the fishery management unit that are really mostly Florida-based species anyway. Next slide.

And one of our biggest topics over the past year and continuing to be so is modifications to the blueline tilefish fishery. We received an assessment at the end of 2013 that's provided quite a few challenges for the council to adjust. There have been multiple concerns regarding the data that were available for the assessment.

We've seen increased catches of blueline tilefish in the Mid Atlantic, so it is currently not regulated there. And we've been communicating back and forth with Mid Atlantic Council and staff to examine what our options are for appropriate management of that species moving forward.

Another big topic for us is looking at modification of the existing prohibition on the use of black sea bass pots while balancing protection of North Atlantic right whales. Next slide.

And then we have a multitude of joint activities with the Gulf Council. But I'm sure

Kevin and Greg will also mention. Most of those have to do with mackerel. We received a new mackerel assessment. So we're looking at modifying the boundaries in the mixing zone as well as potentially discussing some separation of permits. You know, this is a jointly managed fishery and I think in -- over the past year we've seen that there are probably some different management priorities for the two councils.

I think some of the other priorities that we have that are joint involve electronic reporting for both our commercial sector as well as our charter vessel sector. This is a continuing trend of moving towards electronic reporting that started with our head boats in the region and moved onto our dealers last year. Next slide.

And just a little bit more about our joint South Florida Committee. You know, really this is to try to harmonize what our suite of conflicting regulations for those fishermen. Mostly in the Florida Keys, but south Florida in general where they have one set of regulations from one council on one side of a bridge. Another set on the other side of a bridge. And then a third set from the State of Florida in between. Next slide.

So we've been working really hard over the past couple of years to try to adjust this. And sometimes it seems like the more things we come up with, the more things we create for ourselves to do. But I think we're hopeful about we'll be able to finalize something and give the fishermen some relief by the end of this year. Next slide.

So just a little bit about teacher priorities. Again completing division and contact and trying to see how we can apply those lessons to some of our other fisheries. We're always looking to improve our reporting and data collection and that's certainly where the electronic technologies plan in the southeast is aimed at least for our fisheries in the South Atlantic.

We're always looking to try to increase the throughput of our SEDAR stock assessment process. And you know, we have been working very hard to encourage and support the

development of cooperative fisheries' independent monitoring program. We see that there's never going to be more money for science, probably only less. So we're looking to try to work with the agency and the industry to find as many efficiencies as possible to get the data that we all need. Next slide.

And then of course, you know, there are always areas where we'd love to see additional support from the agency, including our stock assessment and fishery evaluation reports. Having those on a more regular basis.

I've already mentioned the cooperative monitoring and resources to support our existing fishery independent surveys and independent data collection. And as well as support to explore some of the data limited approaches to management that have been explored by a variety of folks recently.

A system for allowing us to have more timely tracking of our ACLs, particularly our recreational ACL. I think that has been a little bit challenging and frustrating for folks in the region. And then obviously we're always looking to improve communication, collaboration and other activities in the region.

So I'm happy to take any questions. Or could you even hear anything?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you Michelle. Any questions for Michelle?

(No response)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Moving onto Western Pacific. Ed?

MR. EBISUI: Thank you Mr. Chairman. This is going to be a team effort. So leading off will be John Gourley and followed by me and then hitting clean up will be Kitty Simonds. John?

MR. GOURLEY: Thank you Ed. We followed the rules and just gave you three top priorities. There was a big fight to get it down to three, but we got three. First one goes into data limited stocks. In the Western Pacific we only have four of 115 ACLs that are based on a stock assessment. Basically they're all bottom fish. The main Hawaiian Islands deep seven bottom fish and then we have -- which comprises of six snappers and one grouper. And then we

have bottom fish from American Samoa, Guam and CNMI.

The majority of our other ACLs are based on data limited methods from depaupered fisheries, data depaupered fisheries. West Pac FIN is not really meeting the needs of the council and has evolved over time to become basically a data repository.

To address this problem, the Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee, the FDCRC was formed in 2014 by the council. The FDCRC's strategic plan is a signed agreement that enumerates strategies, tasks and actions to improve data collection and conduct targeted research with the ultimate goal of helping in the development of stock assessments.

FDCRC is comprised of state and territory fishery agency directors, the Guam Bureau of Statistics and Plans, NMFS, Pacific Islands Fishery Science Center, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Sport Fish Restoration Program and of course the council. As no dedicated funding presently exists for this regional plan, the region will rely on competitive RFPs, such as SK to get started.

In order to succeed, this program will require a continuous and stable funding source similar to the funding line provided to the Fishery Commission to collect data in other regions of the U.S. However, it is important that the funding be channeled through the council. Annual funding needed to support the FDCRC program is 2.8 million per year. Or a paltry 140,000 per area, per year, for five years. Okay, Ed?

MR. EBISUI: West Pac's second priority is the pelagic international fishery management area. U.S. tuna fisheries are not only losing in the Pacific, but we are being hammered. The bigeye tuna quotas continue to trend downward. Meanwhile, purse seine, the bigeye catches are on the rise.

What's ironic about this entire situation is that the purse seine fishery, which is centered around the equator, their bigeye bycatch of juveniles exceeds the entire quota of longline bigeye. So it is the purse seine equatorial fishery that's driving the bus for our

bigeye fishery. And again, the purse seine fishery catches juveniles. The longline fishery tends to be heavily weighted towards mature animals.

The United States is compliant. And while there seems to be no disincentive to compliance in the area, for example, one country exceeded their bigeye longline quota by several thousand metric tons with absolutely no consequence. The only consequence was an increase in their quota. Their fleets continued to increase.

The latest event is that there seems to be some, not some, but a lot of under reporting going on where their catches are one third of what they caught in previous years. So there are some issues with this fishery.

Expenditure to monuments. Last year with the expansion of the Pacific Remote Island Marine National Monument, the President took out 410,000 square nautical miles of fishing area to our domestic fishers. It's taken the eyes and ears of the U.S. fishermen off the water. It's opened up the EEZ to incursions. And it in effect has promoted IUU fishing. So it's --- there are a lot of unintended consequences.

In American Samoa, our -- the second largest fishery, which is the albacore longline fishery, is under heavy competition from heavily subsidized and increasing foreign fishing for albacore. These fleets are able to deliver fish to the canneries without regard to the cost of production, contrary to what the American Samoa fishery experience is. And so it -- that fishery needs help.

We feel that no one in the fishery service is not leading as it could in WCPFC. The council has made repeated requests for the Commission to look at spatial management of the bigeye tuna which will we think would be much more efficient and much more fair regulation of the fish. Nothing has happened.

The council has taken initiative to hold workshops on issues of great importance to international tuna fishing. For example, the council has hosted workshops on bigeye movement, small island developing states and disproportionate burden. Workshops on purse

seine bigeye management and also longline vessel-based scheme. These workshops were attended by European Union nations, as well as Asian nations. So the council is taking the initiative in trying to do something to the best of its abilities to try and bring some mitigation to what's happening in our area.

Another area has to do with diverging reference points between the RFMOs and the council process. For example, under the council process our definitions -- our reference points are over fishing and over fished are our Magnuson reference points. Whereas the RFMOs are driven by SPR values. So, these divergent reference points could be potential sources for future conflicts and confusion. And we have asked the government to please direct its attention to resolving the implications of these divergent reference points.

So, next slide please. Oh, that's me. Okay. Evaluating Hawaii longline catch shares. Okay, perhaps the time has come. The Hawaii longline is subject to internationally established quotas in the western and central Pacific, as well as the eastern Pacific. And as I said earlier, these quotas are definitely trending downward.

There are more longline vessels entering, not really entering the fishery, but becoming active. Previously dormant permits are now being actively fished. Production is good. In fact 2014 has brought record catches to the fishery.

The council will be working with the longline industry and others to start to consider fishery rationalization options. I know that that was a bad word a few years ago, but again, perhaps the time has come. This initiative will require funding. And we are looking to the government to provide the funding so we can begin exploration in this area. Thank you. Back to John.

MR. GOURLEY: Thank you Ed. The council five year program priorities. The fiscal year 2015-2019 program plan and budget was approved in March 2014. And identified five program priorities with the first being to review all the fishery ecosystem plans. The council was

the driver for the FEP review and updating of the five FEPs. We've got the Hawaiian, American Samoa, Marianas, Pacific Remote Island area and Pelagics FEP.

We have itemized budgets --- have been developed for FEP monitoring and reviews, integrate ecosystem information and elements into the FEPs, monitoring data collection research programs to support management of marine resources, capacity building and fishery development, international is supporting U.S. Fisheries highly migratory species management trade compliance, and then outreach and education.

Currently, the council staff has started the FEP review by contracting external technical review. Public outreach to council family members for review and comment started in November 2014 in the Marianas and will end this month in Hawaii. The results of the initial comments will be reviewed by the SSC with the draft plan, hopefully, being approved by the council next month. Due to the history of litigation, comprehensive EISs will be developed for all five FEPs. Work towards this end will commence after the 162nd council meeting.

Annual funding needed to support the NEPA review of our five FEPs is $1 million for five years. Or about $200,000 per year for five years. And that's it, unless Ms. Kitty would like to finish up.

MS. SIMONDS: All right. I just want to add a couple of things. You know, Ed very carefully skirted around naming the country that is scooping up all of our fish in the Pacific, and that's China. China has gone from 100 boats like a few years ago to 400 longline boats. So our U.S. fishery in American Samoa is having a very difficult time catching albacore. And not only in American Samoa, but a lot of that swath, Fiji and all those other countries. No one is catching albacore except China.

So here's the thing. We were out somewhere two weeks ago in American Samoa and we spoke to both canneries, Starkist and Tri Marine. And Starkist told us that over the last several months the only albacore they're getting is from China.

Now the interesting thing about that is, that fish is being caught right next door to American Samoa in the Cook Islands. And then that fish goes to China, and then back to the Starkist cannery in American Samoa. That's -- you know.

The other thing about the importance of us taking care of our U.S. fishery there is that in order for Starkist and Tri Marine to have contracts with the United States for school lunch and military programs, the fish have to be caught by U.S. vessels. So, this is a -- this is just one of the complex, interesting complex things that happen out there.

And so we are asking the fishery service to do an emergency action for us. We will be doing this in March. So that right now we have a 50-mile closure to boats over 50 feet. And we want to allow our large boats to go in up to 12 miles to fish for albacore. And we believe that this is a very necessary thing. We're asking this to be a temporary measure.

But what I just told you about is just what's happening out there. And of course China subsidizes everything. All the shipments, everything for their vessels. And obviously our longline vessels are not subsidized in any way. The U.S. purse seine fishery risks, they=re -- we call it subsidized, but they don't call it that. They call it foreign aid. But for our U.S. purse seiners to fish in the other countries, we pay -- the U.S. pays $21 million a year, since 1988, for access.

So you know, things are just not right out there. And I don't -- well, at least the Commission out there, it does have voting for certain things, but to get to the point of limiting you know, the number of boats is just really impossible.

So you know, we'll talk to the State Department and you folks. But something needs to be done about this proliferation of vessels, including vessels from the European community. So you know, our fisheries are going out down the tube -- and all these other countries are catching fish, and we need to support U.S. fisheries or why are we here? I have other things, but I'll bring them up later.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any questions? Yes, Chris?

MR. OLIVER: Kind of an ignorant question. Kitty, the China -- where are the China vessels fishing? What waters are they fishing?

MS. SIMONDS: Well I have my trusty map here. So, they're fishing -- if you notice -- if you know where American Samoa is, surrounded by foreign countries, right next door is the Cook Islands. And so they're fishing in the Cook Islands. They sell permits to China and Taiwan. And so American Samoa is where some of the vessels come in to drop their catch off at both canneries. But what is happening with the albacore is they're sending it back to China, and then coming back to Starkist cannery.

But there's Kiribati right around it and so we're just right in the middle here. And these are the areas that were included in the Monument. No fishing. And as we said to the White House, we said there's no other country in the world who would not allow their fishermen to fish in their own waters.

So there was a very ugly situation. And we won half of it. And the enviros won half. Whatever that means, or we both lost. But there's virtually no enforcement out there okay. The Coast Guard can't be enforcing all these zones. The Coast Guard, also, they have ship rider agreements where they enforce for these other countries who are violating our zone. It's messy. We just want to catch fish.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: No other questions? So we'll go off the agenda at least. And I just want to give a heads up. We'll have Pacific Council next followed by the Mid Atlantic Council.

MR. McISAAC: Well thank you Mr. Chairman. Before we start our presentation, we wanted to show that the daffodils are blooming in Portland, Oregon when we left. And you may recall that we were one of the councils looking to avoid this particular week. Congress isn't in session. There's just a myriad of other reasons why this week is not a particularly good week.

But as you can see, out west the daffodils are blooming, the children are playing

and the Congressional offices back there are asking us what we think about the President's budget, and we're here. So, combined with the weather, we conclude this week is jinxed and we'll work on the agenda for next year.

We have a top three that we would like to bring the group=s attention here. Dorothy will speak a little bit about our groundfish trawl IFQ program that you've heard so much about. Herb will talk a little bit about ESA and Magnuson integration at the Pacific Council arena. And I'll say a few things about North Pacific albacore in our search for some international agreement.

MS. LOWMAN: Thanks Don. Since the west coast trawl catcher program was implemented in 2011, we've been giving periodic updates to the CCC every year. And today I wanted to kind of catch you up on some good news about the program, and also talk about some not so good news.

So first the good news. As has been the case in the last few years, the bycatch and discards are dramatically reduced from prior to the program. And fishermen are continuing to work on innovative gear modifications that are going to allow those levels I think to be decreased even more. Implement -- changes to the --- trading rules have been implemented. And that's allowed fishermen to trade all the way through the end of the year and then therefore be able to match their portfolio to their fishing strategies better.

MSC certification happened last year for 13 majors, 12 caught species. And the catch share was cited as one of the major factors in reaching this decision by MSC, was they talked about how certifying this was one of the most complex fisheries that they have ever certified.

In addition, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Program did a new assessment in 2014. And 84 percent of the species have now been upgraded to either a good alternative or best choice categories. And prior to that a lot of them had been red, red, red. So that's all good news. In addition, we have -- work is progressing and to allow electronic monitoring to replace some of the human catch monitoring. As

you recall, we have 100 percent monitoring requirement for this fishery.

The schedule is now to have the whiting fishery regs implemented by 2016. And the fix scare and bottom trawl by 2017. And the region is working really hard right now in completing EFP permits that the councils have also supported. That will help to provide the additional information so that we can stay on schedule for these implementation schedules.

And the program is paying off in some other ways too that I think maybe weren't as obvious. For one thing, we're having fewer lawsuits related to this fishery. And we're actually seeing some unprecedented and new collaborations between NGOs and the fleet. Including some ongoing work on thinking -- talking about EFH, potential EFH revisions that are currently underway.

So now, the not so good news. So while we've had some impressive accomplishments in reaching the conservation objectives, the success in meeting the social and economic goals are sort of lacking here, falling behind. In many way I think this is sort of a timing issue.

You know, we've had costs come on line, but the tools and policies to mitigate them have not yet been implemented. Costs have gone up even while we're still only accessing 35 percent of the ACLs. So you know, there's still a large upside for revenue that's staying in the water at this time. But at the same time we've had cost recovery implemented in 2014.

The observer subsidy that Tom spoke about has been gradually decreasing and is scheduled to end in this September. And that means that after that the fleet will cover 100 percent of the direct costs of observers, which the current rate is about $500 or more.

Observer availability has been also an issue for some of the more remote ports with fewer vessels. And so we are looking forward to seeing the revised observer rules that we're hoping that additional entities can be certified to provide observers. And this is important both in terms of observers and dockside monitors.

In addition, we have -- we certainly have some key council prioritized council actions

and a schedule that requires a lot of work from both the council and the region that are -- that again, you know, I think the fleet had expected to be already implemented. One of these are RCA adjustments.

RCAs were put in place as -- to keep the mortality of rockfish down. But now with 100 percent accountability, there's ability to allow more access. And therefore more access to some of this -- these sustainable levels of harvest that could be taken out of the water. In addition, we're working on mid water trawl season changes to allow better access to some stocks like yellowtail rockfish, which have a strong desirability in the market. And we are also working on widow reallocations now that that stock has been rebuilt.

So we need to get these things finished so that we can you know, provide more opportunities to have the revenue to meet these costs. And we need to do them soon so that we don't have unnecessary loss of vessels in the fleet. There is another issue. There's -- some of you may have heard about. It's not really in the council purview, but it's really critical to this fleet, and that's the refinancing of the buyback loan.

There was a strong bilaterally supported piece of legislation that passed the Congress at the end of last year to allow refinancing of this loan to bring it back to sort of today's interest rates. But there are current challenges and there's styling that the implementation of this critical need, which we really need to get done since that would give them another two percent of their -- essentially of their gross revenue to be available to meet these challenges that I just identified. And that's it.

MR. POLLARD: The situation with Coho salmon in the Columbia River is probably one of the more complex issues of mixed stock management/weak stock management. And lower Columbia natural Coho have been a constraining stock.

Now this is one out of perhaps 75 stocks that are mixed together in the ocean and river fisheries. Mixed jurisdictions of the

states and international situation with Canadian Coho and Chinook as well as the U.S. mixed and pretty much equally recruited to the fisheries and ocean -- commercial ocean recreational, in-river commercial and recreational, also tribal commercial and subsistence fisheries, both in ocean and in the river.

And in 2002 the Lower Columbia Natural Coho were listed as threatened under the ESA. And they became quite a constraining stock. Over the past two years, the council put together an ad-hoc Coho committee consisting of senior scientists from the various jurisdictions and developed what we call shorthand, the Coho matrix. An abundance and productivity based sliding scale on harvest that integrates the sustainable fisheries mission with the protected species mission of -- in the ESA. And allows -- well, it addresses the recovery plans and the listing recovery plans developed by NMFS as well as Oregon and Washington.

And the matrix includes a sliding scale of some specific fishery allowances that may occasionally go as high as a 30 percent harvest. But most of the time it will be more in the range of 10 to 18 percent. Which is allowable and allows the recovery actions to be successful. A good example of the management council and NMFS working together to develop a matrix that has been accepted and is coming into use, with the mixed stock fishery, it's sometimes a very small adjustment. I mean even less than one percent adjustment in the harvest rate on the constraining stock may have some very substantial benefits.

And through the use of this matrix, the scientists have been able to show that these small adjustments may not have a great conservation benefit to restrict further than they have a substantial fishery benefit to allow some harvest. And it's -- we feel very good about the way this has come out and it's a successful integration of what could be conflicting mandates. So, thank you.

MR. McISAAC: Thank you Herb. And thank you Dorothy. Our last one here is North Pacific albacore. It's currently one of our, if it's not the most important HMS fishery on the

Pacific coast. The stock is healthy.

The Pacific Council is advocating for the classic United States Magnuson Act type of approach. That would be an OFL type limit reference point, an ACL target reference point, so a buffer in terms of what the biological possible -- biologically possible catch would be. We're advocating for a catch-based approach, not an effort-based approach. And we would also note that the international considerations are proceeding quite slowly. This is all taking place in the western central Pacific arena where the United States, Japan, Canada and a couple of other northern Pacific Asian countries are the primary players.

There's an MFC exercise being considered that could be a very good idea or it could slow things down a little bit more. And I guess we'd note while it's going slowly, we need to remember what Kitty was saying about China lurking out there. And when they're done on south Pacific albacore, we don't really want them looking to the north Pacific albacore next.

Before I go to the last slide, let me say that the Pacific Council has always tried to be a friendly council. And we try to do some gifting whenever we can. And so we just had a -- we just provided for an important gift to our friends in the New England area. And I know we've only got three folks at the New England table now.

But we gave them an important gift just recently.

(Laughter)

MR. McISAAC: And when somebody could have run, as you see they're second and goal with one yard to go and you've got a hulking beastly running back that could run the ball three times to get one yard. Don Hanson called his old pal from USC, Pete Carroll and said why don't you throw one to the other team.

(Laughter)

MALE SPEAKER: And he did.

(Laughter)

MR. McISAAC: And that's all we've got.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you Don. Any questions? All right. That takes us to the Mid

Atlantic Council followed by the Caribbean Council.

MR. ROBINS: Good morning Mr. Chairman. If I could have the next slide. I'll run through the Mid Atlantic Council's 2015 priorities.

Our first initiative is one that's ongoing right now. And this is easily the most significant habitat protection amendment that we've ever considered. It's our Deep Sea Corals Amendment. I think it's fair to say that it's captured very broad public attention.

It's captured the imagination and interest of the public. And we received over 120,000 public comments to date. So the level of interest and input that we've had from the public on this has been very exciting.

You may have previously heard the Mid Atlantic benthic communities described as a mud flat. You know, I think the work that was done by the Okeanos Explorer and the other vessels in the region over the past few years has really provided us with stunning images of the deep sea ecosystem in the region. You know, it was previously largely unexplored.

But the impressions I think that we took out of those recent cruises were truly eye opening. And the diversity of those deep sea marine communities has been very impressive and one that we're seeking to protect through this.

I've thought ever since we initiated this that we would be able to protect the vast majority of deep sea corals in our region while having a minimal impact on our existing fisheries. And I think the data continue to bear out that idea.

We started this process with an interactive GIS workshop together with coral researchers, the fishing industry and other parties. And as we went through that, you know, we had a very good engagement. And what we're proposing to do before we take final action at our June meeting is to have another workshop that would allow for additional dialog around the specifics of those discrete zone management measures that we might consider.

We're proposing to protect up to 15 discreet zones. Those include all the shelf

slope canyons. And it also includes those incised canyons along the coast. We have five in our region. They're all very unique biologically and ecologically.

Then we're proposing to protect broad zones. And those measures would run from between -- would begin at depths of 200 meters out to 500 meters and would prohibit fishing shallower to that. And those broad zones are based largely on a habitat suitability model that combined with all the multibeam sonar imaging that's been done in our region, has a very strong predicted power to predict where corals would occur and where suitable coral habitat exists.

And so you know, as we consider those two different approaches, I think we'll be in a very good position when we take final action to have a package that adequately protects corals. But does it to the extent practicable while taking into consideration the needs of our current fishing operations in the region.

The next item is our Summer Flounder Amendment. It's a comprehensive amendment. Summer Flounder is probably our flagship species. It's very important socially and economically to the region both commercially and recreationally.

The management plan itself was derived from an overfished resource. And so most of the goals and objectives were oriented around trying to rebuild that resource. As such, a lot of the goals and objectives in the plan are out of date.

And the fishery has changed a great deal since the 1980s and 1990s when management really first got underway. And we are trying to now go in and update those goals and objectives. We're also doing a comprehensive review of the commercial and recreational management strategies used to manage that fishery.

This is a very complex plan because it involves state by state allocations. It's a joint plan together with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. And as such, you know, as we go through this, it's going to require a lot of coordination with the ASMFC and the States. But it's also going to be a very significant undertaking to try to address some of these disconnects between a historical objective and the current conditions in the fishery.

In part the resource has expanded and that has significant geographic implications. The center of biomass is further north than it used to be. You know, we think that's driven in part by the rebuilding of the resources --- that is the age structure of the population has been restored. And also potentially climate forcing.

So, there are a number of issues in play there. But we look forward to getting underway with that this year.

The next item is coming out of our strategic planning process. And that is the Ecosystem Approaches to Fisheries Management. That's contemplated as a guidance document.

We developed it through a series of modules. Each one of those of topics has been supported with technical workshops. And so we've had a science workshop on the management of forage fish. You know, the science one on that suggests that single species management techniques may be inadequate to really effectively monitor and manage lower trophic level fish.

So we're developing a forage fish policy. We've also initiated an action to preclude the development of forage fisheries on -- that are currently unmanaged until such time that we have adequate assessments to ensure their ecological sustainability. So we=ll sort of reverse the burden of proof there.

And we're also considering climate change in fisheries to have a solid adaptation strategy for that. We've had a number of workshops on that. One was scientific. The next was a workshop that we held jointly with all three Atlantic Coast Councils and the ASMFC.

And we were discussing the governance challenges associated with that, as fish stocks move potentially. You know, how can we be prepared for that with respect to governance?

And finally the question of species interactions. These are all issues that came out of our visioning project that our constituents wanted us to see us address more effectively.

The blueline tilefish issue that Michelle Duval referenced in her presentation is an unplanned and unscheduled priority for us. But one that came to us in December. Our staff

reported at that point in time that this fishery had expanded very dramatically in the Mid Atlantic.

We have a long history of coordination on this issue with the South Atlantic Council. And we had spent a number of years trying to establish a northern management area that would be north of the south Atlantic's management area for these species. As we have an emerging fishery in our area, and we had a couple of member states that took action proactively, Virginia and Maryland back in 2007 and 2009 or '10, to manage an emerging fishery.

But there was still a significant regulatory loophole that existed north of Maryland. And a handful of boats found and exploited that loophole in 2014. And directed on it commercially and landed about a quarter million pounds of fish. This fish is very sensitive biologically. It's like putting a red snapper in a blue suit.

And so, you can imagine the level of concern around this. We're considering requesting an emergency action next week. We have a webinar scheduled next Wednesday to consider that. But look forward to continued dialog and coordination with the South Atlantic Council to discuss a longer term solution.

And that's all I have. Thank you. Be glad to take any questions.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you Rick. Any questions for Rick? All right. Thank you Rick. Next the Caribbean Council followed by the North Pacific Council.

MR. FARCHETTE: Thank you Mr. Chair. Our top two priorities is to establish the -- well, we have established the Island Based Fishing Management Plans for Puerto Rico, St. Thomas and St. Croix.

With that we have recently approved nominations of a 15-member advisory panel for each district to review the FMPs and address management recommendations. The AP members represent all stakeholders to include both commercial and recreational fishers, dealers, charter for hire, sport fishers, taco shops and NGOs.

Second, as a data for area we have

with the SSN and the Southeast Science Center, Director Dr. Ponwith adopted an alternative for data analysis to comply with our ACLs. And finally, we have finalized the Pan-Caribbean Queen Conch Fishing Management Plan which involves more than 20 countries including Cuba, in coordination with WCAFC, the Western and Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission.

This management plan will be implemented by each participant country and is being coordinated by the WCAFC secretariate, Dr. Raymond van Anrooy and the International Queen Conch Initiative was started by the Caribbean council in 1996, coordinated with the U.S. Department of States. This Pan-Caribbean fishing management plan is a combination of all these years' efforts.

We also have the participation of the International Fishery Office of NMFS and all the meetings and projects related to Queen Conch Fisheries. We especially want to mention the hard work of Nancy Daves, liaison to the National Marine Fisheries, International Fisheries Office. Thank you Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Any questions? All right. Next we have North Pacific Council followed by the Gulf Council.

MR. OLIVER: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I will give a brief overview and look to my Chairman and Vice Chairman and perhaps Mr. Merrill to add to it. I don't have a PowerPoint. I promise I'll have one in June.

Our top priority probably is addressing bycatch of prohibited species. And by prohibited species I'm specifically referring to in this case salmon and halibut which are taken, salmon in our trawl fisheries and halibut in both our trawl fisheries and longline fisheries.

And we have implemented caps for Chinook salmon in both the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea. Chinook salmon, I don't have to tell you is an iconic species critical to cultural and subsistence and commercial fisheries in Alaska.

And looking at our Bering Sea pollock fishery for example, while it is one of the cleanest fisheries literally in the world, I think something like 98 or 99 percent pollock is what comes up in the net. But unfortunately some

of that other one percent is salmon, Chinook salmon and chum salmon.

So we've put some -- the council spent a lot of time over the past five or six years implementing caps for Chinook salmon bycatch and chum salmon measures also in the Bering Sea. We're looking at potential additional measures this April.

It will be a big agenda item for the council in April is looking at additional restrictions on the trawl, pollock trawl fisheries in the Bering Sea relative to Chinook salmon bycatch, and also chum salmon bycatch involved in that consideration as well. There's a lot going on with that package, and I won't try to go into the details of it. But hopefully if you have questions, I'll try to answer them.

The other species that's really captured the council's attention recently and will be a huge item for us this year is halibut bycatch. The halibut stocks have been, the exploitable biomass of halibut fish over 32 inches have been in a pretty steady decline over I guess about the last ten years. And the good news is, there's a lot of small fish, a lot of small halibut, smaller size and age. I guess that's also the bad news.

So there's in the Bering Sea for example, we've gotten recently to the point where the level of bycatch -- our bycatch, we have caps for halibut bycatch in both the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea and have for many decades.

But those caps were recently --- three years ago we implemented 15 percent reduction in the halibut bycatch caps for the trawl fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska. And the council is now looking at a package of halibut bycatch reduction in the Bering Sea literally up to a 50 percent reduction in the halibut bycatch cap by the different sectors that fish in the Bering Sea, both trawl fisheries and longline fisheries for cod for example.

The exploitable biomass in the Bering Sea has declined to the point where literally the bycatch cap is higher than what's left over for the directed commercial fishery. There's been concern that some long reliant communities in the Bering Sea, in the St. Paul Island area for

example, we're looking at a potential reduction in their fishery to literally where they didn't have a fishery.

So, the council's been working very closely with the International Pacific Halibut Commission to address this issue. And we are, like I said, looking at a final -- we did initial review of a bycatch amendment package a week or two ago at our last council meeting. And we'll be take -- the council's going to be taking final action on that in June.

So that's -- those bycatch issues have really been the focus of the council, the council's priority. I guess a second and related priority, is while most of our fishers in the Bering Sea are, quote unquote, rationalized either it's some type of IFQ or fishery cooperative program.

Our fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska, particularly the trawl fisheries are not. We have some semi-rationalized measures like sector allocations for Pacific cod. But we don't really have a rationalized fishery in the Gulf of Alaska.

So last --- over the past two years that's been a high priority for the council. We last developed a package of measures in October that was centered around a fishery cooperative. Basically a catch/share program that would allocate both target species in the trawl fisheries as well as the PFC species, salmon and halibut.

And that -- we're doing a lot of background analysis on that. And I'm not sure whether that program's going to stay on the same structure that we have in October. We're going to be revisiting that this coming October. So, we'll see where that goes.

But that has been a high priority for the council. Basically to give those trawl fisheries the tools to deal with bycatch reductions and the tools necessary to continue to minimize bycatch to the extent practicable.

So, and sort of related but not completely, I would say our third priority is further refinement of our restructured observer program. We have long had a comprehensive observer program for our groundfish fisheries

with something on the order of 500 to 600 observers per year deploying close to 40 thousand observer days per year in the North Pacific fisheries.

That was recently -- we're in our third year, what we call a restructured program, which is a fee based program where everybody pays an X vessel percentage on their landings. And it basically --- while we have pretty comprehensive, basically 100 percent coverage on most of the fisheries in the Bering Sea, we don't in the Gulf of Alaska.

And this program allows us to move that observer coverage around on an annual basis to where the fisheries where we feel like the best deployment of the available coverage under that fee program. And including some small vessels and halibut vessels that heretofore were not subject to observer coverage.

And one problem, this is prime -- this is an industry-funded program, although I think the Alaska Fishery Science Center has a $5 to $6 million a year budget where they administer the program. But the industry pays the direct costs for that observer coverage through this fee. And it's somewhere on the order of $15 to $20 million per year.

Under this restructured program, this is where I put my funding pitch in, it's the -- we do -- the cost, because of the contracting process, the cost that we estimated, we underestimated what the cost of the program was going to be. And essentially the cost for an observer day under this program is nearly twice as much as the cost per day under the pay as you go program, which was still the case in many of the Bering Sea fisheries.

But we're looking at approximately $1 million shortfall in 2015 for our basic observer coverage program. And one of the ancillary priorities of the council is electronic monitoring. We've been very aggressively pursuing EM solutions, particularly for our small boat, fixed gear fisheries that are -- many of which are -- it's impractical for them to carry a human observer.

But we want observer coverage or some type of coverage on those vessels. So we've

really been aggressively pursuing an electronic monitoring in particular for those fisheries.

And so that's an area too that requires funding and we're hopeful that in addition to the money generated under the fee program which could be used to you know, deploy either human or a camera, that internal funding availability that will help us get EM actually implemented in our 2016 Fisheries.

So those are, I guess what I would consider our top three priorities. I'll just stop there and Mr. Hull may have some additional comments.

MR. HULL: All right, thank you Mr. Chair. Dan Hull, North Pacific Council Chairman. I'll add to Chris' report with a couple of thoughts and observations. First about the council's ability to manage bycatch and quantify impacts and measure the success of our programs.

With respect to Chinook salmon bycatch management, I think a couple of important elements stand out in our ability to do that successfully. First, the State of Alaska has a really good accounting annually of the harvests and the spawning populations of salmon.

In the observer program in the Bering Sea for the pollock fisheries, there's a census of the salmon bycatch. And a sampling, a really strict sampling protocol for genetic stock identification. And then subsequent estimates of the river of origin of those Chinook caught as bycatch. And then an approach to turn that into an adult equivalent of the returns to those rivers of origin.

And then third important element of that program is our devolution of the responsibility to achieve the bycatch reductions to the pollock fleet itself through their cooperative agreements and their incentive plans to try to control on the vessel level the bycatch of Chinook salmon.

In contrast, halibut's quite a bit differently, quite a bit different. We don't have a lot of those same types of elements yet in our management of halibut bycatch. First of all, it requires a really close coordination with the International Pacific Halibut Commission.

That institution has undergone some

significant changes internally over the last probably three to five years. The stock itself has changed significantly as Chris pointed out. I think the average size of halibut, coast wide over the last ten years, has dropped some 30 percent or more.

And they've also undergone significant changes in their stock assessment methods. So the council is only as good in managing halibut bycatch as the data that and the information it gets about the stock from the Halibut Commission. And that's in progress at the Commission.

I guess the flip side of that is the Commission is only as good in its stock assessment as the data it gets from the council and through our observer program. And so this is particularly important since halibut as bycatch is primarily the juvenile fish. It's important to know what the size and sex proportions are of that bycatch.

We don't yet have the kind of exact accounting that we need for the Commission. It also applies to the discards in our directed halibut fisheries. These areas are, I think we've embarked on some closer coordination with the Halibut Commission and recently had a joint meeting with them.

And so I expect further development. But again, with as significant contrast I think between Chinook and halibut management. This is, I guess then leads into what I would say is the critical importance of collecting fisheries' dependent data for catch accounting and for stock assessment and I think especially in the Gulf of Alaska.

As Chris mentioned, we've put a significant amount of effort as a council and with the region and the Alaska Fishery Science Center in trying to develop electronic monitoring for small boats. And also in the restructuring of our observer program.

With respect to electronic monitoring, we do have a plan for a pre-implementation year in 2016 in which we will actually be collecting the data on discarded species in the directed longline fleets for vessels for whom carrying an observer is problematic. So, I think we've made great progress in the council generally along

with the region and the State agencies has really been actively engaged with all stakeholders to try to make good progress.

But, with electronic monitoring, it really is critical to have adequate funding in order to develop the technologies and the structure that the agency needs to be able to implement it. And I really think our success in 2016 hinges on that.

So, I'll turn it to the Vice Chair, Mr. Merrill for, you know. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Any questions? Yes, Don?

MR. McISAAC: Thank you Mr. Chairman, a question back to the halibut bycatch matter. I can't imagine anything getting quite as sticky as what you guys had to go through.

But my question has to do with the international nature of that, particularly up in the Bering Sea. Does the Russian connection on Pacific halibut come into play at any point in all these discussions?

MR. HULL: Mr. Chairman, no, it does not. I don't recall at any of the Commission meetings that the Russians have had any input into it at all.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, thank you. That will take us last to -- I've asked Doug to go ahead and provide the presentation, and I'll remind him that we are ten minutes into our 15 minute break Doug, so.

MR. GREGORY: Right. Therefore, I'll reserve the right to go first in June.

With the Gulf Council, manages the fisheries in federal waters across five States and America's sea. If you look at the grant, you'll see lots of bays and barrier islands and overlapping jurisdictions. And that becomes important. And at the very bottom right you'll see the Florida Keys, which is our jurisdictional boundary with the South Atlantic Council. Oops, did the same thing.

We had three top priorities. Red snapper regional management, allocation issues on red snapper and now on king mackerel, and cross jurisdictional management in South Florida that Michelle Duval touched on in her presentation.

We also have some other priorities

real quick. Rebuilding greater amberjack. We're having a difficult time doing that. We have recently made some more changes to try to get that. That was not rebuilt within the ten-year time period.

IFQ modifications in both their grouper IFQ program and our red snapper IFQ program. Electronic monitoring, and like the other councils, we're eager to expand into electronic monitoring. Our big hang up seems to be the lack of funding by the centers to do that. And of course National Standard 1 guidelines and reauthorization.

Back to our top priority, red snapper regional management. We've been working on this for a couple of years. We would like to try to institute differing regulations among States and/or regions. Initially we looked at delegation to the States and now we're exploring the similar flounder model.

The important thing here is we're only looking at recreational management; the commercial management for red snapper is IFQ that will remain federal. So we're only looking at recreational. And of course allocation as everybody knows is intrinsically difficult, and it's even more difficult when your recreational harvest assessments change every year. Your historical estimates change every year.

This is a little snapshot of our different allocation issues. Of course regional management is an allocation issue among the five Gulf States. We're also looking at, as I mentioned last year, intersector allocations between the commercial and recreational sectors of red snapper. The difficulty there is that both sectors are fully utilizing their respective quotas.

And now, with sector separation, we're looking at within sector allocations between private vessels and the for-hire vessels. And because of the way the for-hire harvest estimates are made and we don't have individual catch or vessel estimates in recreational fishery other than head boat/party boat, the for-hire industry is very eager to adopt electronic monitoring including VMS, which I thought was interesting.

Now in king mackerel, that's a fishery

that's above optimum yield. It's been rebuilt. We have got to kind of -- we have different fishing zones because it's a highly migratory species throughout the coast. And the fishing zones and seasons were established to give all areas of the Gulf equal access or appropriate access to the resource.

We had a shared resource with the South Atlantic Council, and the mixing zone or the shared part of that has changed dramatically in the last stock assessment. So that's going to cause us to reevaluate all the zones and the harvest levels in each of the zones.

And then we've also got the situation where, because of changing recreational estimates, it turns out the recreational quota that was established 40 years ago has not been met by the recreational industry historically due to these recalibrations. So they're probably meeting half of their allocation. So we're looking at transplanting some of that quota to the commercial sector.

South Florida issues, our third major priority is to coordinate shallow water grouper closure so that along the Florida Keys, which is 120 mile area, multi-jurisdictional area, that's one of the most heavily fished areas in the Gulf of Mexico for, you know, species other then shrimp and red snapper. We need to consolidate regulations to minimize confusion and problems both within public and the enforcement people.

So we've been meeting jointly as Michelle explained to address this. And we hope to have something to the councils in June with public hearings in July and final results and implementation by the end of this year.

With that I'll answer any questions. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any questions for Doug?

(No response)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. So that wraps up all the councils' reports. And that takes us to our break scheduled for today. It's 15 minutes. I would say, let's plan on ten minutes. Try to recapture a little bit of the time and make sure we try to get back on the track.

So in ten minutes from now, please be back. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 10:45 a.m. and resumed at 10:59 a.m.)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: So there were a couple of people that came in during the council reports. And John, if you want to go ahead and introduce yourself.

MR. QUINN: John Quinn, the beleaguered Vice Chairman from New England.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Thank you for making it. And then we have one other. Sam?

MR. RAUCH: Sam Rauch, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulator Programs at NOAA Fisheries.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: And we have one more.

MR. PENTONY: Thanks. Mike Pentony, ARA4SF from the Greater Atlantic Region.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. So that brings us to the next scheduled item, which is the Management and Budget Update. Dr. Doremus?

DR. DOREMUS: Thank you Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to you today about where we stand overall with our budget.

Before we get underway with the specifics here, I wanted to also add my personal voice to Eileen's in congratulating John Henderschedt to his new position as Director of our International Affairs Seafood Inspection effort. And we're really looking forward to getting underway on that front.

And also, I do regret not having the opportunity today to introduce to you, those of you who haven't met our CFO and Director of our Management and Budget Operation, Brian Pawlak. He has been acting in that capacity for about nine months. We have had a combination of people in that position since I've been with Fisheries; it's a great pleasure to me to have that position now fully encumbered by Brian.

He has a background in budget. He worked in our Formulation Division. He ran our Formulation Division for a period of time, and has had a number of years in Habitat Program. Was the Deputy Director of the Habitat Program.

So he has his feet on the ground in

terms of our programmatic functions. And he is today -- was going to be here to meet all of you, but is doing our budget briefing for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. That's a traditional annual budget process that we do.

So we're having to send him over to that event. And I'm sorry I'm not able to introduce him to you here today. So he's replacing the last permanent person who has held that person was Gary Reisner. Gary as many of you know, has moved on to be NOAA's Budget Director.

So we have a lot of Fisheries knowledge and expertise downtown and that's a great service to us given the frankly a rather complicated nature of our budget. And the challenges that we are all facing in this type of budget environment moving forward. So we're overall in good shape there. And I'll look forward to future opportunity for all of you to meet Brian.

We're covering here today the status of where we are in FY '15. In particular we'll look closely at the table for council funding as we do every year at this time.

And we also want to spend a little bit of our time here today looking at the FY '16 proposal that was just put out. We have gone through our traditional engagements with our Appropriations Committees on the House and the Senate.

And that process is moving forward fairly well. And provided overall look at our budget with some concluding notes. That's really part one in your agenda; that's listed as the 10:45 to 11:45 slot. We do have -- and we'll pause at that point for questions, discussion about budget.

And then we'll move into an administrative update if you will, heads up on our overall approach to records management for the agency, which will affect the work of the councils in some measure. As well as a very important few minutes on our S-K Grant process, which you all are contributing to in a rather substantial way. And we want to review where we are and make -- have the opportunity to discuss

what is coming and what to expect.

We do have here with us today from our Management and Budget Operation, Dan Namur, who is the Program Manager for the S-K Grant process and he may contribute to that discussion. I think Dan's around. He's in the back.

He has been extraordinarily helpful. We have quite a big lift in moving that one forward this year. So we'll spend some time on that.

Overall, in 2015 our bottom line number as it were is $958.2. That is down from FY '14. But FY '14, as you recall, was a bit of an aberration because it had $75 million in disaster mitigation funds.

So overall, for our operations, research and facilities funding, our core programs, as we have it here, it's a modest increase, 1.6 percent over FY '14. And we are pleased to be able to work with that in this environment. And I'll go through where our programs evolved during the course of the last few years.

This is a table we conventionally use. It might be a little difficult to read from the table. But what you have here, this is our budget broken down into major subactivities as our budget has been structured up to this point in time. And I'll get into that issue in a little bit.

But we have our protected resources line, our fisheries resource and management line, enforcement and observers and habitat. Those are the primary programmatic buckets, if you will, of our program. There are a range of expenditures in other activities supporting Fisheries as you've become familiar with.

This is one of the areas of our budget and I'm going to talk later. We do have in our FY '16 proposal, it is in a different configuration. We have along with other parts of NOAA, are proposing a consolidation of our budget so that it's actually structurally more sensible. We have like things with like things.

And when we get to this table for FY '16, you'll see some difference there. But that other activity supporting Fisheries is the main thing to change. There's a lot of science-funded

programs there and they got put in different buckets, if you will.

What I'd like to point out on this table and my laser is a little bit weak and difficult to use, but I won't use it. The enacted line, if you look at the last two columns, that's our request line relative to what actually came forward.

And one of the major take aways there just scanning down you'll see that the FY15 enacted and we understand that Congress had just changed its composition. The FY '15 budget was largely a continuity budget. And many of the increases that were proposed, with the exception of habitat, where we got some unexpected changes in the Congressional enacted budget.

In all instances while our budget is up slightly from FY '14, in all instances we were down from the President's FY '15 request. That was a very strong request. It recognized a number of significant needs in our program in all areas, protected resources, fisheries, research and management, and many of those got pushed to the right.

We did see an increase in our habitat conservation and restoration line. There was an addition of a $5 million grant effort there that I'll talk about at a little bit further.

The other thing I always encourage people to do is also look by subactivity over time. So if you use 2011 as a bit of a reference point, you can see in each of these areas where we are today relative to FY '10, FY '11, which were essentially the high-water marks in recent years for our budget.

So while we are up slightly from FY '14, we are trying to move out of a hole from sequestration years in FY '13. We are still down about nine percent in our ORF budget off of where we were in FY '10.

And you can see that in comparing the first and the last columns where we are today, with the FY '15 being the last column and the first column is a few years back in FY '11. And across the board we are with the exception of our enforcement and observers area and our habitat areas, our major lines are down relative to the historical expenditures there.

So I wanted to point those major features out about where we are in FY '15.

This is our detailed council funding table. The primary line is the regional council PPA line that is enacted by Congress.

And as you know, we've gone over in great detail in prior years, there are also detailed additional contributions to council resources from NEPA, from our fisheries research and management PPA and specific areas that are broken out here, ACL implementation, regulatory streamlining, SSC stipends and in the peer review funding. And that varies by council.

And we have the breakout here for each of the councils. There's also some expended annual stock assessment money, a small amount that flows to some councils.

So we have a bottom line on the FY '15 number, if my laser seems to last and in the second, is down at the bottom there, FY2015 spent plan, basically $27.9. So we're seeing an increase of about 2.5 percent available to the councils. It's up about $670.5 thousand off of last year.

These numbers do reflect an across the board reduction that OMB levied on all of our PPAs. It was small, .28 percent. Just under .3 percent. So that's built into what you're seeing here as well as our M&A, which is very, very close. It's the same practice as last year, very close to the same amount. Just a small variation in our M&A at 4 percent this year from 3.9 last year.

So that's the council funding. We have gone to great efforts -- given the review, the grant renewal process -- to get an allocation from Office of Management and Budget early. And to accelerate that process we have sent some information out to all of you about where we stand.

We're working very closely on a daily basis through our grants staff. That is our highest priority. We're moving it very, very quickly. And we anticipate having most of the grant process done within a few weeks.

So we are accelerating that as much as the system can tolerate and just wanted to confirm our commitment to doing that and that we

feel like we're pretty close to the end of the line there.

And with that, let me just make some observations about the '16 budget. It was just released. We were pleased to have it released on time; it has not been in recent years given the difficulties in the last few years with the overall budget environment.

We've got a link here to the Blue Book. As is always the case, we make all of our budget information available online. You can actually see our entire Congressional submission. If you really want to punish yourself, there's hundreds of pages there that you can work through to see the details on what we've asked for, what the justification looks like, at every level.

I'll go through the fundamental changes in FY16. But I want to do this in the context of the realities that we are currently seeing and expect to hear more in specific terms with the budget on the Hill.

As is the case across the board for domestic discretionary spending, the President's budget was a very strong budget. We are continuing to see as we did see in '14 and in '15, very strong recognition by NOAA, by the Department, by the Office of Management and Budget.

Very strong recognition of our program requirements, of shortfalls in key areas in our budget. And a lot of those are recognized here, in very good measure, both with Fisheries' budget and in other areas of NOAA's overall budget that we rely on. And I'll point that out on one slide coming up.

This is a very, very strong budget for us. But we also need to acknowledge the overall policy and political environment that this budget is being received in. Our discussions with Congressional Appropriations Staff have gone very, very well. But we do not yet know what the top-line pressure is going to be.

This is a substantial increase off of where a lot of the thinking has been in Congress on appropriations and elsewhere. And I think you can see that a little bit in the FY '15 budget, which basically was a continuity budget with some minor adjustments.

There's a great likelihood of something like that in the future. It would not be a surprise. There are also a lot of discussions about what the relevant reference point is for our budget. We tend to look at FY '10, FY '11 before we hit the economically driven reductions that showed up across the board for domestic discretionary spending.

The sequestration law that was put into place was one measure for dealing with that. And that remains to be fully played out. So a lot of uncertainty. That's the bottom line with our budget. We emphasize it every time we talk about it.

This could go a number of different ways. If it goes towards the President's budget, which we all obviously hope for and are making a case for, that would be a great thing. And I'll detail exactly why that's the case in the coming few slides.

So starting here, it's the big picture. It's about $957 million in discretionary. That's really where our operations funding is. Operations, research and facilities. This is about a 3.3 increase over the enacted budget. So we're building back again, continuing to progress back towards what we might consider to be more reasonable budgets given our mission requirements.

And this just shows you the big puts and takes with technical adjustments, inflationary adjustments. And the large one is where I'm going to focus on, which is where our efforts are outlined and focused on in our Congressional interactions. And that's on the $55 million in program changes that are built into our budget.

This is a real key slide. It really explains the overarching strategy for what we're trying to do. We can step through the puts and takes, but they really come down to three fundamental things.

The first two, actually all of them, but the third one is an accent on what we always call our core mission funding. We have very, very distinct statutory requirements, drivers, Magnuson, ESA and MMPA being the primary ones. We're responsible for something on the order of

85 statutory requirements drivers. But those are the three that drive our mission.

We are in the sustainable fisheries business. We are in the business of conserving, recovering protected resources. And investing in habitat science and restoration is required to do those two things. Our budget reflects that.

These first two elements involve a series of increases on the order of $14 million for domestic fisheries management with better science, new technologies. We have increases in electronic monitoring.

Aquaculture and some habitat investments to improve coastal resiliencies that are linked to Fisheries' needs and considerations that go into this category. So that's about $17 million for strategy one, if you will.

The second strategy on the protective resources front is a very significant series of investments -- just under $19 million -- that are designed to improve our ability to protected threatened and endangered species.

It centers really on consultation capacity. We are seeing a huge increase in demand. We don't have the capacity right now to meet it. I'll step through that in a few seconds.

And the more recent one Eileen mentioned, recent activities, a lot of Presidentially-directed focus as well as enormous interest in all sectors in IUU came up in their context of some of the discussions and report outs from the councils here today. And we have an increase in our budget that's directed towards that. And it's an area where we anticipate additional focus in the future.

So that's our overall '16 strategy. Before getting into the pieces, I do want to highlight where Fisheries stands in the context of NOAA's budget.

So there is a $6 billion ask for NOAA. The largest portion of this, close to 40 percent is for our satellite data and information service. That's a very capital intensive line of business. We have some refresh on-key satellite technologies that are driving that number.

The National Weather Service accounts for approximately 18 percent. And Fisheries is

third in terms of the composition of NOAA's total budget at just under 16 percent of the budget.

I do want to highlight, we have strong interdependencies with the rest of NOAA across all of these areas. We are increasingly collaborating with the National Weather Service in a variety of areas where their hydrological and weather predictive capacity has a large bearing on some of our management considerations. We're doing that very heavily out west, related to drought and other matters.

Other particular areas that I want to point out. In program support, not aptly titled, about 11 percent of the total budget, the biggest piece in there is the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations. We are consistently asking for, the Administration supported, we're very pleased to see that.

But it's a big lift to get the recapitalization requirement acknowledged in our budget for the fleet. So there is a dependency on our ocean going assets. It's in protected serve -- the protected suppor -- I'm sorry, program support line that we always go out of our way to point to.

We also have a lot of collaboration with the National Ocean Service. Particularly on habitat related investments that have the dual benefit of improving coastal resiliency as well as conditions for our trust resources and our fisheries resources.

As well, we have substantial interactions with the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research. Particularly in the climate arena, ocean acidification. The FY16 budget has a very strong increase of over $20 million for ocean acidification we would benefit quite a bit from. As well as a small number in there for aquaculture that would complement our activities in aquaculture. Also a program request, increase request in FY '16.

So it's not just our piece. It's our interactions with all of these that is going to be a considerable part of our ability to meet our mission requirements in the future.

So this is the analog to the subactivity table. But in our new structure. Again, the FY '16 budget, with the support of the

Administration, has a simplified budget structure. We simply aggregated largely for efficiency but also for sensibility.

Our budget was kind of an amalgamation of historical budget items. Some of them earmarks. We had functions split across multiple budgets. It was very difficult to tell, for instance, where some of our science investments were. What we were spending on observers. We had enforcement and observers put together.

So we took and essentially kind of rationalized our budget so that we could have instead of some total of 50 PPAs, we reduced that substantially. And we're hoping that this would be a great benefit to all of those involved in understanding the rationale behind our budget and our presentation of our budget.

In our program accounts and in operations, research and facilities, we had 37 separate PPAs. We combined that in ways to get us down to ten. And they roll up into these subactivities. So these are much more sensible subactivities.

When we had for instance fisheries research and management before, it did not well represent what we were actually spending in fisheries research and management because we had an enormous amount of activity in the subactivities previously called inelegantly, other activities supporting fisheries. A lot of that were actually science investments. Some of them were support for observations and other functions there.

So this new structure can totally compare it, but we have crosswalk tables that make that easy over time. But you see the same type of pattern. Here what we did, is instead of providing the historical reference point, we're looking at '14/'15 in its various dimensions.

So we have our spend plan where we are today in the FY '15 enacted. It's the first two columns. Then you can see the President's request relative to those two lines. The program changes, listed in the second to last column there -- FY '16 program changes -- are off of '15. And you can see where the accumulation of our specific investments play out.

So we have about $29.6 million in

requested program augmentations in our protected resources, science and management. Area, that's the core consultation-oriented focus of our protective resources work. We have $17.5, as I mentioned, in fishery science and management. And an increase of just under $4 million for enforcement functions.

Those are where our changes are really concentrated. And what I'll do is step through the actual program changes quickly so you can see what they are.

So the first one is really the two components. I mentioned $17 odd million. The two components of that are the Endangered Species Act recovery consultation related work. That's a $13.2 million increase. And then a $5.7 million increase in our EFH related work to support Magnuson.

We have an enormous amount of growth in demand for consultation capacity. Think corals affecting the southeast and the Pacific. Think the work related to on the west coast related to drought conditions. Think deep continued consultation work related to Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf.

Those are among our major programmatic drivers. We have a strong increase in demand for section seven. In particular consultations. And we have the same and slightly declined staff. And those two things don't go well together.

So we're trying to build back that capability so that we do not slow down and inhibit all of the economic activity that resides both public sector spending as well as private sector spending. It's dependent on efficient functioning of the permitting process in the Federal Government. So that's the core logic there.

On the Species Recovery Grants front, we are looking at an increase of $17 million. This strategy will be familiar to you from prior presidents' budgets. We have advanced this on a number of occasions.

This will provide additional grants to States and tribes to focus on priority ESA species. We do have a substantial effort -- Eileen alluded to this in her opening comments -- a substantial effort to focus on recovery and

to improve our ability to prioritize species. And the focus of species recovery grants in the future would be affected by that prioritization process.

So that's pretty key. We have a small increase here for Atlantic and Pacific salmon. The Pacific salmon piece is actually a consultation capacity. It's related to the first one that I talked about.

And Atlantic salmon is a key issue. We've got a species there hanging by a thread. Our investments, in collaboration with our northeast States, are designed to keep that from going completely out of commission. And we hope to be able to see Congressional acknowledgment in support of that effort for fish passage, dam removal, continued work to ensure the survival of that species, which is very much in question.

On the second strategy front, fishery science and management, we have a series of increases here. One of great interest to all of you, referenced a number of times in the report outs, the council report outs this morning.

Two pieces of our electronic technologies, a $7.1 million ask on electronic technologies. We don't have dedicated funding. We anticipate this year in FY '15 spending on the order of $3 million on electronic technology.

We would really like to have the ability with the support to accelerate the application of electronic monitoring and reporting technologies into practice. And that's what these would be designed to do.

Building on pilot projects that we have. Work in the northwest, northeast, in the Gulf, elsewhere to tailor electronic monitoring capabilities to specific fisheries and get those capabilities into action.

As I think Tom quickly pointed out, and I do like to emphasize this whenever we talk about electronic monitoring, reporting, we've been doing a lot of Hill engagement on this. We do want to hasten to add: this is not a solution to observer costs.

There seemed to be a lot of thinking on the Hill that if you invest in cameras you can invest less in people. We don't see that actually working that way. You're collecting

different information through these different techniques.

We want to be able to meet our observing requirements in the most efficient way possible. Sometimes that will allow for electronic monitoring; sometimes it will require continued use of observers.

So this is not a path towards -- necessarily a path towards lower observing costs. We want to be as cost effective as possible. We want to invest in these technologies. But what we expect to get is larger, better, more ready access to data.

But I wouldn't expect necessarily our cost structure to ultimately change enormously. That all remains to be determined and this investment will help us figure that out.

There's a holdover here. The Distributed Biological Observatory is a $500 thousand investment. This was present, you saw this last year. In last year's budget it wasn't approved. It was readded into this request.

We have also continued investments in expand annual stock assessments in our National Catch Share Program. This is core business that we've been advancing for a number of years and have had fairly steady Congressional support certainly for the annual stock assessments. And more gradually then we had anticipated, but still a strong understanding and support for the continued progress on our Catch Share Program.

So those are fairly modest increase requests there. Looking broadly in a number of areas, we're very pleased the recognition here in the President's budget for FY '16 of the need for improved investments in collaboration cross sector on aquaculture.

So there's a $2 million augmentation here. There's also $2.5 million in the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research budget line. This is very much focused on the science to accelerate rules that will allow the more rapid implementation and investment in aquaculture technologies around the country.

I think all of you are well aware of domestic aquaculture production relative to international production capabilities and how much that's driving our total seafood demand and

consumption in the United States. And we believe this is a long term, very important strategy for domestic seafood production. A very modest request would be a great assistance to us.

We're also recognizing as I mentioned earlier, increased demand for enforcement capabilities related to IUU. So there's a $3 million increase request here as well as an additional $0.9 that would support supporting capabilities such as but not limited to forensics and some compliance assistance. But the core of that is IUU related enforcement activities.

Small increase in observers and training here. And we have what looks like a very large number. This is the issue that Dorothy mentioned on the refinance of the Pacific Trawl Loan Program. And I'll spare you a really long story. If you'd like to get into it, we could. It would take some time.

But the upshot of it is, Congress has asked us to refinance that program. The Administration determined that an appropriation was required to actually do that. And what this does, this would be the appropriation in FY '16, this would essentially pay off the old loan.

The difference between the old loan and the new loan, according to OMB's rules for scoring, we would need to return $10 million to the Treasury. That doesn't go to us. That's not a program that we have to implement. That's $10 million that goes to the Treasury that accounts for the differential between the old loan, which was at a high rate, the new loan which is at a lower rate.

The Government technically is foregoing an anticipated $10 million that had already been scored in the budget. So we have to basically make the books whole and $300 thousand of that is basically the one percent required to start the new loan.

So that's what that number is. It's not program money that we have to spend; it is pretty much an accounting requirement that we have been recognized through this process that we have been confronted with.

So that's there. I guess the good news of the story, while it's been difficult, the Administration does recognize the importance of

this refinance effort and is going to considerable lengths to try to make that happen. And I would be happy to talk to those who are interested in greater detail.

A few decreases. These are modest decreases and are related to decreases that you have seen before. So about a $7 million total reduction. Some slowing of the pace under salmon management activity of our Mitchell Act Hatchery Reform effort. There's still considerable investment in that area. This kind of slows the pace a little bit.

Prescott, we've gone back and forth in recent years on what the right level is. And there may still be some discussion on that. But this reduces it to a level that we executed in FY '13.

And we also have here an adjustment in our Coastal Resiliency Ecosystem Grants line in FY '16. In light of a substantial request that's made by the Administration in the National Ocean Service account for a large ecosystem habitat management and restoration effort that's focused on coastal resiliency.

So that is a large new grant program. About $50 million in NOS's budget. And this reduction of $5 million is part of that consolidated approach. So that would be continued, but under a program that would be -- a grant program that would be run through the National Ocean Service.

PCSRF always has been a volatile budget number. We're pleased here that the reduction of $7 million is considerably less than previous proposed reductions as our budget has come under pressure. And that compares to about $65 million, which has been the Congressionally enacted level for a number of years.

So, we're pleased that at least there's less of a gap between the President's request and prior Congressional funding then has been the case in the past. So, that's our decrease set. And where we go from here, really is to continue to work with Congress, with our stakeholders.

We're having constituent stakeholder engagement in a variety of ways to explain the request that you have here. The screen shot of

the cover of our Blue Book. We are a long way from an enacted budget. So what we're going to do is really focus on what we've been allocated in FY '15 and get the greatest value for the taxpayer out of that.

This is our message externally as well as internally. With all the uncertainty in our budget, a lot of the disruption to our external partners as well as our internal staff from budget reductions in prior years, we still have $958 million to execute on behalf of the American public. And we can do a really good job with that. And that's where our focus is going to be going forward.

And we look forward to continued collaboration with the councils -- an essential element in our core business of fishery research and management -- in executing our responsibilities for Magnuson and other areas with that $958 million allocation.

So our success there will largely shape the receptivity of future Congresses to our budget requests. And that's where our operational and strategic focus is in the coming year.

So I'm going to Mr. Chair, conclude here for the budget portion of our discussion. And open things up for questioning before we get into part two, which centers on records management and S-K Funding.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you Paul for the presentation. Are there any questions from the group? Don?

MR. McISAAC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me try to make a few points. The first one is: it's a little tough to react to all this information because we haven't seen it before.

So, maybe one comment would be, to whatever extent this could be in the future distributed at least the day before, we would have had a chance to think about some of this in a council caucus for example. Or even a week before, sure would make it a little easier to try to digest the importance of all this.

Let me just offer a few observations and then maybe ask a couple of questions. I'm not sure I've got any of this right because as I said you know, it's first glance.

The line item for the council funding in 2015 seems to have gone up a little bit. I didn't see the Council and Commission's PPA line item in the 2015 clustering of programs. I didn't see the Council and Commission's PPA or line item in the 2016 proposals. You mentioned something about reorganizing those.

So I'm not sure where we're lumped in there. If that's under science and management or what. But some other scratching I've done, shows that the 2015 Council and Commission's line item was a little bit higher than 2014.

So it looks like that increase got carried forward to your very detailed table on what the councils get. And what slide is that here? Let's see that would be slide number five, I believe.

So, my first observation is that's good if the Council and Commission's line item has gone up and it's carried forward. I did a quick calculation here and looks like it's up about 2.99 percent, which is not the same as that other favorite number we talked about a year ago that's only one percentage point higher. But at any rate, this time it's up. So, my reaction is: that's good.

It's a question about where we are in terms of being lumped in from the rest of them. We don't see on this table that's on number -- slide number five -- anything different in terms of the other sub-items that the councils have normally got money from.

So maybe if you could switch to slide number five, whoever has control of the screen there. We see the normal ones. ACL, regulatory streamlining, SSC stipends and the rest. So, it's unclear in terms of a process of as you built these numbers whether you considered any other -- I mean what we've called soft funding in the past -- differences for 2015.

Yesterday we talked a little bit about EM. In the past we've talked a little bit about Catch Share. I'm going to lump some of this 2016 discussion in here as well. But anyway, one thing when we look on here is we don't see any new line items where the councils have gotten money.

In 2016, in the proposal, it's unclear

again where we're lumped into. What is proposed for the Council and Commission's PPA? Is it up? Is it down? What did you all put in for that? What was your thinking in terms of coming up with a number?

We haven't had a chance to provide our input to you on what we think it ought to be in 2016. So there's a little bit of a process question there.

When you run through the 2016 other special projects, there are many that have some increases. Protected resources, science and management, as you indicated Eileen spoke to that in her opening remarks. You emphasized it again. That's something you'd hoped to do better on in 2016.

Protected resources, science and management, makes us think about the council arena; that's where a lot of the real protection can come forward if there's some new twists there.

In 2016 is there more money for the councils to try to help in that regard? And plus $5.6 million in 2016; is there any expectation that the councils ought to do a little bit more on that?

We weren't able to see a line item here for 2015 that said electronic monitoring, but we're kind of hoping there might be one. But there's not. Is there one in 2016?

Magnuson Act, EFH, there's a whole bunch of them in there that the councils would like to help on your priorities on, but we're unclear whether or not you're providing some emphasis on that to the councils or not.

So, let me try to go back to my reactions, which again, are a little tough. And what a couple of questions might be. Oh, and the last one here before I get to them is the New Horizon money. So I'll have a question about that too.

So, first of all, thanks for the presentation. If you could get it a little bit earlier to us, that would have been very helpful. But at least it shows some increase in 2015. Let's not miss that that's a positive. That that's a good thing.

Your process for 2015 and how you

decided on these line items or sub-line items, is a question: What went into your thinking on those?

For 2016, again, a process question: What did you consider when you put forward in the President's budget, something for the councils? Is there any expectation that some of these other plus-ups have something in them for the councils or not?

And then that last one, of the Deepwater Horizon, when you get all that money back. Are you going to get any of that money? Maybe is the question.

So there's a blast. I apologize for it. But again, not having seen this until a moment ago, it's a little touch.

DR. DOREMUS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Don, for your detailed questions. Just a couple of observations.

One is this information has been available. When the President's budget was released, we put all this information online. And I do apologize for not drawing your attention to that. But it has been out there -- not this detailed table, but the fundamentals on the President's request -- have been out there for a couple of weeks.

And in the future, we'll make it a point to draw your attention to when that is available. This is essentially a synthesis of publically available information with the exception of this detailed breakout on the council line, which actually takes a while to compute.

Some of the things that get factored into here are in the small print, such as the note at the bottom there that there is rescission for Hollings Scholarship. That's required by Congress. There's also the smaller programing of 2.28 percent.

Okay. Thank you. I didn't include here and should have, relative to your question, a good one. On the '16 Pres Bud, is -- we should have added that -- a column here. And I just hadn't thought of it.

But the top line there, the Regional Council PPA, which you see moving from '13 and '14 to a request of $23.233 in FY '15. We have

in the President's budget a $25.1 number there. We do not -- to your question about changing the composition of the additional lines that support the councils under NEPA, fisheries research and management, the specific piece is there and it's been in annual stock assessments.

We don't at this time have any plans to change the composition of funding that would go directly to the councils along those lines. These are well-worked out methodologies to determine by council what each of these pieces is program funding to support those needs. And ACL implementations and regulatory streamlining and the like.

That said, if you look at details like our electronic monitoring proposal, there's a portion of that, that's focused on the continued technology development research work. And there's a portion that's directed towards the management effort that's required to get some of those into place. Which presumably we anticipate would augment our capability to work productively with the councils on the implementation of electronic monitoring technologies.

So these asks can effect what we're able to work on, how we're able to collaborate with you and at what speed. But we don't at this time have any proposed changes in '16 in the composition of funding.

You did ask where we fit the Council and Commission line. Regional council, it's called here regional council PPA. That is in the fisheries research and management. We have a detailed slide which I could maybe page to very, very quickly, although it's out there.

We had a slide in backup that shows the composition of each of these major pieces of our budget. We have our budget now centered on these four major activities, our fisheries science and management, enforcement, habitat and protected resources.

And if you look on the top right box there, those PPAs are the PPAs that fit under research -- sorry, fishery science and management. And the regional councils and Fishery Commission's line, or PPA, is there untouched.

So that is not changing. It will

still be as visible as it always has been. Ultimately what gets provided under that line to the councils and the Commission is a Congressional allocation.

It's a Congressional decision. And what we see with the current year, and what we hope to see in FY '16, ultimately will require that support as you well know.

Deepwater Horizon is a big unknown in terms of where as your third major stream of questioning. As to where the litigation is going to bounce on all of that and what resources we will technically have to work with.

So I really can't speak to how that's going to function in the future and what kind of impact that might have on the relevant councils who participate in related activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Doug?

MR. GREGORY: Yes. I want to support some of what Don said. We're you know, at our limit as far as staff time and effort. And council meetings time and effort in dealing with what we have.

Six years was a big burden to put on us in addressing that. I see if standardized bycatch reduction efforts have to be made, that's going to be an additional burden on the council. Electronic monitoring, we've already undertaken some of that.

And this is all additional workload. It would be nice to have some support for those things. But contrary to what Don said, any Deepwater Horizon money should all go to the Gulf of Mexico.

(Laughter)

MR. GREGORY: So just take it easy.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Yes, Tom?

MR. NIES: Thanks Paul. I might reiterate a few of the things Don and Doug said, but I think they're kind of important. And I've tried to wade through your President's budget and your Congressional justification document as well.

And I struggle to make things match up. The first thing is that while I'm glad to see an increase from last year=s budget, it looks like to me that at least in the New England

Council, we're still not where we were in 2010. So you know, we're essentially getting less money than we got whatever that is, five or six years ago.

And you know, that's starting to become a real problem with us. If you look at how much money we've spent the last couple of years, we've been spending roughly $4 million or $4.1 million. So that's just to do our job.

The longer we stay at that level, we're going to have to start cutting back on what we're doing. And the way this gets connected to the President's 2016 budget is when I read your Congressional justification documents and you talk about, I think it's close to a total of $7 million for electronic monitoring and $2 million for catch share projects, when I read your Congressional justification, it talks about all this stuff you're going to do to plus up support in the agency with additional staff positions at the regions for electronic monitoring and all this stuff.

And it says you're going to work very closely with the councils in order to get these things in place. But there's nothing in the justification that says any of these dollars are going to flow to the councils. There's nothing explicit that says that.

And so it makes me very nervous that what's going on here is the agency is staffing themselves up to do more at the same time that they're expecting the council to do more with less, effectively. And so this is a problem.

So then you know, I go through the -- both the Blue Book and it looks like you're moving the $2.5 million from the Inter-jurisdictional Fisheries Grants to the Council and Commission's line item if I read that correctly in the crosswalk. I think that's what it says.

And so, it's hard for me to figure out exactly how all these numbers match out. But when I look at the President's budget and it says on the Regional Councils and Fisheries Commission line, fiscal year 2016 program changes, zero. It looks to me like you're anticipating either a flat or nearly a flat.

And so I think you just mentioned

something about a $2 million increase in that line. And I don't see that in this President's budget. Or at least I can't interpret it from what's in there.

So I guess there's a couple of points there. The first is you know, are we really looking at an increase in the Regional Councils and Commissions line in 2016 or is it obscured by moving these pots of money around? Or is it really going to be a zero program changes?

And if you're talking about basically being flat from 2010 through 2016, we're not going to be able to help you with all of these initiatives that you're talking about in your Congressional justification.

DR. DOREMUS: Thank you Mr. Chair and thank you for the questions, Tom, as well as Doug. To put things in context and we have talked about this in prior meetings. Fishery is going to great lengths during the course of the strongest downward pressure in our budget from '10 to '11 to '13, '12 and '13 where our overall budget went down about 12.5 percent.

We held the line on the Council and Commission funding as well as very limited other areas. Enforcement was the only other areas where we were able to keep it relatively flat during that time period.

With the exception of sequestration where it was rule driven and it went through every PPA. We did have the additional complication as Don pointed out of a requirement to charge M&A, management and administrative costs on all the PPAs. We've been through that. It's a requirement. We're dealing with it and we've made back what that differential is.

Nevertheless, I think when you look out of that time period from '10 to today, other activities in fisheries were pushed down substantially more than the Council and Commission lines. We lost well over 300 people. We've built back a fraction of that.

We're still down on the order of 280 plus people over that time period. So while yes this budget does, if it is supported, allow us to pull back and put more staff on the ground for things like consultations that had real and immediate economic impacts if we continue to be a

bottleneck for those decisions.

It does not put us anywhere close to where we were back at that same time period. So we're down on the order of nine to ten percent overall. The Council and Commission line relative to '10, I don't have the number off the top of my head, I could look at it, but I'm quite certain it's substantially less than that.

There is an increase in the '16 request. The number I gave you, $25.1 has not yet been corrected for the M&A charge there. But it will be an increase. And we can give you the specific numbers and I'll add them in here.

We'll make them available to the councils on how the request looks for '16. That's for the first line up there, which is really the primary driver of the bottom line for all of the councils. And we are pleased with both the '15 and the '16 being able to see progressive increases so that we can go back on lost ground.

But I do what to emphasize there was considerably less lost ground on the Council and Commission line then elsewhere in our budget. And we had felt that directly in terms of our staff.

We'd be happy to provide the detailed historical numbers so that you're interpretative would be -- any interpretative questions you have about what has happened over time can be clarified. The structural changes we have made in our budget do not affect the Council and Commission PPA. That's not changing.

A table like this we'll be putting forward next year once we're able to see when we get an actual appropriation. And we have whatever adjustments to it need to be made. The principal ones typically are, as they have been here, the adjustment for Hollings, the Scholarship Program and also the adjustment for any reprogramming requirement that OMB determines is necessary for the overall NOAA budget adjustment process.

So these are all very good questions. Everybody has a reference point back in time to a healthier budget. We would all like to be there. We're doing better than a lot of other pieces of the Federal Government.

But all of us across the board are feeling the same pressures that all the councils are. And we'll have to work together to be as efficient as we can under the circumstances.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. I have actually, Bob LaHood is on the phone. And then followed by John Quinn, then Kitty. Bob?

MR. LaHOOD: All right. Yes. Are you getting an echo on your end?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: No, but if you could speak up though.

MR. LaHOOD: Okay. Just a quick question is all. 2015 and 2016 budgets, there is increases for loss percent. And what -- how are the joint -- are there? Are they -- line item questions or is it all in one?

DR. DOREMUS: Bob, it was very difficult to make you -- make out your question. I think I heard you asking about the joint enforcement agreement funding. Is that what you were trying to ask about?

MR. LaHOOD: Yes, correct.

DR. DOREMUS: Okay. That's a key element of our enforcement line. And we anticipate that being steady throughout this process. To the extent that the enforcement line grows a little bit, it is likely that that will. I can provide detailed numbers to you later.

But the basic story is we don't anticipate any changes in the joint enforcement agreement program. We have had some increases there in recent years. And we hope to be able to sustain those.

MR. LaHOOD: Okay. Well, that is incorporated within the overall enforcement budget. It used to be a separate line item. And I just wondered if that's still the case?

DR. DOREMUS: We can provide historical detail and current detail on any piece of this budget at any time. We have tried through this restructuring effort with the encouragement of OMB and others to make the overall request to be as strategic and understandable as possible.

We would be happy for any interested party, the councils among them, to provide break outs related to the detail on council funding or the detail on any other line such as the JEA

component of the enforcement line.

But yes, Bob, in the current budget, it is within the enforcement line. And we do not foresee changes in that program in FY16.

MR. LaHOOD: All right. And I may give you a call and ask a couple of questions. We're going to discuss it at our next council meeting in a couple of weeks. So, if you -- if that's okay, I'll give you a call.

DR. DOREMUS: Absolutely Don. I encourage you to do that. Sorry we're having a hard time hearing you. But please do call me and we can cover any detail you need.

MR. LaHOOD: All right. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, John Quinn.

MR. QUINN: Thank you. I've got more of a political question then a budget question. Just you know, we know this is the President's proposed budget. And with the changes in Congress, particularly in the Senate, you know, how reliable is this proposed budget for our planning purposes going forward?

I think this is different than years passed when the different parties controlled the House and the Senate. I think this is the first year that both branches are controlled not by the President's party.

DR. DOREMUS: That is a very good question. I don't think I can answer that any better than you might get from a good read of the current media that follows the Hill and follows budget matters in particular.

I don't think if you agree that the general account of the circumstances, I don't think anybody expects the President's budget to be agreed at anywhere close to its current levels. There's going to be some very, very large policy issues way more significant than our specific ask.

I do expect the overall level for domestic discretionary spending increases that Congress enacts to be considerably less than has been requested. But we don't know how that's going to shake out.

It's a very uncertain environment. There is a lot of strong support and interest in Fishery's programs. We have the great benefit of

having direct and very visible economic impacts and relevance for around the nation.

And I think if we can make sure that people understand that the value to constituent communities around the country that rely on ocean and coastal resources that we manage, that that will be a helpful thing in trying to sustain a budget like this.

MS. SOBECK: If I can just comment. You know, we've had our first two presentations of the overall NOAA budget last Friday and the Friday before to the House and Senate Committees. And you know, I would say that we had a positive reception. Because we don't know and I don't think they know where they're going to end up.

But I think you know what, they really wanted to know the details and what our justifications were. We really want to help them understand the basis for why we think we need more.

And so I think that you know, that's the information that all of us need to get out there. I certainly wasn't getting the sense that they were sending us the signal that we didn't have a lot of really good substantial justified asks.

What I got the message was wow, we are really going to have to know the absolute details and the best arguments you can give us for why you need these. Because it's going to be a tough year.

There was no initial indication of hey, this area isn't going to fly or we're getting a lot of pressure. I think everybody's I mean, I hope you guys ask the representatives from the Hill this afternoon I think what their thoughts are.

But I think that we're all feeling our way in the dark at the moment.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I think you have Kitty followed by Chris Oliver.

MS. SIMONDS: I guess my question is this. It looks like we're you know, three percent of your total budget. And my question is, in terms of priorities, where are we with NMFS?

In the past we've been told that you know, we're 90 percent of the client and so we're

out there to do this, and this and that. And several years ago, there were different approaches that we suggested.

One was look at our budget and take five percent of all the line items that are effective by us or that we are affected by and give us that percentage. It's so easy to do that.

And when we did that actually, I'll show you Hogarth to think about that. It turned out to be a sum that we had all figured out we should get. And that was $30 million. This was what, seven years ago. Seven, eight years ago.

And the thing is that we all have very small offices. None of us have increased our, you know, our staff all these years. I don't think any council has more than 20 staffers working for them. And as you've heard, I mean, well you know, all of these mandates that we have to abide by, follow, do the work.

I mean we end up helping the NMFS by doing preliminary assessments. By hiring PhD students so that NMFS doesn't have to do that. And I know that's fed into whatever stock assessments we get. And I just heard we only get four.

So where are we? How do you think of us? We have all these other you know, applicable laws. But it seems to me that they're all creeping up either, you know, unbalanced the same as we are. I think that we should be at a higher level. Be thought of at a higher level.

I love these philosophical talks.

DR. DOREMUS: So do I, Kitty.

MS. SIMONDS: I know. Last time I said something to you, you were --

DR. DOREMUS: I'm just saying we should all be at a higher level.

MS. SIMONDS: Yes. No. No, not you all. I'm talking about us, the clients.

DR. DOREMUS: Yes. Well we're all in the same line of business. I do think that the budget history that I was just reflecting on in response to Tom's question indicates the central role that Fisheries holds the councils and the Commissions in.

We have tried to if you will, protect this line from downward budget pressure. And

we've been relatively successful in doing so.

We don't ultimately control the resources here. We don't have the liberty to move money across PPAs. That would be a program -- a reprogramming request that we would have to get Congressional and Administration support for.

But, in any event, we would also need to demonstrate need. Any part of our organization as is true probably across every area of federal and I would say state and other public sector spending that's been under pressure for such a while, increasing something is decreasing something else.

There are constituencies for everything in our budget. And to make a case for doing that would require incontrovertibly strong case for what is not being done today? And what is the unacceptable impact of that?

So while we all have notions of historical benchmarks, equity notions and other kinds of things, these budgets spin on the anticipated impacts of the public expenditure. And we hope that our continued collaboration and executing our budget through the councils would allow us to continue to make the case in this adverse budget environment for the entire mission function.

We routinely deal with as Eileen was just saying, the detailed discussions in the House Appropriations and the Senate Appropriations staff. They're acutely aware of where we spend our money and what on.

And as I said to a constituency survey, every piece of our budget. So we do need to keep the broader context in consideration and ultimately implement the budget that Congress gives us.

I think our ability to look at the whole and the impacts of our total mission will ultimately be the tide that floats all boats.

MS. SIMONDS: That's a very good speech. You're very good.

DR. DOREMUS: I would add to that, we all speak in Washington in the currency of budget. And people think that if there is take some for you know, any program, that within your increase or decrease is the measure of support for the program.

And while there is reality to budgets, we all know that. And you all are suffering the same impacts we are from reductions. The budget is not the only measure of the strategic significance of a function to the agency.

And I just wanted to put that final note there.

MS. SOBECK: I would suggest that every member, every council member who has a Representative or a Senator on the Appropriations Committee and on the related other Committees, you should be talking to them.

One year, you remember when we were having these similar discussions, we all decided to visit OAD. And that was a very interesting exercise because it was very you know, forthright about our needs. And so, there are other things I'm sure that we can do rather than waiting for the number.

So, I'm just suggesting that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Chris Oliver?

MR. OLIVER: Thank you. I have a specific question. But I wanted to make a general comment along the lines of Kitty's and Tom Nies' remarks.

As we are just ending our five-year award and entering a new five year award period, but I tend to use 2012 as the reference point. Because I think, it was just somewhere in the middle of our five-year award when we realized that we were going to be suffering budget reductions.

A lot of us began cutting back on spending. We had contracting we didn't do. I have had in my case two or three during that award period, staff moving on and not rehiring those positions right away. And frankly, actually still have one open that I haven't hired yet.

And so that allowed us to accumulate, I think many of us, many of the councils, most of the councils had some carryover funding from our previous five-year award. Substantial in our case.

And first of all I want to thank you for whatever role you had in getting that expedited, those approvals for that carryover expedited through NOAA grants. Because it's

saving our butt in 2015.

But, I just want to be clear that the fact that we had that carryover shouldn't be viewed as a reflection of a reduced need. Because I remember arguing in 2011, we were all saying we need more money. $30 million I think was the number.

And we actually took an 11 percent reduction in 2013. And another four percent through the M&A. And last year for essentially a 15 percent reduction in our council funding over that two-year period.

So, I'm more worried that we're good, in our case, we're fine for 2015. I'm more worried about 2016, '17, '18 and the future. And the fact that we're now, you know, we used to argue for $30 million. Now it's like geez, I hope we can get back to the 2012 level.

So, I'm really happy to see that there's at least a slight upward trend in that over 2015 and 2016. But I just want to reestablish the perspective of where we're at. We're 15 percent down this year from where we were two years ago.

And we need to get back up that amount in the future because while we're good for 2015, I'm pretty concerned. I want to refill the positions we have open. I want to hire an additional position. At least one. But I'm scared to do it because I'm worried, well, we were good for 2015, but I've got to let you go in 2016.

So, that's really critical to see that upward trend back in '16 and '17. So that was my comment. I have a specific question on your presentation, Paul.

On the 2016 budget you had a plus up for observers and training on the order of $44.8 million. I think it was $44. One more slide I believe. Ah, no, keep going. Yes. Observers in training with -- oh, from plus .5 to $44.

Okay. So it's basically the same number. But I misread it and thought there was a big increase there. But it's essentially flat.

But I guess my question still is can you give us a little more detail on where that $45 million is distributed?

DR. DOREMUS: If you don't mind, we'd

be happy to talk about the distribution of observer money. It's more detailed then I can get into now with the time that we have. But that is something we could follow up with.

And yes, that is indeed, the $44.8 is a total for the program. So it's a half million dollar increase.

And I don't know if there are other questions on the budget. But I would like to make one concluding note before we shift quickly given our time to some remaining information.

I do want to note and I'm queuing off of Chris and thank you for your comments and your observations are well taken. I don't want to queue off your sense that you know, we can do okay today but you're worried about '16, '17 and '18, where we're going here.

That and Kitty's comment about you know, encouraging people to make it clear what our needs and requirements are. We are ultimately working in our view strategically, collaboratively to achieve benefits for the American people that are consistent with our statutory requirements under Magnuson, ESA and MMPA.

The American people are the client in the end of the day. And I really do view our budget holistically in our ability to generate value perceived of good value through the types of very democratic decision making processes that are embedded in Magnuson and carried out by all of you.

That is how we work. It's how we deliver mission solutions that people care about. And that's what's going to determine our circumstances in '16, '17 and '18. So we're, in terms of the federal budget, we're a small boat in really heavy seas.

And I think we need to focus on the direction of the entire effort to be able to weather this kind of environment and encourage all of you to keep our broader mission responsibilities in mind as you do interact with members. Because you cannot take that for granted.

We have had strong bicameral, bipartisan support for Fisheries Research and Management in particular. It was deflected

substantially less than other pieces of our budget and other pieces of the federal government's budget.

And with this time period from '10 and '11 to '13, that line went down 4.5 percent. Protected resources went down 19 percent. Habitat went down over 30 percent.

So there's different degrees of support and we have the good benefit, the great benefit, and I think it's largely through the combined work of all of us. Of being seen as delivering value proportionate if not well in excess of our appropriation.

And that's where I hope we can focus so that we can continue to sustain increases that we hope future Administrations support beyond the President's budget in FY16. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you Paul for that explanation. As you mentioned we have some time constraints here and you have an additional item under this particular topic.

So if you wouldn't mind going ahead and then getting into that. We are basically at the break. So you might have to reduce some of our lunchtime to try to get back on track here.

DR. DOREMUS: I do not want to do that. So in four minutes or less. A big heads up on Records Management. So we have a requirement handling all council records, handled in accordance with NOAA Records Management Office procedures across, and this is just one slide on this issue. It is really a heads up.

We're looking across our organization, all of our work at Records Management, requirements, we're developing a long term plan to deal with that. It's going to require annual training for all of Fisheries to do. And we're trying to leverage that for an appropriate application to councils as well.

We have run into a number of different issues with inconsistent adherence to records management requirements. And we have a global challenge with handling digital records in particular. We just don't have standard operating procedures for digital recordings of various types and how those get handled.

We're clarifying that. There's going

to be new guidance. We're going to ask you as is a requirement for all of us, to amp up our efforts on records management so we don't have the inconsistences in application that we have seen and run into problems in specific areas.

So that's coming. And we're hoping to leverage our total effort so that it can be as efficient and effective as possible with the training tools, et cetera, for council staff.

So we wanted to draw that to your attention. We could talk about that further if you'd like offline.

S-K. You want a good news piece of budget? This is it. A very substantial increase in S-K Grant process for FY14/15. As you well know, we've talked to you before.

We're combining FY14 and '15 into one large grant process. We anticipate spending on the order of $22 million. Perhaps more and get that obligated in the third and fourth quarters of FY15.

We have been approaching this in a completely different way. We've talked to you about it. We've got new priorities. Thank you all for contributing to that.

We looked at the regional research plans. We looked at all of the input that you all provided and modified, not just the priorities but the themes under the detail under each of these themes. And we are going to as you know, and have heard from me on a number of occasions, involve you in the process so that we have our feet on the ground in the regions for the evaluation of these proposals.

This is a competitively managed grant program. It is a funding allocated on the basis of merit. That's a first order principal for us. But we want to make sure that we do respond to regional needs and we are looking forward to your continued contribution along those lines.

Our evaluation criteria are importance/relevance, scientific and technical merit is the primary one there. The ability of the applicant to actually deliver. Do they have a good business plan and are they going to be able to get the results out? That's the outreach and education component.

So we are looking at on the order of

285 applications. They have to go through this merit review process. And we're looking at an approach that would allow -- what we will be doing is an approach that would allow the councils to comment on this set of proposals that go through basically phase one of the review process.

So we're going to review everything for merit. Determine something about double what we actually have funds for as meeting the fundamental requirements. And then we will ask the councils to review for balance and distribution.

So that is the key thing that we're going to be looking at. And I'm going to detail that really in the next slide what that will look like.

But this is the overall process where we will get your input on balance. We'll go through the constituent review process. And then we'll fund on the basis ultimately of the top applications that go through that three-part process.

So the council and Commission contribution centers on the creation of priorities. We already did that. We will revisit that in the future is if we hope to have the continued benefit of an S-K Program in future funding years. It does seem to be well supported by Congress.

Your contribution to identifying reviewers is extraordinarily helpful. And I want to thank you for working closely with your regional fisheries staff as well as with our National S-K Manager. Dan is here with us today. During the whole nomination process for constituent panels in particular.

We were not able to do that piece in FY13 because the appropriation was received so late. And we view it as a very important step in this year=s process. And your contributions to the selecting people for those panels is very, very helpful.

So we're going to ask you as this set of proposals comes forward to look at balance and distribution by priority. Do we have the right distribution across these four major priority areas?

By project type. By the nature of the applicants and partners associated with those applicants as well as geographic distribution. So this is not about evaluating individual proposals. It is about looking at what is coming through the merit process.

And to look and see if we have from your regional perspective the right balance across those areas. Particularly the priority type. You know, are we overweighted in one priority and under weighted in another?

If we do need to make changes, they are going to be based on the merit review outcome. So if we're going to increase the balance in one area, we would go up the list of the technical review outcome. It literally gets translated into a number. It's very straightforward.

And if we were to decrease in area, we would take off from the bottom. The lowest rated one. So it's not about selecting individual projects, it's about looking at balance and distribution.

Again, the competitive review, merit based competitive review is axiomatic in this whole process. So, I do what to thank you all for your contributions.

We think that this is an enormous improvement to how we're running this program. It's increased in size and it's always been significant. We anticipate that in the future as well.

And we always welcome your views on how we can improve the process once we get through all of this for FY14/15. It's on rails now. It's an enormous work effort and we're talking about on the order of 900 reviews that need to be done to get to the step where we can ask you about balance and distribution.

So it's a big effort. I want to thank Dan Namur again. And happy to answer questions you might have about either this or the records management topic.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Chris?

MR. OLIVER: Thanks. I had maybe a two-part timing question, Paul. And I appreciate that you reached out and asked the councils to help nominate folks for the review panel.

We submitted a nomination package that actually included a couple of council members and myself. And so, my question is, have the dates of that been finalized so that we're sort of planning as I understood it the week of the 13th or 14th, which is right on the tail end of a council meeting for us.

So my question is, had the dates been formed for that? And then my second question, also kind of timing is, you say you're going to have the councils review the initial rank order for balance and distribution. What's the timing of that given that we don't necessarily have council meetings occurring right during this period?

Or we're seeing that as maybe a not necessarily a full council review, but a function of council leadership such as the Chairman and myself? How did you see that occurring?

DR. DOREMUS: The entire schedule is constrained by the grant cycle for the year and what targets we need to make to be able to ensure that we can actually get these funds expended through the grant process in this fiscal year.

We've worked out detailed schedules. I don't know the dates off the top of my head. But we could provide that detail to you as much as we have it now. And I would anticipate sending out information to you along those lines in the coming days.

But we're working off of a master schedule that's driven by the grant's management process. And it probably will not give you what you think to be adequate time. I'll tell you that right off the top. And that's the case for every segment of this.

Whereas we're doing 855 technical reviews in a really short amount of time. So everything's compressed. Each phase has been given a maximum amount of time. And in every phrase it's not enough. We'll lay out a detailed schedule for you so you can see what to expect in the coming days.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Tom?

MR. NIES: Well, I'm going to talk out of both sides of my mouth here just to warn you ahead of time. But we really appreciate you giving us a greater role in the S-K Program.

I have one question. Either I missed or I don't believe I received any request for naming people for the constituent review panel. So if you could resend that to me, it would be appreciated.

The other problem is that we're involved in some other technical review programs. For example Research Set Aside Programs that are within our own region. And you combine that with the S-K Programs and you know, typically, my staff gets tagged for technical reviews.

And we like to help out. But the reality is that our ability to support technical reviews from a wide range is falling. And you know, to tie this to your earlier discussion, additional budget support would be helpful. And you know, in the future I don't know how much support we're going to be able to give this program.

I know this year we had to scale back our technical review. And the amount of staff time we devoted to technical reviews. And I recognize it's kind of shooting ourselves in the foot because we all benefit from the S-K Program. But it's just a reality.

We went through a priority setting exercise this past fall with our council. And it was clear that when they give input on what they want the council staff to do, performing these technical reviews for external research programs falls pretty low. So that's a problem going forward.

DR. DOREMUS: Point's well taken Tom. And we certainly recognize those pressures and feel them across the board. Thank you. And we'll make sure you get information sent out before all the constituent panels.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Any other questions? Yes, Eileen?

MS. SOBECK: Are we about ready to break?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I think we are about ready, yes.

MS. SOBECK: Hey, I was just going to make one comment about the budget, which is we really appreciate your support and participation in the budget process going forward for 2016.

And we've had a lot of discussions about the points at which we can share with you and work collectively towards our budget goals and the points during which we can't.

And obviously before the President's budget is released, we really can't share much about how that has been undertaken. And now we are at the point where we can share more. And we are. And this is the beginning of that.

I wanted to just make it clear that Paul is our diplomatic spokesperson here. But we all participated. I participated. NOAA leadership participated in the work up of these budgets. The President's budget as you guys know full well goes all the way up to the ethereal reaches at OMB and then rolls back down to us.

And so, what goes in and what comes out is sometimes different. But at the end of the day, I still think that we have an incredibly strong budget compared to some of the other agencies that are out there.

And I fully support it. So please don't shoot the messenger. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, thank you. So I guess we'll go ahead and break for lunch. We'll still try to maintain the schedule and reconvene at 1:45.

Brian can we leave the computers here? Will someone be here? Or will it be locked up? You'll be here? Okay. All right, thank you.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 12:24 p.m. and resumed at 1:46 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, everyone, we're going to go ahead and reconvene. Our next item on the Agenda is the Legislative Outlook. And then we have our Rob Moller, Kiel Weaver, Matt Strickler, and Sara Decker, here. And I don't know, Rob, if you have any comments, or anything, do you want to start it off?

MR. MOLLER: Yes. I want to first thank, of course, these three --

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. MOLLER: Oh, okay. Sorry about that. I want to start just by thanking these three for taking the time to come up and do this. We actually sent out a document earlier today that shows each of the committees that have

jurisdiction over NOAA and the membership thus far, including the ranking members and chairman. So you should have gotten an email from Bill Chappell with that document.

So you can, sort of, see how the lay of the land has shaken out and who the committee chair is and ranking members are for our committees and subcommittees.

Obviously, there have been some big changes. I know you guys have questions about that and thankfully these guys are here to answer them, probably much, much better than I could.

So today we're just going to have a quick discussion about, you know, where these guys see things going on MSA in this Congress, and, sort of, what their bosses' priorities might be, or will be, going forward.

So as Kevin said, we have Sara Decker here. She's the Legislative Director for Senator Rubio, and is our main point of contact on the Senate Commerce Committee and the Subcommittee for everything fish and MSA.

Matt Strickler, he works for the House's Natural Resources Committee Minority Staff, and Kiel Weaver, who is the new Staff Director at the House of Natural Resources Committee for the new Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans, which has jurisdiction over fisheries issues. So I'm just going to turn it right over to Sara. I think that's how the coin checked out.

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. MOLLER: No. No.

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. WEAVER: Can they hear me? Okay. So Matt and I have to do this tomorrow about this time, so this is a good warmup, so he will quickly find out that I'm a professional smart alec, so welcome to the group here. And this is what I'll say tomorrow too, I'm from the Federal Government, and I'm here to help.

So I want to recognize Bill Ball. Stand up, Bill. He's actually the expert at the Subcommittee. I actually hired him about two weeks ago from Senator Collins' office, which means he is from Maine, and I forget where from Maine; it's along the coast somewhere.

I'm originally from Minnesota, so

walleye fisheries I know all about. But, no, that said, for the past 12 years I have been at the Water and Power Subcommittee and dealing with California water. I don't know if anyone knows about that, but three-inch smelt and a lot of salmon have taken a considerable amount of my time over the years, and we still don't have a solution, but hopefully we will get there.

So one of the things I've been asked to talk about today is how this subcommittee sort of came about and sort of where we're going to go with MSA and some other issues.

So I'll just be candid with you; I was sort of handed this portfolio, and when Chairman Bishop from Utah took over, and I think he may have sent all these people out, but Chairman Bishop is the Full Committee of the House Natural Resources Committee.

He is from Utah. Not sure how many fisheries there are in the Great Salt Lake, but he wanted to really create an oversight subcommittee, and really wanted to focus on oversight. So as a result of that, you know, one of the subcommittees had to go, and so what he ended up doing was he sort of divvied up what was the Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans Subcommittee, and then divvied it up. The fisheries and oceans part came to water and power, so now it's called Water, Power and Oceans. The wildlife part was given to what's now the Federal Land Subcommittee.

And, am I missing anything? So that's, and then, there was a third thing, but I guess it's not important. They may kick my butt for that, but most importantly for this, the Fisheries and Oceans is here now.

So we do have a Louisianan, as a Subcommittee Chair, Dr. John Fleming. Although he is from landlocked Louisiana, I have met with him numerous times over the past few weeks and he has a good understanding of these issues.

So we also have five other members from coastal districts, I should say, Louisiana, Alabama, Alaska, South Carolina, and others. And if you look at the subcommittee split, it's very interesting.

We have six people from coastal issues, from coastal states, or from the East,

per se, and then you have six people from the West, so it's really a composite of people. You have, you know, people from the Inter Mountain West and you have people from fisheries areas. So it'll be fascinating to see how we go about doing this.

I actually think there will be a lot of good interaction, because those in the Inter Mountain West may not know a whole lot about coastal fisheries and vice versa, so I actually think it'll be a good opportunity to create a dialog on that.

But I don't want to leave it just to the six members of the coastal fisheries part of this subcommittee. I will say that there were other members that are on the committee that are not on the subcommittee, Garret Graves, from Louisiana, being one.

But there are also other members who, you know, represent coastal areas, other Republicans, I'll leave the Democrats to you, but other Republicans who represent coastal areas.

And, you know, I have a large spreadsheet that we're going to meet with each and every one of the Republican members. I mean, they go down from Coastal Maine all the way to Alaska, of course, but if you look at who's not on the Subcommittee, yes, you'll go from coastal Maine to Long Island, all the way down to the Carolinas and, of course, the Gulf.

And then, if I recall, there's only one on the West Coast and that would be Jaime Herrera Beutler, and so, you know, we're going to meet with all those folks.

And I'm the kind of guy who, I've been in and out of D.C., or in and out of Congress for 18 years, which, you know, to me is a lifetime, and it's certainly not what I presumed that I would be doing, but I enjoy it and I enjoy the politics of it and I, obviously, enjoy the substance. And so it'll be interesting.

But I will say one of the first things that we are going to handle is MSA reauthorization. And I can, if you guys have questions about that, I can be more than happy to get those questions.

And by the way, I'd rather not speak at, because you're going to hear me speak enough

tomorrow, so I'd rather get some questions from you all. And, you know, we're here to learn. We're here to listen, learn, get that input, and then take it back.

But, you know, one of the things I owe the Republican members is to simply, you know, listen to them and try to find ways to find consensus.

For those of you in the Gulf, I know that there are a number of red snapper issues. And I'm understanding now that there's some sort of "consensus," and I put that in quotes, between the five states. I'll be curious to see what that exactly means and how that translates into the efforts of the past.

But my feeling is this, and poor Bill's heard me say this again and again, if I can deal with California water issues and the divisions of that and all the egos with that, I could probably deal with anything, so I actually look, very much look forward to that.

But, you know, some of you in the audience know that we've been meeting with a lot of people over the last month or so, and I've noticed quite a few things.

Each region is very different in, for example, Alaska -- and this is just an over generalization -- but Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, it's been going along pretty well. And, you know, when people look at MSA they also think, hey well, don't fix it if it's not broken.

But at the other hand they do have a few fixes. But there are others, you know, for example, maybe in the Gulf and sometimes in the Atlantic that people say, "Hey, we need to look at this seriously and make some changes."

So there are regional differences and I think whenever we do an MSA it has to reflect that; a one-size fits all policy is not going to work.

The one thing that I've also heard, particularly in some regions is, you know, there needs to be more data; there needs to be more robust science. Now, of course, science is in quotes, you know, and it's either the beauty of the beholder, but, you know, there will be a lot of focus on, for example, I mean, I hate to go back to red snapper, but there will be some data

collection efforts on red snapper without question. And there ought to be, you know, from what I'm hearing, better data collection period, but then the question is, how do you pay for that, and who does it?

You know, I'll just conclude by saying MSA is at the top of our agenda and, you know, I would presume that we were going to focus on that in March or April. You know, I would presume that the bill that was passed out of the Committee last Congress will be, or last, yes, last Congress, will be the main vehicle thus far and then we'll, sort of, go through the Committee and through the Floor, and see what amendments are added at that point.

And then, you know, we also are going to focus on something called the National Ocean Policy. We're also going to focus on Marine Mammal Protection Act and how it interacts with fisheries.

And so, you know, I wrote this on the cab ride down here, and I need reading glasses, but the bottom line is, you know, we're going to do a lot of things, but we're obviously not going to do it on our own.

I'd like to say, you know, Washington doesn't know best. Some people may disagree with that, but, I mean, again, we're here to learn, we're here to listen, and, you know, I'm not king for a day, although sometimes I wish I was, you know, we're going to really focus and try to work with you guys as much as we can and go from there. So with that, I'll just defer to you guys.

MR. STRICKLER: Hey, everybody. My name's Matt; I work for the Natural Resources Committee on the minority side. Mr. Grijalva from Arizona there is in the Third District, he's our new ranking member.

As Kiel mentioned, we've had a lot of turnover on our Committee, both member-wise at the top and with staff. We've gone from having two ranking members and a chairman from coastal states to a ranking member, and a chairman from not coastal states that don't, you know, have a lot of baseline knowledge, or constituencies in fisheries, but I guess that's what we're here for is to help educate and serve them, so looking

forward to doing that.

And as Kiel mentioned, the Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans is going to handle Magnuson reauthorization and all things fisheries.

Our ranking member on that subcommittee is Jared Huffman, from California, who some of you all might know. He's a really bright guy. He has commercial and recreational fisheries in his district, so he's really looking forward to, you know, getting more involved with some of these issues and playing a role in reauthorization.

As I mentioned before, last year, and talking to some of you all throughout the year and throughout the process of considering Chairman Hastings' bill and some of the other legislation that was moving through Congress at various times, our members have been and remain very interested in seeing, you know, what problems can be solved by the revisions to the National Standard Guidelines.

I know that those were released last month, which we think is a great step. We've taken a look at those and are curious to see what all of your reactions are to those proposed revisions and kind of hopefully be able to, you know, to make some positive changes to Magnuson implementation through that process.

You know, as far as reauthorization, I think, you know, a lot of folks agree that it would be good to re-authorize Magnuson, it is the most important fisheries law that we have.

At the same time, we and our members on the democratic side, didn't think that the bill from last year, HR4742, was a constructive starting point for a lot of reasons, and so we're looking forward to working with Kiel and Chairman Fleming on the Subcommittee and others, to see if we can find a little more common ground this time around.

So like Kiel, I'm more interested in your questions and what you all have to say, I think, today, and I'm happy to, you know, to answer those at the right time.

MS. DECKER: Thank you. First of all, thank you for having us here today. It's a pleasure to be in front of you, a couple of new

faces and old faces and great to see everyone.

As Rob mentioned, I'm Sara Decker, and I'm currently serving as Senator Marco Rubio's Legislative Director, but prior to that position, I was his Professional Staff Member on the Ocean Subcommittee.

We are working to have somebody fill that spot, and in the interim you guys are stuck with me. But, as far as committee structure in the Senate, my boss is, obviously, now serving as Chairman of the Subcommittee.

We just found out last week our ranking member is Senator Peters from Michigan, I believe, also not an ocean's member, but a Great Lakes member, so that should add a new perspective.

And, of course, at the Full Committee level, we have now Chairman Thune, and then Ranking Member Nelson from Florida. So I think that the structure of the Committee says a lot about the prospects of MSA going forward.

You know, I think last year we did a lot of work with then-Chairman Begich, meeting with folks from all over the country to hear some of these issues out and pull together what we thought in the Senate was a workable draft, unfortunately, we were never able to introduce the draft we worked on with Mr. Begich, but my boss did introduce his own bill, the Florida Fisheries Improvement Act, speaking to the regional differences that I think we all are fully aware of.

Naturally, our legislation focused very much on the Gulf and the South Atlantic. We too feel that that bill is probably the best starting point for us in the Senate. You know, I think that hearing the House's time line is great to know, it's why I wanted you guys to go first. I was very curious about that.

(Off microphone discussion)

MS. DECKER: But I do think that if we do do anything on MSA it will happen sooner rather than later, and I think that, I think it's going to be, perhaps, even hyper regional focus, given the politics and dynamics in the Senate.

You know, we know that it's working for a lot of folks, particularly in the Pacific that are happy with the bill; we know that the

conservation community is not interested in any broad changes and feels that if it's not broken don't fix it. And what that leaves us with is the Gulf coast snapper issue, which I know Dr. Crabtree is very familiar with.

So I can tell you that there's already conversations happening at the staff level to sort of figure out how we want to handle that and if we want to handle it legislatively. Conversations are not broader than that.

And, I guess, we would be curious to know if they should be broader than that, but at this point, you know, particularly, with our Ranking Member also being from Florida, we know where we would like to focus our efforts.

In regards to the rest of the agenda for the Subcommittee, I think that there will be a lot of oversight of the Agency, whether they're happy to hear that, or not, I suppose, and I also anticipate, you know, as Kiel mentioned, there's a focus on the National Oceans Policy.

There's also a focus on the current sanctuaries nomination process and what that will mean going forward for access to fisheries. And, you know, should legislation be incapable of moving within the first few months of this Congress, then I would expect the turn to be much more oversight than a focus on any legislative priorities. So with that, I will open it for questions.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, thank you for the comments thus far. Any questions? Don?

MR. MCISAAC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Don McIsaac, with the Pacific Fishery Management Council. One question about timing, and then, maybe, just a clarification on your request that you want to hear from us, or you want to listen to our perspectives.

But on the timing matter, we're going to talk a little bit about this tomorrow. It's going to be a strong thing on our agenda when we get back together for our annual meeting in June, so when we hear something like something might happen soon, is that something that you conceive of happening before June, and that you are interested in hearing from us well before June, or is this something that if we refine positions that June is still going to come in advance of

something soon?

MR. WEAVER: I'll try that first. I will say that the bill that was passed out of the Committee last Congress is going to be the base. But that's not to say that it's going to be the end product.

And so what I sort of envision is us marking something up, passing something out of the Committee in April, but it's going to take some time to sort of focus on that when it comes to the Floor.

Frankly, when you look at something between when it passes the Committee and the Floor, it usually takes a while, so I can't give you a definitive time line. But, I will say that June is probably, June/July, would probably be the time, it all depends on how much time we have on the Floor.

And, frankly, it depends on how confrontational it might be, which is why I'm relying on this guy to be a nice guy and not offer a lot of amendments. But we have to feel that out. But I would say that June, you'll probably have some time before June, but my guess is June/July that we pass it.

But, again, you know, to be honest, I mean, once of the questions I have, and this is internal baseball to D.C., but the last Congress, you know, the last Congress' bill that passed out of Committee, normally what happens is the Congressional Budget Office, you know, assesses the cost of these bills and assigns the cost to it and, you know, it had a $1.5 billion cost to it.

So one of the questions I have to the Congressional Budget Office is: okay, out of that $1.5 billion cost, how much of that is already ongoing versus how much of it is new?

And so to be candid, I mean, I don't have an answer to that, yet. So we need to find that out, because, you know, if members from, you know, Iowa, or landlocked states come up and say hey, why are we giving $1.5 Billion to coastal fisheries? You know, I got to come back with a response to say hey, bottom line is a lot of this is already being spent this is baseline spending, it's not necessarily new. But, you know, I got to work with CBO in finding that out.

So I guess what I'm, it's a long way of telling you that I may have a good goal, and I think my Chairman has told Mr. Young from Alaska that the goal is to pass it out sooner rather than later.

My guess is, you know, passing it on the Floor will come June/July at the earliest. But I will tell you this: the goal is to get this out of here and potentially done by the end of the year.

MR. STRICKLER: If I could just add a little bit to that? I mean, Mr. Bishop and Mr. Fleming and Kiel have the luxury of being able to drive the train on this. We in the minority kind of read and react, so the timing is going to be largely up to them.

That said, I would like to reiterate that our members don't think that it's appropriate to be considering reauthorization legislation without first hearing from the councils and from others on the National Standard Guideline revisions, which the public comment period is open until June.

So to the extent that we hear from people before anything moves, that's great; however, you know, we think that it's important to let that process pay out, or play out, excuse me, and give, you know, give people time to review and give, you know, good, thorough comments.

MS. DECKER: I'll just say, from the Senate perspective, I mean, and from my boss' perspective, we put a lot of effort into this process in the last Congress, and I don't think that there's appetite to sort of reinvent the wheel in those discussions and the things that we look at.

That said, you know, having just got a ranking member, you know, I don't currently have the ability to say how they'd like to run the Subcommittee and deal with the issue, and that's a conversation that I think the members need to have.

All of that said, I will just reiterate that there's already conversations happening at the staff level, in particular related to the Gulf Coast snapper issue. It's a regional conversation.

And the other thing I'll add is that, you know, the Senate now has a functioning amendment process, and so there are many more opportunities for us to move something a little bit more quickly than perhaps we would've in the last Congress.

So with all of that said, if you have concerns that we should be aware of that maybe weren't raised in the last Congress, I think those are the issues that I would be most interested in hearing about.

And the other thing I will say is that, should we go in a regional direction, that's not to say that further down the road we couldn't have a more broader overview of the issue, generally, and be looking at a broader reauthorization, so it won't be necessarily the first bite at the apple.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. John Bullard?

MR. BULLARD: Hi. My name's John Bullard. I'm the Regional Administrator from the Greater Atlantic Region, which used to be the Northeast, now Greater Atlantic.

And I don't want to talk about Magnuson-Stevens, but you said after that you might focus on ocean policy, or ocean planning, and I wanted, and you said you were here to listen and learn, and so I wanted, not knowing what focus might mean, to give you a perspective from our region on that, because ocean planning can be a loaded term.

And I just wanted to tell you, kind of, what it means in practicality with the two councils that I work with in the Mid-Atlantic in New England.

And because, one way, when you hear the term ocean planning it's all the agencies involved in the oceans in some way, it can be positioned as government over-reach, and it's a bad thing.

But in our region there's a lot lease sales going on with renewable energy, and I come from a fishing port in New Bedford and the fishing industry there looks at renewable energy and sometimes feels left out of that conversation, or maybe the last to be consulted.

And their voice box to be consulted

are the councils -- the New England Council in the case of New Bedford, but further down the coast it's the Mid-Atlantic.

And so the way that you deal with a potential conflict between a fishing industry and an emerging industry, like renewable energy, is with science, first of all, what usage should go where, and then, frequent and science-based communication between various users and various regulatory agencies.

And that has happened in our regions with the New England Council and the Mid-Atlantic Council and BOEM and others, being the forum. And often times the science is provided by data provided by the fishing industry, shared with BOEM, by lots of energy meetings.

So when you don't call it ocean planning, it seems to work really well. And everyone learns a lot from each other and better decisions get made.

But it is involvement by lots of government agencies, Coast Guard, BOEM, NOAA, et cetera, and convening of existing historical industries like fishing, new emerging industries, like renewable energy together. And it is facilitated, or it can fall under the rubric of ocean planning.

And all I wanted to say is that I think it is not just a good thing; it is absolutely an essential thing, because without it an industry like fishing gets walked over.

And so when something like ocean planning gets this moniker that makes it easy to attack just because a) it's big government and, you know, all right, a real service to an industry like fishing that provides a necessary form through the people in this room, through the councils, it's collateral damage, and on the ground this exchange of information is really, really helpful.

And so when you look at it in specifics, on the ground, that exchange of views that use of data and science to make decisions happen better, works. It's just, somehow, the name it doesn't work.

And so as you focus on that, after you do MSA, I think if you get examples of things like that, you'll see, well there's some things,

they don't necessarily cost any money even; it's just a way of having people come and converse, and you can get examples from the Mid-Atlantic and from New England of how these conversations take place, and they provide a real service, and decisions get made in a much better way. Thank you.

MR. WEAVER: That's very helpful. I appreciate that. I will say that, I don't know how many field hearings I've done, or how many oversight hearings I've done, probably, probably more than I can count, but, you know, oftentimes when you do those you obviously go into a situation, you know, that you have the answers, but that doesn't necessarily bear fruit all the time.

And so, I mean, one of the things I expect us to hear more about how government agencies are actually working together better as a result of this.

That said, there, of course, other people on the other side of the spectrum, so that would be just one of those things that we go about. But what we're not going to do, though, is not have any hearings and just assume everything is well.

Because, to me, what I've heard, and, you know, correct me if I'm wrong, but there sort of has to be, there's a lack of transparency, I guess, from the feds, in general, that's been the notion anyway, and so one of the things the hearing will focus on is transparent data, transparent communication, and all that kind of stuff.

And, you know, frankly, if NOAA, which is very good at marketing itself -- I'm used to agencies that are, you know, basic, bottom line is they just wants us to go away and then hide in caves; NOAA's the exact opposite. They're very, very good at marketing themselves, and so they will have every opportunity to talk about how transparent they are and how well they communicate.

MS. DECKER: I just want to concur with that. I mean, I think nobody is against having a dialog and making sure that stakeholders, you know, all stakeholders are involved in whatever process moves forward, but

it's really on the Administration to keep that process transparent. And, you know, frankly, I think the mistrust of the planning policy is the result of their lack of transparency up to this point.

MR. WEAVER: But thank you, though; we appreciate that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, I have Kitty Simonds, followed by Rick Robins.

MS. SIMONDS: Two things. One is, because I knew it was going to be introduced, do all our comments from last year get dumped and we have to resend them to you?

MR. WEAVER: No, I have all the files.

MS. SIMONDS: Okay. That's good to hear, though. As do I.

MR. WEAVER: You know, if I just had, you know, I've finally been cleared to go to the gym, and so I'm going to start taking all my files and reading them on the elliptical and all that. I don't have time to work out like --

MS. SIMONDS: Yes, I know.

(Simultaneous Speaking)

MR. STRICKLER: You have our permission to revise and extend your remarks, however.

MS. SIMONDS: Well, I might just do it.

MR. WEAVER: No, I have all them. So no, I don't think you need to resubmit them.

MS. SIMONDS: My other question is I'm very curious, you mentioned that, that you would be, you all would likely be looking at the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and so I'm curious to know, are you thinking about adding things, or deleting things, because I hope you get rid of two words: zero tolerance.

MR. WEAVER: I think what we'll do, there have been a number of conflicts that we've heard between the statutes. And, well, Marine Mammal Protection Act, ESA.

MS. SIMONDS: Yes.

MR. WEAVER: You know, the whole deal. And if you look at, you know, I'm putting on my other hat now for power stuff, if you look at what's happening at Bonneville Dam, for example, you have a number of sea lions coming in just gobbling up salmon at the base of Bonneville Dam,

and that's a serious issue. And that's just one of numerous things that I've been told.

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. WEAVER: So I don't want to say that we have something specific in mind in terms of legislation, but I think there needs to be a big emphasis on, sort of, where they're compatible and where they conflict. So stay tuned.

MS. SIMONDS: Right. Well, our problem is with the false killer whales, they're gobbling up our fish too, and they just leave the heads. So that's kind of cute right? You're looking at all these lines and all you see are fish heads.

MR. WEAVER: Where are you from, ma'am? I couldn't see over there.

MS. SIMONDS: Honolulu.

MR. WEAVER: Oh, okay. All right, thank you.

(Off microphone discussion)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, Rick.

MR. ROBINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm Rick Robins, with the Mid-Atlantic Council. I want to thank you all for the briefing today and being with us to do this.

I just wanted to see the -- it sounds like the starting points are going to be potentially significantly different between the House and the Senate, if the Senate is going to be focused on mainly a more regionally-focused bill.

And so given the time line, again, the CCC won't reconvene until June, so I just wanted to see if you all were open to the individual councils refreshing their regional priorities and transmitting those to you, relative to the reauthorization process? Because, you know, there are a number issues that regionally-specific that are going to be particularly important.

Just thinking about the Northeast, or now the Greater Atlantic Region, we share resources together with the New England Council, then the Mid-Atlantic State Fisheries Commission, but one of the challenges we face -- and this is particularly acute, I think looking forward to the next decade -- is just making sure that we

have the tools we need there in legislation to effectively monitor our regional fisheries.

And if you look at the provisions for the observer program that are spelled out in Section 313 of the Act, those establish very clear authorities and provisions for the North Pacific Council. And those are limited to that Council.

But, you know, I think in the Northeast Region, we have been significantly limited in our ability to meet our, just for example, our observant coverage requirements. I mean, there are a lot of factors that restrain our ability to be successful there.

But we really need a long-term solution that ensures that we have the tools that we need there in the Act to effectively monitor our fisheries. And, you know, it may be an expansion of Section 313, but whatever it is, it needs to be robust to the needs of the future.

And we've highlighted that some in our previous testimony, but, you know, I think, just thinking about it at a reasonable level, we're ultimately going to need to make sure that we have those provisions, or adequate provisions, in the Act.

And, obviously, the, you know, some of the discussion about monitorings, the shifting over, and being driven by changes in technology, we need to make sure the Act is ready for those technological changes, as well.

But I think that's going to be an important priority. And that won't be our only regional priority brought up to the reauthorization, but I just want to see if you all are open to hearing from us about updating regional priorities before that June time frame, because if you're going to try to move something in April, I would think that time would be of the essence for that.

MR. MOLLER: I'm very open to that.

MR. WEAVER: When you say tools, what do you mean? Do you mean money, or what else?

MR. ROBINS: Well it's a combination of things. The, you know, in the Northeast Region, we've had several amendments between our two councils where we identified levels of observer coverage that we wanted to require in

the fishery management plans, and we haven't been able to implement those.

And the inability to implement those, in part, it's been funding. And one of the difficulties is, you know, we talked about trying to create a cost sharing mechanism, and the industry has come forward and said in some cases that they're willing to fund a certain amount of FC portion of the observer coverage, but we haven't been able to fully implement that yet.

And there is an amendment that would essentially be a work around to that challenge, but I think, ultimately, those tools need to be specified in the Act.

MR. WEAVER: Okay. All right, thank you.

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. WEAVER: Thank you.

MR. ROBINS: Sure.

MS. DECKER: Like I said, I don't think that, you know, I don't think that whatever moves, at least in the Senate, will be the first bite at the apple, so we would absolutely welcome any additional, specific comments that you guys feel are necessary.

But I would also encourage you to work with your delegation state senators on the Commerce Committee with that, as well; I think they'd be best positioned to help you with that part.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, Dorothy.

MS. LOWMAN: Thank you, Chair. This is Dorothy Lowman, Pacific Council. And thank you all for coming here today; we really appreciate it. Last year, as we were working on the bill that you are going to have as a startup for your markup, we didn't have the National Standard 1 Guideline proposed rules.

And, you know, there was a lot of discussion, well, does this really have to be in the Act, or could it be handled through the Guidelines, et cetera, but we didn't see any language.

So now that they are there and you're thinking about your next markup, I heard Matt talk about wanting to hear our comments on the proposed rule before something was finished, but I was wondering what your strategy is to thinking

about them in the, sort of, bill that will be marked up?

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. STRICKLER: It's not going to be our bill.

MS. LOWMAN: So I think I was really directing this towards you, Kiel.

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. WEAVER: Well, I mean, of course, I want to hear from everybody on that, but I guess, my question back to you is, well, do you think there will be unanimity between the regions on the Standard 1? I would assume not, but I may be wrong.

MS. LOWMAN: Well, you know, this is a discussion where, next on our agenda, --

MR. WEAVER: Yes.

MS. LOWMAN: -- as a beginning place. I think in our little meeting yesterday we talked about how important it will be for us to be talking about where we have the levels of, and we didn't have a complete consensus on --

MR. WEAVER: Right.

MS. LOWMAN: -- the Magnuson --

MR. WEAVER: I'll just get a --

MS. LOWMAN: -- Act, so.

MR. WEAVER: I'll get a stay for some of that, if that's okay?

(Simultaneous Speaking)

MS. LOWMAN: Oh yes.

MR. WEAVER: Yes.

MS. LOWMAN: Yes. And we hope to, you know, flush that out a lot between now and our June council meeting too, so.

MR. WEAVER: All right.

MR. STRICKLER: Just to follow-up real quick. And thank you, Dorothy, for the question. You know, we had the Managing Our Nation's Fisheries Conference almost two years ago now, and what came out of there is that there were a lot of things that; there were some things that people thought needed to be handled through revisions to the law, there were a lot of things that people thought could be dealt with administratively, and this National Standard 1, 3, and 7 Guideline Revision Proposal is the vehicle for doing that.

And what came out of that conference

was that potentially as much as 80 percent of the changes that people thought needed to be made to implementing Magnuson can be done in this way. So what we're curious to find out is, you know, how much of that do you all think got in, how good of a job has NOAA done in meeting the needs that everyone has, and can, in a final rule, they do even more, based on the comments that you all submit?

So that's the information that we want, and then, after that, then I think the goal would be to see, kind of, what's leftover that needs to be done through a reauthorization, if that makes sense?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Tom.

MR. NIES: Hi. I'm Tom Nies, with the New England Fishery Management Council, Executive Director. I guess, I think a couple of us have hinted at a question, and I just want to make sure I get a clear answer. And then the other is related to the National Standard Guidelines.

The first is that, I think last year when we were working on the, when the draft bills were being worked on, the councils all got specific requests from the various subcommittees to provide comments.

And I'm assuming from your comments that you feel like those requests are still out there, and that we should feel free with giving you those comments and educating you on the implications?

The other thing relates with National Standard Guidelines. You know, we get very nervous about the timing of these things, because we've got a draft rule out with a comment period ending June 30th, we don't really know how long the Agency's going to take to refer to the comments.

And so often there's a big gap between the draft and the final. And so we get, kind of, put in a bind when you ask us the question, well, do you think the draft guidelines address all your issues, or not, because the draft might address many of our issues, but we don't know what's going to be in the final.

MR. WEAVER: Okay. Those are both fair points.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other questions?

I just wanted to follow-up on Kiel, your statement, I appreciate you all coming and providing your remarks. I'm with the Gulf Council, and red snapper is an issue, and so I'll take a few more minutes to talk about red snapper.

And that, certainly, we are engaged, at least at the state level, and we had a meeting last week with the state directors, and we'll be supplying you some information on specific ideas and thoughts for the plan, and so be looking out for that in the next couple of weeks. And hopefully that will be useful for you all and the time line that you described.

MR. WEAVER: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: But, again, thank you for your time. So I guess that will take us, if there are no other questions then, for the group? You are all welcome to stay, of course --

MR. WEAVER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: -- and listen to the rest of the meeting. But that'll take us to the next item on the Agenda is National Standard 1. Sam.

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. RAUCH: All right, so we've issued National Standard 1. I think you've heard a little bit about the history; I won't repeat all that history. We have our expert on National Standard 1, who is going to walk you through the high level of presentation, Wes Patrick. He'll come up here and guide you through all the details.

We're also intending -- and I think many of you know this -- to talk specifically to each council. The comment period goes through June in large measure, so that we can have adequate time to talk with all the councils, so that you can fully understand what we're proposing here, what the implications are, and those kinds of issues.

So without any further issues, I'm going to be up here and can help, but Wes will lead us through the presentation.

MR. PATRICK: Hello, everyone. So as you've all already heard, we had the proposed rule out, it came out in January, the 20th, of this year, and we're accepting comments through

June 30th. We did the long comment period to make sure that the councils had enough time to meet a few times and provide us with some good feedback.

We are going to be setting up some, hopefully, some presentations with you all at your council meetings. We already heard back from many of you, and some of the ones here coming up.

Just to give you another, kind of, background slide here is that, you know, National Standard 1 is about achieving optimum yield while preventing overfishing, and the last time that we revised these guidelines was back in 2009 when we were implementing the annual catch limits and accountability measures that came out of the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act.

And since we've implemented those Guidelines in 2009, we've been getting a lot of comments and issues raised by councils and fishery managers, NGOs, a lot of different comments.

We had our Managing Our Nation's Fisheries 3 that we mentioned earlier. And so through this process over the last couple of years, we've been taking that information that we've been gathering and trying to resolve those issues in this proposed rule that we have.

The real takeaway you need to have about these guidelines is that they do not establish any new requirements; they don't require councils to revise their current management plans.

What they mainly do is they provide clarity and some potential flexibility in how we can meet the current MSA mandates, and so what this proposed rule does is try to stay within those sideboards of what we have in the MSA.

So what you're going to see is that we're still, the proposed rule still requires that stocks in need of conservation management must have annual catch limits, the accountability measures, and other reference points.

And that some of the issues, as you've all mentioned, will hopefully be addressing some of the points raised by Congress over the last couple of years with MSA.

And lastly, we wanted to point out

that any type of proposed flexibilities that we have in the Rule still need to meet the National Standard 2 requirements, so using the best scientific information available.

So we have seven major elements that we're going to be talking about in this presentation. This kind of hits on the highlights of the proposed rule, and it will touch on things like rebuilding, stability, and annual catch limits, and looking at the routine review of management plans.

So starting with rebuilding plans. There's five sub topics that we cover in the proposed rule. The first one is on calculating Tmax, then I'll move into adequate progress, interim measures, extending rebuilding time lines, and then, just continuing rebuilding plans.

So first up is Tmax. So what the proposed rule has here is that we're trying to address the concerns of: how do you calculate Tmax whenever you're developing a rebuilding plan? And our current approach now is that you have to calculate that by doing Tmin plus one generation time.

However, the calculation of generation time can be a data intensive process, because you have to know a lot of information about that stock to calculate generation time.

And so what we have here are two additional methods of calculating Tmax that are not as data intensive but also give you some of the same results in calculating Tmax.

The first one is two times Tmin. This was the approach that was mentioned in the National Research Council's report on rebuilding, and it's an approach that New Zealand uses for the rebuilding stocks.

And the second approach is the time needed to rebuild Bmsy when fished at 75 percent of your fishing mortality rate. And, as you all are probably aware, we already have that in the guidelines, this 75 percent of Fmsy.

We say that when you reach the rebuilding plan and you haven't yet rebuilt, you can continue with your rebuilding plan with the Frebuild, or setting 75 percent of Fmsy, whichever is lower.

And what this slide here shows you is how these three different ways of calculating Tmax compare with one another. As I said, they are very comparable with one another.

On the X axis here, what I have is the productivity of the stock. So if you're on the far left-hand side of this graph, you're a slow growing species, like a shark, and if you're on the right-hand side of this graph, you're a fast growing species like tuna.

And then, on the Y axis we have years for rebuilding. And so as you can see here, all of these lines here pretty much overlap. You are going to see a little bit of variation here and there, but for the most point, they're very similar.

The next topic under rebuilding was Adequate Progress. So our current guidelines don't really provide any advice on what Adequate Progress is. We do know from the Magnuson Act that the Secretary is supposed to determine if adequate progress is being made in a rebuilding plan and that they should be doing that every two years.

And in the past, the way that we've done this is relied on stock assessments to determine if adequate progress is occurring. But with our implementation of annual catch limits in 2009, we know that several councils have been using that to look at adequate progress, and there may be some other appropriate measures. And so what we've done here is added in these other ways of looking at adequate progress.

We also wanted to point out that, give kind of a definition for what adequate progress is, and it's, you're not making adequate progress if your catch is exceeding your Frebuild, or the associated annual catch limit, and the AMs are not effective.

And so this isn't if you exceed your ACL for one year; it's if you are continually exceeding your ACLs, or your Frebuild, and your accountability measures aren't adequate for correcting that overage, you could be determined to not be making adequate progress.

And the other way you can do that is if you have a new stock assessment that significantly changes your understanding of the

status of the stock.

A good example of that is what happened a few years ago in New England with Atlantic cod. They were rebuilding the stock and having catch limits less than their annual catch limit, but they got a new stock assessment that totally revised their understanding of the status of the stock, and therefore triggered inadequate progress determination.

So following on with what happens when you have an inadequate progress determination with a significant change in understanding of the status of the stock is that you can sometimes have the Secretary implement interim measures that reduce, but not necessarily, end overfishing.

And so in our guidelines, we have this section in our guidelines, and it basically repeats verbatim what's in the Magnuson Act. And what we wanted to do in this proposed rule is actually outline, what does it mean, or when can you use interim measures, and what are the criteria that's needed to trigger those?

And so we've only triggered interim measures twice that we're aware of, in recent history. One was in Northeast, like I just said, and then also, more recently, in the Southeast, I think, with tilefish.

And so the guidance that we've been providing in the past is what we've put in the proposed rule here, which is that, as I said before, there's an unanticipated and significantly changed understanding of the status of the stock that ending overfishing immediately would result in severe social and ecological, or economic impacts, and that whatever measures you do put into place, you need to make sure that the biomass must increase during that interim period.

Next up is on extending time lines. With rebuilding plans, you go through this process of calculating a minimum time to rebuild and a maximum time to rebuild, and then you identify some target time in between that balances out the quickest time to rebuild that stock.

And as you get new stock assessments, you might want to revise those reference points. And that can be a process that is very time

consuming to the council process, and so what we wanted to do is try to emphasize that needing to revise, or routinely modify, your rebuilding plan -- or changing these reference points -- isn't always needed.

And sometimes the driving force behind those revisions is because you're looking at the biomass of the stock to see how well it's meeting your milestones for rebuilding. And then our, I think, you know, the last year the National Research Council had their rebuilding report that said that we shouldn't be putting so much emphasis in looking at the biomass of the stock, but what we should be focusing on is the fishing mortality rate for that rebuilding plan.

And so what we're trying to emphasize here is not focus so much on the biomass of the stock, which you can partially manage through fishing mortality rates, but also has a huge component to it of environmental factors that you don't have any control over. And so rather than modify your reference points to try to meet that deadline that you can't really control, because of environmental factors, let's try to focus more on just maintaining your F below Frebuild.

And then the last part under this rebuilding section is about discontinuing rebuilding plans. As you all know, currently, what we do is, once you're in a rebuilding plan you need to stay in the rebuilding plan until that stock's been rebuilt.

But we know, from recent studies, like the National Research Council, that there's a lot of scientific uncertainty about the biomass of stocks, and that whenever they did a review of our currently rebuilding stocks, 30 percent of those stocks were found to never have been overfished whenever they did a new stock assessment later down the road.

And so if you're in this situation where you're in a rebuilding plan, but you find out that you shouldn't really ever have been in a rebuilding plan, it can cause some problems.

And so what we're trying to do here is allow for these rebuilding plans to be discontinued, and so our proposed rule here is just outlining that if the Secretary determines that the stock was never overfished, as

originally thought, then you can discontinue that rebuilding plan.

So you have a new stock assessment, you find out that the stock was never overfished in the past, like you originally thought, well then, you can come off of that rebuilding plan, if you also find that the current biomass of the stock is not overfished. So there's kind of a two-point criteria there.

The next element I'm going to talk about is Improving Management of Data-Limited Stocks. Basically, what we're doing in the guidelines here is that we're trying to resolve some of the problems that we've had in more of our data-poor regions, where our scientists weren't able to calculate maximum sustainable yield for these data-limited stocks.

And what that resulted in was that you had several stocks that maybe had an annual catch limit and acceptable biological catch, but they wouldn't have an overfishing limit, because there was no equivalent estimate of what that would be in maximum sustainable yield, or its proxy.

And since these 2009 guidelines came out, there's been a lot of differently viewed data-poor methods that have been developed to help you all estimate what the sustainable levels of catch are for these data-poor stocks.

And while those estimates aren't MSY-based in some cases, they do provide you with a sustainable level of catch. And so what we're clarifying in the guidelines here is that when you can't estimate MSY, or MSY proxy, it is okay to calculate some sustainable level of catch and still set your annual catch limits and overfishing limits with those new methods out there.

So I just have a couple of examples here of ones that councils are already using and we just highlighted those in the guidelines as appropriate ways of calculating catch, like, Only Reliable Catch Methods, which they use down in the Southeast, or the Depleted Correction Adjusted Catch is a method that they commonly use on the West Coast.

Let's see here. We also wanted to emphasize that, in our guidelines here, that another approach for managing data-poor stocks is

using stock complexes, which is basically putting a lot of data-limited stocks into one complex and measure them as one unit.

And in our guidelines we found that sometimes whenever you have this stock complex and you would go in and assess one of those stocks within the complex, it would often be taken out of the complex, because our guidelines would say, well if you were able to identify the status of the stock, you should be managing it on an individual basis.

But then we also said later on in the guidelines that if you have an indicator stock we would like you to use that in your stock complex. And so there was some discontinuity in what kind of guidance we were giving on these stock complexes.

And so what we've done is we've taken out that statement about needing to manage stocks on an individual basis, and that where practicable, we would prefer that indicator stocks be left in the stock complexes to better manage them.

So here's another section that is on stocks that require conservation and management. This was essentially a lot of revisions to the guidelines.

It looks like a lot, but what all we've really done is consolidated the guidance that we had in National Standard 1, National Standard 3, and National Standard 7, on what stocks need conservation and management.

And so currently what we have in the guidelines is that guidance for councils for identifying what stocks need to be included in the FMP occur throughout those three guidelines, and it can be confusing.

So what we've done is consolidated all of that information, we haven't really deleted any of that guidance, we just put it all together and we moved it up to the General Section of the National Standard Guidelines, so that it's all there in one place.

And what those guidelines say is that stocks that need conservation management and need to be included in an FMP are those stocks that are predominantly caught in federal waters and are overfished, subject to overfishing, or likely

to become so.

So if you have those two criteria, then you should be including an FMP and you should have annual catch limits, MSY estimated for those stocks, et cetera.

We also have a list of ten other factors that come from National Standard 7 that kind of lay out all these other factors that councils have been using over the years for what stocks could be included in the FMP.

This list of ten factors aren't must be included in the FMP, these are factors that you can consider, as well as other factors that you might come up with.

So it's not exhaustive list, but it gives you some guidance on what kind of other factors you might want to consider for including the stock in the FMP.

So for example, if we were to look at Number 6, the fishery is important to the Nation and to the regional economy. Just because maybe that stock is important to the regional economy, doesn't, by itself, maybe mean it needs to be included in the FMP and managed with ACLs. You might want to have multiple objectives that gets you into that next level.

It's only those first two criteria about, in federal waters, and you're overfished, or likely to become so that definitely gets you in the FMP.

And through this process of consolidating the different guidance we had in National Standard 1, 3, and 7, we re-labeled what stocks are in need of conservation and management, and then we had stocks that are not in need of conservation and management, and we have other managed stocks.

And we realized that the last time that we went through the guidelines and created new categories it caused some frustration, because it meant that the councils needed to go through and revise their FMPs to use these new terminologies and align with the annual catch limit terminology.

And so in this round we were trying to minimize any of your council's work to have to go through and re-categorize stocks again. And so basically, what we say is that, currently, what

you have in your FMP as stocks in the fishery, which is the old term, are stocks that require conservation and management, and we're going to assume that those stocks are equivalent.

The same thing for ecosystem component species. We're going to assume those are equivalent to stocks in need of conservation and management.

And then there's this oddball group here, other managed stocks that are stocks that are captured in two different FMPs. One FMP will be the primary FMP, the other FMP will be the secondary FMP. And you really only need to have your annual catch limits and reference points and stuff described in the primary FMP, not in the secondary.

The next element is on Ecosystem Approaches to Management and Optimum Yield. So our guidelines, we've heard a lot from the councils and from stakeholders that we weren't very clear in how optimum yield aligns with annual catch limit framework.

And so we're just clarifying here, as many councils here have already done in their guidelines, is that optimum yield is equal to annual catch limit. If you were to do that on an annualized basis, it's the same thing as MSY's equivalent to the over fishing limit.

We also put in the guidelines some new ways of calculating maximum sustainable yield. Currently, the way that we calculate maximum sustainable yield in most cases is on an individual basis.

And what we wanted to do is introduce this term called aggregate maximum sustainable yield that scientists have been using for years, but you don't often see it in FMPs, because it's one, not what we're used to, because we're supposed to be, in the past we had used status determination for individual species. Aggregate MSY, what it does is it treats multiple stocks together and calculates the maximum sustainable yield.

And so the reason that we wanted to introduce this is that it takes into account some of those multi-species interactions that go along with ecosystem-based management, and it may come in handy with the optimum yield specification, if

you wanted to try to identify optimum yield at the higher fishery level, rather than on an individual species level.

And the last point I'll make about this slide is that, in the past when we've been talking about optimum yield specifications, we've always had it in there as a quantitative analysis, and that's caused some problems with different councils where maybe they don't have the information on socioeconomics of the fisheries.

And so whenever you go through your analysis you have, maybe, a lot of quantitative information about the biology of the stock, but not so much the socioeconomic factors. And so we're just clarifying in the guidelines here that, when you don't have the quantitative information to do these analyses, a qualitative approach is acceptable.

This fifth element is to provide more stability to catch levels in fisheries. This is one of the major things that we've heard over the last couple of years from you all and from other stakeholders, is that our annual catch limit framework has thought to cause instability in our fisheries, and that we do these knee jerk reactions to when we have a new stock assessment, we have to reset ACLs, and it can cause this instability in the fisheries.

And so we have three main things here that we have in the guidelines, to try to help stabilize these levels of catch in fisheries. First one is our multi-year overfishing definitions, which is relating to how we make status determinations for our stocks.

The second one's going to be on phase-in of stock assessment results, and so that's how do we react to new information from stock assessments?

And then the third one is about carryover of unused portions of annual catch limits, and that's more related to how we handle projections from stock assessments, and also address some of these safety at sea concerns with how fishery managers have to work with this annual catch limit and developing quotas.

So the reason that we keep hearing and recognize that there's issues with stability with

fisheries is that we, of course, work in a very uncertain field where, even though we have stock assessments for these data-rich species, there's often a lot of uncertainty related to them.

And so for example, you all are familiar with retrospective bias where the stock assessment's most uncertain point often is the newest, or terminal year, point in the stock assessment.

So if you had a stock assessment in 2014 that's looking at the first year of data is in 2012 that data is usually the most uncertain, often because of these retrospective biases. And as you look further and further back in time those uncertainties tend to dissolve away and become more accurate.

Another reason that we're looking at stability in fisheries is because we recognize that the reference points that you all use will vary from year to year.

And so for example here, what I've done is I looked at some West Coast fisheries that have stock assessments every couple of years, and what we have is their reference points for Fmsy, Bmsy, and maximum sustainable yield.

And you look down at the bottom here, what you can see is that the average variability in those reference points from one assessment to the next varies by 20 percent. And so you can definitely recognize that whenever you get a new stock assessment and these reference points change that can sometimes result in very different changes in catch, even though, maybe, your catch has been stable but the reference points have started changing.

So one of the things that we're introducing in the proposed rule here is that maybe we can look at multi-year overfishing definitions to try to smooth out some of this uncertainty from stock assessments.

This might come in handy whenever you're trying to look at the status of the stock. So this is more of, you've done the stock assessment, you're trying to determine the status, and may or may not affect how you show up on these Red Lists with the different groups out there that do eco-labeling.

And so currently what we do in our

guidelines is you look at the most terminal year in a stock assessment and determine the status of that stock. Is it overfished? Is it under going overfishing, or not? What we want to do is try to minimize some of those false negatives and false positives that occur from the stock assessments.

And so through a multi-year overfishing approach in the proposed rule, we're saying that you can look at a three-year period from the stock assessment to look at the status of your stock.

As long as you go through the process, if you do decide to use this approach, that documents how this approach will not jeopardize the capacity of stock to produce MSY.

And so what that might look like is, what the Southeast is already doing and as, you know, a good example that we built our proposed rule off of, is the snowy grouper stock assessment.

They realized that they do have a lot of uncertainty in that terminal year estimate from their stock assessment, and so what they've been doing is using a three-year average from their stock assessment.

And it shows that if you use the three-year average here that the overfishing rate here, or the fishing mortality rate, is actually below the overfishing level.

So if you're below the green line here, you're not overfishing. And they have a ratio of .59, so they're well below the overfishing level. But if they'd only looked at the last data point in their stock assessment, it would have showed them up here around 1.2 and they would have labeled them as overfishing.

And so understanding the uncertainty related to your stock assessment and using a multi-year approach can help resolve some of those false negatives and false positives.

So the next one was on Phase-in of ABC Control Rules. So this is basically a tool that we're using to try to minimize those dramatic shifts in catch that can occur from stock assessment to stock assessment.

They've been used in other places like the International Pacific Halibut Commission, as

used in the European Union has these types of control rules.

And just like the multi-year overfishing approach, we're proposing in our guidelines that you can use a phase-in approach, if it doesn't exceed more than three years, and that you provide a comprehensive analysis of how this phase-in control rule prevents overfishing, and when the control rule should and should not be used.

So you might find some situations, such as a declining population, where using a phase-in approach isn't maybe a proper tool to use. So with this approach you'll want to make sure that whatever method you use doesn't jeopardize the capacity of the stock.

Example of how a phase-in approach might work is here I have what you're used to is an overfishing limit, it's the red line at the top, and the blue line down at the bottom is your acceptable biological catch.

And for this example I'm going to pretend that the ABC is 75 percent of OFL. And you can see that this assumes that there's a stock assessment every three years. And rather than have projections, they just set their overfishing limit as the static level for those three-year periods.

And so you can see that, here in 2014, they got a new stock assessment, it says that the catch should be something much lower. So they would need to reduce their catch, if they were to use their ABC Control Rule, as written, reduce it from 500 metric tons down to 360 metric tons.

And so what a phase-in approach could do is, maybe, you could phase-in that catch over that three-year period. And so rather than taking that 140 metric ton cut in the first year, maybe you take only, say, 100 metric tons, or 60 metric tons, in that first year and continue on until you finally hit that point in your third year. And just to note here that that dotted line in 2015 is still below the overfishing limit for that year, so this would be acceptable.

Lastly, Carry-over ABC Control Rules. This is something that we put in, as I said, as a way to improve safety at sea, but also, looking at how we use projections from stock assessments

and thinking about how much of the catch do we actually take of our annual catch limit, and how does that affect next year's yield? We also have used this a lot in catch share fisheries over the past, and the more recent years we've been using it in other fisheries.

And we actually got sued over the way that we were using carryover a year or two ago, on where the catch limit was being set above the acceptable biological, ABC, set by the SSC. So the reason we lost on that is because we're not allowed to set catch above what the SSC has specified.

And so we've put this into a control rule so that we can always modify our ABC with the carryover approach. Or, if your carryover never, say, if you have an ACL that is set below ABC, and the amount of carryover you have doesn't exceed the ABC, well then, maybe, you don't need to mess with an ABC calculation, because you already have that buffer built into your existing system.

And I understand that's the way that several of the councils have been handling carryovers, that there's already a buffer between the ACL and the ABC, you might have that flexibility to take some carryover without adjusting your ABC.

But if your carryover's going to exceed your ABC, well then, you will need to modify your ABC so that it's in line with the court case.

So what we have here is in the guidelines is we recognize that carryover is a very useful tool in fisheries and want to encourage its use.

And I have an example here, you know, it's just like your cell phone bill where you can carryover the minutes, you can carryover the catch that you didn't use in last year's fishing year to the next year, because you realized that in fisheries we kind of always assume that we're going to catch the ACL perfectly, especially in these stock assessments where we have projections of catch.

And if we don't catch ACL perfectly, well then that's some additional biomass that could be taken in the following year. And our

example here, what we've done is we're saying that it's not really a one-to-one carryover, because you could account for a thing such as annual survival rate and natural mortality.

The sixth element is on Defining Depleted Stocks. This is something that we've been hearing for decades. I think we actually had this in a proposed rule in 2005. And we've decided to bring it up again here in this proposed rule, which is that we understand that our current definition for an overfished stock means that the biomass of the stock has fallen below this limit, the minimum stock size threshold, and when it does we call it overfished, regardless of whether that decline in the population was due to fishing, or environmental factors, or some other unknown factor that we don't know.

And so our stakeholders have been saying for years that, you know, when we call it overfished it puts the onus on the fishermen as the cause when maybe they weren't.

And so what we did here was try to separate out the difference between what an overfished stock is versus a depleted stock. And what we're trying to resolve here is that, if we keep both definitions of an overfished and a depleted stock, we need to have some period of time where we know for sure overfishing hasn't been occurring, so that your scientists can easily identify an overfished stock versus depleted stock.

And so if your -- depleted is whenever you have declined below your minimum stock size threshold and the stock hasn't been experiencing overfishing at any point over a period of two generation times of the stock.

Or, if you have a stock that's already overfished, it's in a rebuilding plan, and you've been rebuilding that stock for years and you've reached your Ttarget time, or your target time to rebuild, and the stock, its biomass, hasn't shown any significant signs of increase, despite being fished at, or below, levels consistent with Frebuild, then you can call that stock depleted.

Depleted stocks still need to have rebuilding plans, however, but what a depleted stock does is it changes the onus from it being a

fishing-related cause to something else, and so in that process in your rebuilding plan, you might want to focus on some other non-fishery-related issues like looking at habitat, or other environmental mitigation issues.

And the last element I have here is about Improving the Routine Review of Fishery Management Plans. And so this is, basically, a reflection of things that we've been hearing from our stakeholders, in that, we recognize that the councils have very busy agendas, and some stakeholders believe that some of the goals and objectives of these fisheries need to be re-evaluated on a more regular basis.

For example, looking at the allocation of how harvest is distributed among different sectors of the fishery. And also, if you have more up-to-date goals and objectives of your fisheries, they become more relevant whenever you're looking at your optimum yield specifications for your fishery, also.

So what we have in the proposed rule is that you should reassess the goals and objectives of your fishery on a regular basis. We do not define what a regular basis is, only that it's set upon the schedule that the council agrees upon, will be a review period every five, ten, 15, 20 years, whatever they agree is a regular basis.

We did give you all an example, though, in proposed rule, like in the Magnuson Act they have the catch shares re-evaluation period, which I think is, the first time is seven years, and then after that it's five years after you review the performance of these catch share programs. And so we gave that as an example, but, again, we didn't define it.

So just to summarize, the main points is that what we're trying to do here is improve and clarify and streamline the guidelines to one, recognize the great things that the councils have been doing and put those into the codified text.

We're trying to stay within the guide rails of the Magnuson Act, and trying to address all of the different comments that we've been receiving over the last five, or six, years, since we've been implementing the annual catch

limits.

And if you want we have a lot more resources online, if you'd like to go visit that. We also have a redline version that you can download and see all the individual comments, or revision stuff we made to these guidelines. With that --

MR. RAUCH: All right. So that was a lot of information, as I said, we're going to try to get to all the councils, but we're happy to take questions now while you've got the expert here.

Let me just reiterate at the outset, our purpose here was, after listening to a lot of what we'd heard through Managing Our Nation's Fisheries and everywhere else, is to make the changes that we thought the statute gave us, the flexibility that we thought the statute gave us that we were willing to make.

There are some things we've heard, a few things that we've heard that we can't address. This works within the current statutory construct.

This deals with a lot of the kind of issues we've heard from people who thought there should be more flexibility. They thought that there needed to be more stability, this sort of the tyranny of the last data point, something we heard a lot of, so this is an attempt to address a lot of that. But, Mr. Chairman, we're happy to take questions now, if there are any questions.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: And, are there any questions? Don.

MR. MCISAAC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sam, you heard the folks earlier say that, perhaps, compared to all the ideas that came out in our Nation's Fisheries 3 Conference that maybe 80 percent could be taken care of by National Standard 1 Guidelines.

One of the slides here said it doesn't look like there would be a mandatory FMP amendment, by any of these ideas. So could you speak to whether or not you see this as a major overhaul that could be accomplished this way, or not, or if when you went through this you thought, well, this will certainly take care of the councils' concern about Magnuson

reauthorization on that, or this, or the other things?

MR. RAUCH: So the one thing that we heard repeatedly through the entire process is that there was not a need for a major overhaul. Almost universally people believe that the Magnuson-Stevens Act was working, but there was a need for some small changes to the whole issue.

So it's not a major overhaul. We didn't hear that. We didn't hear a need for that. What we heard is that people were -- there was a lot of fish being left on the table, a lot of economic value, actually, more so than the fish, more economic value being left on the table by the constant raising and lowering of quotas every year, in response to the last data point.

We heard in a lot of data-poor fisheries that we hadn't give clear guidance that not every fishery can be managed as if it's the Alaska pollock fishery. All right? That there are a lot of fisheries around the country in which we have very limited data, and to try to model them on a data-rich fishery creates inequities, creates difficulties, not only for the councils, but for the fishermen and the scientists who have to deal with it.

So part of what we're trying to do is outline tools that the councils can use, with our blessing. And many of the tools we have on here are tools that one or more councils have already used, to say this is an acceptable approach.

This addresses a lot of the concerns we had by the fishermen in this part of the country, to look at somebody that what we're doing in another part of the country and it works there. So they give the councils tools to do that.

So there are not in here requirements on the councils to change what you've done, other than we believe you should set out that process for regularly reviewing your goals and objectives.

But, it does give you the flexibility when you're doing a fishery management plan, a few more tools that you've had that we've pre-cleared that says these are the kinds of things that you can do, to try to give some stability, or flexibility, or to deal with

data-poor situations, or these other things that we've mentioned.

So I don't know what percentage, didn't you do the report on Managing Nation's Fisheries 3? You can calculate up how many of these that that addressed. I don't, we didn't do that percentage.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Doug.

MR. GREGORY: Yes, certainly, in the Gulf we don't have the, I guess, the major problems in the Caribbean that Western Pacific does, with terms of catches and stuff, but the thing that's been causing us a lot of trouble is the incidental species that are caught by a major fishery, and they're very minor components of the catch, to the point where they'll never be a stock assessment.

The different techniques that were listed on one of the graphs, slides, aren't applicable. So what it does is it forces the SSC to develop arbitrary methods of pigeon-holing these stocks into ACLs.

And if we could consider these stocks ecosystem species, or something, where they didn't require ACLs, then our headaches would go away, the scientific community's headaches would go away, because they really don't appreciate, you know, being forced into developing arbitrary approaches to things.

So the Item Number 2, if the stock is caught in the fishery and if the fish are kept, you know, that's the dilemma we have, and this approach doesn't seem to obviate that.

MR. PATRICK: So just to address that point, we were trying to resolve that issue with our old definition for ecosystem component species, which had those, had four criteria that, two of them were problematic.

One was that the stock had to be a non-target, and the other one was that it was generally retained, and that seemed to be one of the main problems for not being able to classify stock as an ecosystem component species.

What we've done in these guidelines is we've taken away those four criteria, actually, two of those criteria, because we still say that if you're likely to become overfished, or you know that it's overfished, or undergoing a

re-fishing, well then, you're in need of conservation and management. That was part of our old guidelines, too.

And so what we've done is try to streamline what stocks should be in the fishery, or in need of conservation and management, and be less stringent on what these EC species are.

And so if your stock assessment scientists, or SSC, recognize that these minor components of the fishery aren't overfished, aren't overfishing, or likely to become so, then they should have no problem adding them as an EC species.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. And thank you for the good presentation.

(Off microphone discussion)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Yeah it's, it's almost appropriate. It's almost siesta time. So, Chris.

MR. OLIVER: I have two questions. On the defining depleted stocks, and it's I'm thinking of a particular, a specific example in the North Pacific, the walleye and the blue king crab, which hasn't been fished for decades, and the small amount that's taken is by catch and some other fisheries, but we've done the calculations that basically say, there's nothing we can do that will either effect, or affect, rebuilding for this stock.

And so the way that this was phrased, you still would require rebuilding plans, so it doesn't get us out of that sort of circular, circular situation where there's nothing we can do in a rebuilding plan.

And so is there, I don't know what my question is there, exactly, but I don't -- what's the net effect really of providing a definition for depletage?

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. RAUCH: First of all, we can't change the congressional requirement. The stocks are technically overfished by the congressional definition -- the statutory definition, I'm sorry, the statutory definition, and if you're overfishing you have to do a rebuilding plan.

It does change the kinds of measures that you might put in a rebuilding plan. You

might recognize that their current depressed status is not being influenced by fishing, at this point.

The only way to rebuild that might be habitat improvements, or other kinds of things that can address the more systemic issues. So you could lay out a plan for that that does not require, does not focus so much on fishing.

But we cannot exempt you from the requirement to have a rebuilding plan that is a statutory requirement. Do you want to add anything to that?

MR. PATRICK: Only that another way that you could look at it, too, but I'm sure you already have, is looking at whether the environmental conditions that that species of crab is experiencing, is it a long-term or short-term effect that would make you consider revising the reference points, if you don't think that that population can rebuild to your reference point, based on older data of when the environment was different to a new environment that maybe will never support that stock to rebuild to the old levels.

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. OLIVER: Follow-up. So this may be an example of where these revisions, sort of, partly get at some of the concerns that came up last year, but there may still be legislative action in tandem that would fully affect, I guess, some of these issues.

But my other question has to do with allocation and I know we've had a lot of discussion and some debate about the initiative to mandate the councils' revisit allocations, and I know we're going to get to that later in the Agenda.

But I do note that two, or three places in this proposed rule it refers not only to reviewing objectives, but to reviewing allocations. And, I guess, my question is, what is the net effect of that in here, why is it in the NS1 revisions, and what's its relationship to the Agenda item we're going to talk about tomorrow?

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. RAUCH: So the relationship to the -- so if one requires you to revisit, in order to

make sure that your optimum yield is set in the manner that meets the best needs of the country, the best interest of the Nation, you have to continuously determine that it meets the best interest of the Nation today, not three decades ago.

That is one of the drivers for something we've talked about a lot here. I've asked you a lot. In order to do that you have to be able to look at all your goals and objectives. One of them is the allocations.

In determining what is the best interest of the Nation today? That involves a determination of what the allocation today is the right allocation.

NS1, as part of our overall objective, would ask you to set a regular schedule for looking at that. It doesn't say that you have to go through the full amendment, but to, much like you look at your catch share issues today and say is this still meeting the needs for which we thought when we designed the program? You would do something similar to the rest of your goals and objectives and let people know when that's going to happen, so that it is not, it is not random.

Now, right now you're going through the allocation trigger question, which is a very similar kind of question, figuring out what your review process should be, when should the councils look at it? So we do see those as related. Allocation is merely a subset of the broader issue, but you can apply many of those same principles that you're going to talk about in the allocation triggers to this kind of question.

And we intentionally leave it somewhat broad, recognizing that different councils will want to address these on different cycles. And that's okay, as long as folks know when that's going to happen. That's what we're asking for.

MR. OLIVER: And so if this rule sets out that requirement, is it moot, our discussion that's slotted for later in the meeting, or --

MR. RAUCH: Well it's a -- first of all, it's a proposed rule, so it doesn't mean anything at this point, is what, I think, Tom said earlier.

But, no, I don't think so. I mean, I think that that discussion is talking about how the councils might want to, in particular, apply something like this for the allocation part of the question. I view that as a subset.

I mean, if you look at the National Standard 1 Guidelines Requirement, it is very broad. And I think that the effort that the CCC is undertaking is an effort to put some of its own internal boundaries on that, or provide some of their own guidance to the councils on how you might want to do that. Alan, did you have a follow-up on that?

MR. RISENHOOVER: No that was really the point. This is, kind of, what needs to be done. How you do it is what the CCC Subcommittee is looking at, in particular, allocation.

MR. RAUCH: Yeah and as Wes pointed out to me, there is -- because this was meant to be in NS1 Guidelines, but it also, it accumulates parts of 3 and 7, there's also a general revision to the -- this requirement is in the general section, so you asked why it's in NS1, it's not technically in NS1 it's in the general, the revisions toward General Guidelines.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Tom.

MR. NIES: I guess I'm struggling to understand a little bit about rebuilding and requirements, or not having the requirement to modify rebuilding periods and extending time lines.

You know, the Slide 12 says you're not required to revise Frebuild throughout the course of a plan, the primary objective is to maintain F less than Frebuild.

And it says unless adequate progress is not being made, and I assume that means the official Secretarial determination that adequate progress is not being made.

And it just seems that you could very easily, and I can probably think of one or two examples, get in a situation where your catch has not exceeded your ACLs, so you don't get a determination that adequate progress is not being made, but your biomass isn't increasing appropriately, because your Frebuild really isn't low enough.

And it seems like this is tap dancing

around the statutory requirement to have rebuilding accomplished by a certain end date. So I struggle to understand exactly how these two provisions interact with each other and don't conflict with the statute.

MR. PATRICK: So within the statute, you know, we are supposed to develop a rebuilding plan to try to rebuild stocks within ten years, where possible, unless the life history of the stock doesn't allow for that, or other conditions like international.

And so the approach that we've used in the past has been somewhat focused on what is the biomass of the stock. And as we've learned over the years, and as other research groups have analyzed what we've been doing, rebuilding plans, we're kind of coming to the realization that we're focusing too much on trying to make a stock rebuild when, maybe, the environment isn't trying the same thing.

So we can't make a stock rebuild within a certain time frame if the environment, or average recruitment isn't going to cooperate with us. And that's caused some problems where you get toward the end of a rebuilding plan, and some stakeholders and councils have looked at dramatically reducing the fishing rate, in order to rebuild that stock by that specified time, which was based on a stock assessment projection that was done, maybe, five, ten, 15, 20 years ago.

And we know that the uncertainty related to those projections are enormous. And so trying to, you know, push a stock to rebuild within a certain time frame, based off an old estimate, we were trying to de-emphasize and look more at, you've gone through the process of identifying how quickly you'd like to rebuild the stock and you've applied an Frebuild to it, and we would prefer to just focus on the fishing mortality rate of the stock.

And the stock will rebuild, on average, on Tmax, but if it doesn't, it's more than likely related to environmental factors that were out of our control. Does that help any?

MR. NIES: Yeah, I think I understand the logic pretty well, coming from New England. But, I guess, with the adequate progress line,

when you say, and maybe I'm misinterpreting this, when you say, Paragraph 1 on your Slide 10, catches greater than Frebuild, do you mean that the F that resulted from the catch is greater than Frebuild, or the catch was greater than the catch that was projected to come from Frebuild?

MR. PATRICK: You could use both. So we were trying to use language here where we were looking at adequate progress, and we're supposed to do it every two years. You may not have a stock assessment done every two years, but you might want to rely on the comparison of catches to your annual catch limit that also aligns with your Frebuild.

And so we were trying to write this requirement so that it was flexible for those councils that maybe could use stock assessments every two years, or those that, maybe, had to rely on their annual catch limits, catch relative to annual catch limits.

So I would assume that we always would prefer a stock assessment that tells us what we think the appropriate catch amount was, but whenever you don't have that information you can rely on your catch relative to ACL. That's where we were trying to make that determination more flexible, depending on the data that you have.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Rick.

MR. ROBINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question relates to rebuilding, also. And I'm looking at the slide that has those options for stocks requiring more than ten years to rebuild. And it appears that you've explored some flexibility for those stocks and alternative methods.

But, you know, there's still an incongruity at the ten-year mark where, you know, if a stock can be rebuilt within ten years, for example, if you had a stock that could be rebuilt within eight, or nine, years, you'd have to do that, whereas, if it's longer than that, you're going to treat it very, very differently. And, you know, I guess, it appears that the guidelines can't remedy that incongruity.

I mean that, you said right up front that you're operating within the current statutory framework, you know, I don't know if there was any exploration of those stocks that

can be rebuilt in less than ten years, but it seems like that's still one of the constraints we've had.

I think the example that we've discussed in the past was spiny dogfish where, you know, the initial rebuilding period was five years, whereas, if it had been Tmax plus a generation time it would have been closer to 30, you know, you would have had a very different set of consequences.

I mean, if we had had that range of flexibility in approaching a rebuilding schedule, we might have been able to optimize a schedule that would have considered the biological, as well as some of the economic considerations.

But, I wonder, was there any expiration on the stocks that can be rebuilt within ten years, or was that simply off the table?

MR. PATRICK: I think your assumptions are correct in that we weren't able to look at those stocks that could rebuild within ten years, because of that statute.

And so the only places where we could try to help out in rebuilding with this computation of Tmax is with those stocks that are greater than ten years, and looking at the type of data you need to calculate Tmax and try to provide some flexibility there.

(Off microphone discussion)

MR. RAUCH: And I think, and you guys can correct me if I'm wrong, when we looked at this nationally, there are only a handful of stocks that actually are less than ten-year stocks.

Most of the stocks are greater than ten years already, so this does affect the majority of our stocks. There are ten or so -- I don't know what the actual number is, maybe it's a little bit more than that, that can be rebuilt in less than ten years, where that dichotomy, or that disjunction, that ten years may make a difference. But the majority of our stocks are already beyond ten years, and so this would apply to all of those.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Chris Moore.

MR. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I've got two questions, one for Sam and one for

Wes. Sam --

MR. RAUCH: Which one first?

MR. MOORE: Yes, Sam.

MR. RAUCH: Okay.

MR. MOORE: So I'm a little caffeine deprived this afternoon, but I really didn't understand your answer to Chris' question. And, specifically, if this proposed rule became the final rule, what would it require the councils to do, as it regards to allocation and/or planned goals and objectives?

MR. RAUCH: So what it would require you to do, well, first of all, it's guidelines, it doesn't require you to do anything. It's the National Standard 1 Guidelines and these are our guidelines.

MR. MOORE: Right.

MR. RAUCH: What we would like you to do is to articulate for the public, or articulate a schedule, at which you would regularly revisit your goals and objectives and determine whether those are still the right ones, or not, or whether you wanted to tweak them.

It doesn't mean that you have to do a fishery management plan amendment, but to go through a process to decide whether you want to do a fishery management plan amendment.

So to let the public know, we are going to in ten, we are doing this fishery management plan now, in ten years we're going to revisit it and then you will have an opportunity then to come back in and see whether it worked, or not.

But it doesn't require you to do a fishery management plan amendment, at that time, just to determine whether or not the goals and objectives are still the ones, whether you're still getting the goals and objectives and if those are the right ones now.

Many of these goals were set in the '80s. But, so it doesn't actually require you to do it, but what we want you to do is to set, is to articulate for the public a schedule at which you will look at these things.

MR. MOORE: Thanks. Thanks for that, Sam.

MR. RAUCH: Okay.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Chair, one more. So,

Wes, you have a slide. I just lost it, it's an ABC carryover. It's like towards the end, like, four.

Yes that one. Can you explain that to me? And, specifically, how does this work if you have a target out within a given year? How do you not exceed your target up, if in fact you're carrying over, I think in your example you say, 500 metric tons?

MR. PATRICK: Sure. So under this example here, we're going to pretend that we did a stock assessment and we have, at least, a two-year projection that says in year one the overfishing limit is 200,000 pounds and in year two it's 205,000 pounds.

And we're going to also assume that we know that the ABC control is going to be some percentage of the OFL. And whenever you come through we're going to also assume that ACL equals ABC, which most councils have.

So in this first year you only caught 169,500 pounds, and so that left 500 pounds, or metric tons, whatever units you want to use, left those on the table.

And your stock assessment projection model would assume that you caught those fish perfectly. It assumed that you caught 170,000 pounds, but because you didn't, that means there's 500 extra pounds of fish out there that you could add to next year.

But in this example, we're taking into account natural mortality, because we know some of those fish will die from the first year to the second year, so that's going to leave us over here on this, let's see here, that's going to lead us over here where we have, instead of 500 pounds leftover, we're only going to carryover 410.

And so next year's overfishing limit, instead of doing 205,000, now it's going to be 205,410, and then we can apply your ABC control rule again to that, and that's going to be, instead 174,250, it's going to be 174,498.

So all we're doing is taking away those assumptions from the stock assessment and those projections about, if you were to catch your ACL perfectly, this is how much we think you can take in the following year.

If you don't do that and leave some on the table, how much can you carryover to that following year and bump up your OFL and your ABC and your ACL to take advantage of those loss yield?

MR. MOORE: So, if I may, Mr. Chair, just as follow-up. So you actually then have to do a recalculation and you have to go through a new, or an updated year assessment, before you actually could figure out how much you can carryover, is that what you're saying, or are you saying there's an automatic, sort of, way of doing this without additional stock assessment analysis?

MR. PATRICK: We think that you can use this without updating your stock assessment. If you could update your stock assessment, that would be the best way to do it. So if you were able to turn the crank, and get the new numbers, that works the best.

But from talking to Rick Methot, the stock assessment process, you can do other things like, he talked about how you can develop, when you do a stock assessment you could have your stock assessment scientists develop a matrix of what if statements, what if we only took a 90 percent, 50 percent of the catch and it would give you what the new value of the overfishing limit would be for the following year.

And then, I'm assuming also that your SSCs could come up with an approach where they could do this kind of analysis themselves on an annual basis to revise those estimates, too, so you don't need to update your stock assessment, but it would be the best way.

MR. MOORE: Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Don.

MR. MCISAAC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A follow-up on that. You indicated earlier that some of these things are being used in certain parts of the country already.

The to address safety at sea issues caught my eye. If there was a need to do this that's unassociated with safety at sea, but maybe business planning for a catch year program, you think that's an eligible consideration here?

And I'm not sure if those three bullets at the bottom get to the point of, you

led up to carryover. We had talked about ten percent carryover in our council arena, for example.

So in the guidance, if it was adopted now, as proposed here, is there a limit on the amount of carryover, and is that at safety at sea issue some sort of critical qualifier?

MR. PATRICK: So the safety at sea is not a qualifier for using this carryover provision. I brought that up, because it was one of the primary things back in the day when it was just primarily used for catch share fisheries.

That made it a very appealing type of management tool, because it meant that these folks with their catch shares maybe didn't have to go out at the end of the year and try to use up their entire quota. If there was a bad storm they could carry that over to the next year.

And so those good management tools have spilled over into non-catch share fisheries. And like you said, there were some councils, or some discussions of being able to carryover large portions of catch.

And in some cases that large portion of the catch that they did do at some councils, exceeded the SSC's recommendation for ABC, and we got sued over that and lost.

And so any type of carryover that we have that our proposed rule lays out is that you need to make sure that it still prevents overfishing and that the amount of carryover doesn't exceed the ABC specified by the SSC.

So the reason we put it in this ABC Control Rule Section of the proposed rule is so that if it did happen to exceed what you thought the ABC would be for this year, that the SSC could take that opportunity to go through and revise their ABC Control Rule so that it wouldn't be illegal under that case law that we've had.

MR. RAUCH: Yes, the issue with just the ten percent carryover that was the measure, the kind of measure that we lost on, and the situation there was a declining stock.

The new stock assessment comes in that approves his stock, but the stock was more healthier, and the new stock assessment says it's not as healthy and we have to cut the cord a lot, and so can you carry that over?

If you carry it over ten percent that would result in overfishing in the next year when the chords are reduced, and so you can't just do a blanket ten percent, or a de minimis carryover, it's essentially, the word de minimis, well, what the court said is, yes, you have to evaluate the impact of that carryover on overfishing.

And that's what we're trying to say here, carryover is a good useful tool, to safely say well that's a good use for it. It's a tool, but we do have to evaluate the overfishing implications, you can't just do a blanket ten percent carryover, without analyzing what effect that might have.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: And so, I guess, Wes, or Sam, a stable fishery, I didn't catch it earlier if you described what a stable fishery is, is that just one that's frequently assessed and it's, you know, it's not the, ABC's not being exceeded, is that a stable fishery, or what does that mean?

MR. PATRICK: So a stable fishery, related to carryover, or just our general statement about how to stabilize the catch in fisheries?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Well, you just had the title up there, Stable Fisheries, so for as it relates to carryover ABC and a --

MR. PATRICK: Oh, okay.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: -- stable fishery, what is a stable fishery?

MR. PATRICK: So in my example here, yes, it was trying to look at fisheries where you know that carryover wouldn't contribute to more overfishing in the stock.

Just like Sam just said, is that, yes, there is going to be ebbs and flows in the population of the stock, but if you have one that is continuing declining carryover, you'd have to be very careful on how you use that, if at all.

MR. RAUCH: Yes. So let me tell you some of the things that we've heard, in terms of economic stability, a fisherman goes out there and fishes at 100 fish this year. And next year's stock assessment comes back and says well, you need a huge reduction, you can only catch 30 percent. Well, that's going to destabilize it, right, because he's going to have to take those

economic losses.

The same would be true if it went up, though, if they say, all of a sudden, now you can take 10,000 fish, then there would be no infrastructure to be able to do that.

And so stability is an effort to try to get to where you can own the value of the fishery, by giving the fishermen a little bit more certainty that they will get a similar amount of fish every year. That's what, when I'm thinking about stability, I'm looking at it in terms of those economic terms.

Now there are environmental primers that you still have to deal with, you can't allow fishing, those kind of things. But in the efforts to try to build in some stability there, so that we can eliminate where we can some of these wild swings that we've seen in some of our fisheries, which doesn't do anybody any good. And, as we've seen in the most, we're reacting to the most uncertain data point when we do that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Do we have any other questions? All right. Well, Sam and Wes, thank you very much for the presentation.

MR. RAUCH: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: That puts us a little ahead of schedule, and so we could do a couple of things here. I'm going to throw out some suggestions, or some options. We could take the break now, a little earlier, and then continue on with the rest of the Agenda, we could go forward with the rest of the agenda items without a break and finish up a little early, potentially, any thoughts? Take a break? All right, so we'll take a break.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 3:40 p.m. and resumed at 4:05 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, we're going to continue on with the Agenda. The next item is, Eileen is going to talk about the Presidential Task Force on Combating IUU Fishing and Seafood Fraud.

MS. SOBECK: Great. Thanks. I wanted to give you guys a short overview of where we are on this issue, partly because this is probably the main area where Dr. Sullivan, the NOAA Administrator, has really dug in and spent

personal time on a NOAA Fisheries issue.

And so it's been a good, but different, point of entry. But she's interested. She's been really depending on NOAA Fisheries and the support that we've been giving her, along with Russell Smith, from the NOAA International Office, to help her formulate her views.

But there are a couple of portions that may well affect you guys more directly than others, so I wanted just to do a quick recap on where we are and what you might want to be looking for in terms of milestones on this in the upcoming weeks and months.

So as you know, this Task Force arose out of our ocean conference hosted by Secretary Kerry last spring, and there was a Presidential Memorandum that set up this IUU and Seafood Fraud Task Force.

It does acknowledge that IUU fishing is a global threat to sustainable management of the world's fisheries, and it undermines efforts to enhance food security, and it allows for unfair market advantage to nations and parts of industry that engage in IUU fishing, to the detriment of fisheries like U.S. fisheries that are sustainably managed.

There is also, in addition to the IUU portion of the Task Force, the Task Force is also charged with looking into seafood fraud, which is focused mainly on seafood mislabeling, with respect to species, country of origin, quantity, quality, and which undermines the economic viability and the ability of consumers to make informed purchasing choices and threatens consumers' confidence.

So where are we, the NOAA is Co-Chair of the Task Force. Dr. Sullivan is our representative, along with Department of State, under Secretary Cathy Novelli, is the State Department Co-Chair.

And as you can see, with the agencies listed below there are a number of different agencies that have been actively engaged in the work of the Task Force. It has been an inter-agency collaborative effort.

And, actually, I think that one of the main benefits we're going to get from this Task Force is having a number of these agencies, among

them, FDA and Homeland Security, give some of our seafood enforcement at the border issues a higher priority.

And we have engaged at a pretty high level on those efforts and I actually think that that's going to pay off. Some of these areas we've been trying for a number of years to get some traction, and we've had good interactions at the staff level, but I think that we have an opportunity here to bump this up a couple of priority levels.

Because these other agencies' sustainable fisheries is not necessarily their highest priority, and so having this window of opportunity for the President and the Administration to tell them that they need to pay a bit more attention is one that we want to take advantage of.

Okay. Yes, the President, this is just the, kind of, basic milestones, the Presidential Memorandum came out in June of last year. Then there was a period of public engagement where we got feedback.

There was a Federal Register Notice. There were a number of public meetings. There were some demarches that went out to some of the major nations that we have significant fisheries imports from, to get their input.

Then in December, the Task Force put out 15 recommendations. Those recommendations are final. We did solicit public input on the implementation of those recommendations, and the comment period on asking for that input on implementation closed, I think, January 20th, towards the end of January, and so we are currently reviewing the public comments and developing an implementation plan.

So of the 15 recommendations, they fall, generally, into four categories, International Governance, Enforcement, Partnerships, and Traceability.

The international recommendations are the first seven. The first seven recommendations, the first one has to do with Port State Measures, specifically, securing U.S. implementation legislation and seeking global entry and to force of the port states measures agreement, by getting the requisite number of

other nations necessary to sign on.

Number 2 directs us to help develop, refine, and seek RFMO, adoption of best practices. Number 3, regarding Maritime Domain Awareness, is focused on ensuring that IUU fishing is included in the larger U.S. Government Maritime efforts.

Number 4 is to use existing and future free trade agreements to combat IUU and seafood fraud. Number 5 is to pursue international commitments to eliminate fisheries subsidies that contribute to excess fishing capacities and overfishing by 2020.

Number 6 is a capacity building measure, which directs us to work with partners to prioritize sustainable fisheries management and efforts to combat IUU and seafood fraud.

And Number 7 just addresses diplomatic efforts, generally, to maintain IUU fishing and seafood fraud is a priority and to enhance international political, the will to make this happen.

I don't mean to minimize these, these are all extremely important, and I think that NOAA fisheries has an interest in, essentially, all of these. We don't necessarily have the lead on these, but to the extent that you all have any recommendations about how these should be implemented, by all means, let us know. Enforcement recommendations. And I know we have, I think I saw Todd here, yesterday?

If anybody has questions about these, we have a number of recommendations that pertain to enforcement. Number 8 directs us to develop a strategy with deadlines to optimize the collection, sharing, and analyses of information resources, including forensic analysis.

Number 9 directs the agencies to leverage existing and future customs mutual assistance agreements to make sure that we can exchange relevant information and work with foreign customs administrations.

Number 10 requires us to standard, or directs us to standardize and clarify identification rules and try to adjust U.S. Tariff Codes to enhance identification in trade of species that are subject to IUU fishing. Obviously, that's a heavy lift over a significant

period of time.

Eleven is, I think this is an interesting one to improve, information sharing for enforcement purposes, and develop tools for state and local action.

Some of the transactions that have been identified in this process having to do with seafood fraud and improper species identification of what the consumer is getting, some of those are happening at the state and local level and the reality is NOAA, FDA, there's probably no federal enforcement authority, so we need to work with our state and local partners to see that they are appropriately engaged.

And that leads us to the last, which is to really identify what authorities, if any, are lacking to accomplish some of the goals that folks really want us to have to combat IUU and seafood fraud.

I think that one of the things that we did accomplish in the discussions surrounding this Task Force is that federal agencies don't necessarily have a firm understanding of what each other's authorities are, and that Customs, we don't necessarily have a perfect understanding of what authorities Customs and Homeland Security has, they don't have a perfect understanding of our authorities.

We all didn't necessarily understand what FDA's authorities are, and so I think that there are some potential enforcement gaps, and if people want us to enforce particular links in the supply chain, or particular kinds of activity, we will need some additional enforcement authority. So that is what the aim of Number 12 is.

The third category is Partnership Recommendations. Just one in this category. I think that there was a consensus during the outreach effort that there were a lot of good ideas from harvesters, importers, dealers, retailers, processors, NGOs, about what priorities are out there, how they should be addressed, what can be done by the private sector, what should be, must be done by the Government?

And I think that we're all looking for a more regular forum to enhance those collaborative efforts and make sure that we have

a constant back and forth flow of information.

And then, the final category are the Traceability recommendations. And in a minute I'm going to ask Sam to talk a little bit more about what this might mean.

Interestingly, there are only two of the 15 recommendations that pertain to traceability, and I think it's worth emphasizing that, you know, there are a lot of other, you know, the first 13 really are important for us to get a handle on IUU and seafood fraud, it's not all about traceability, but this was an area that there was, of course, a lot of input from the public and from all sectors of the public.

So the first recommendation, Number 14, directed us to identify and develop a list of information and types of operational standards and gave us six months to figure out what those types of information, operational standards, should be, with input from industry and other stakeholders, regarding a traceability system.

And then, Number 15 gives us 18 months to establish the first phase of a risk-based traceability program to track seafood from the point of harvest to entering into U.S. commerce.

So Sam's going to talk a little bit about those two elements in a minute, I just want to talk to you for one more second about where we are and where we're going.

The next steps is that we did receive public comment, 48 comments, through the Federal Register Notice, many of them quite comprehensive and lengthy.

And then, interestingly, 28 countries responded to the demarches we sent out, so a lot of nations that export to the United States have views about what we're going to do.

We are in the process, as we are reviewing these public comments, to develop a Task Force report with further implementation steps.

And we are going to be at the Boston Seafood Expo in March and expect to have an opportunity for stakeholder engagement at that event. So hope to see some of you there.

And we will keep you up-to-date. There is a Web page, so if you're looking for the text of the Presidential Memorandum, or the text

of the specific recommendations, and when we have the implementation plan it will also be posted on this Website, and we will be happy to give you more detail, if you need it.

And before we end, I want to let Sam opine a little bit more on what, parse out a little bit what those last, the Recommendations 14 and 15, what we think they mean. Thanks.

MR. RAUCH: All right. Thank you, Eileen. So before I talk about the details, I want to reiterate a point that the efforts here apply both domestically and internationally.

Some of the tools that we were talking about are different, but in part, because of Free Trade Agreements and everything, we have to maintain equity in what we apply internationally that we make sure we also do domestically.

The fact of the matter is we think, domestically, we manage our fisheries very well. We think that there is very little IUU fishing and what little there is, some of our enforcement agents here do a really good job dealing with it.

Seafood fraud's a little bit different issue. NOAA Fisheries doesn't have a lot of great tools to deal with that, unless you are partnering with our Seafood Inspection Program. We're concerned about that, but on the IUU, at least, we have a robust program that deals with it, and we've been dealing with it for decades.

So let me talk about the traceability aspects. And at the moment it keys on species that are at risk of significant IUU fishing, or seafood fraud. So that is a subset of all of the species that we deal with.

There is a goal in the recommendations of eventually going to a more comprehensive, system dealing with something broader than that list of at-risk stocks.

And, at the moment, the recommendations are all focused on for enforcement purposes only. The federal government would collect this information, share it with the various enforcement elements within the federal government, but not share it with the public.

In part that's because of the Magnuson Act, which is one of our main information collection tools, precludes sharing this, because

of the confidentiality requirement.

But there's also part of this that would look at mechanisms to be able to share it more broadly. It doesn't say that that's the ultimate goal, unlike the conferences system.

So right now, though, I want to talk about how we're going to, how this envisions it being implemented for those at-risk stocks. The first step is to identify what kinds of information you would need.

And there's, in the recommendations there's examples, it's basically the who, what, where, when, who did the fishing, what's the name of the vessel, what the fish was, what kind of gear?

Where? Where has been a big issue, because, currently, in many instances we can collect a generic where, you know, off the State of Virginia, maybe, but for a longitude thing we don't collect very many questions, and that's very difficult. So getting the specificity for where down has been an issue, will be an issue.

So you would do that. The operational standards, we've got a lot of questions about what that is. Well, what that is, file it electronically. No matter what we do we want it electronic.

For the international things, does it have to be filed with the International Trade Data System, or the system that Customs maintains, is there a form? This is what we mean by operational standards. How you actually have to file it. How long do you have to keep that information? Is it verifiable? Those are operational standards, as opposed to the types of information.

So within six months you identify that, and we're still working out exactly the details of that, but at some point they, my view is there will likely be a set of minimum standards that we would like to seek, recognizing that in many of the fisheries we collect much more of this data.

I mean, we have fisheries around the country that collect a lot more data than I can see are going to be needed for traceability, but there'll be a minimum set.

Then, once we've collected that, we

are to work with our fellow agencies in identifying what the at-risk species are. Now, domestically, we've been looking into this. I think we collect the who, what, where, and when, in some fashion, on the vast majority of our federal fisheries.

It's not 100 percent, but it is, seems to me, it's maybe more than 70 percent. And I don't know the exact percentage. And it varies in different parts of the country. It actually varies into one that is a federally-collected, or whether the states collect it and share it with us.

But we collect the who, what, where, and when, on the vast majority of domestic federal fish stocks, and many state stocks, as well. Certainly, Mid-Atlantic States Commission where you've got a better sense of that, there may be some purely state stocks in other areas of the country. But, in the U.S. we collect that.

So as I've been trying to think about what definition of at-risk stocks we would apply that would actually increase the data collection requirement in the United States, and it's not clear to me that there are any. There might be.

There might be a stock which is at-risk of significant IUU fishing or seafood fraud that we currently don't collect the who, what, where, and when. But I'm having trouble of thinking of what that would be.

I think that it is very likely for domestic stocks, when we do the list of at-risk stocks, it will be some subset of stocks that we currently collect in some fashion that kind of information, but there may be others.

For the domestic stocks, if indeed we come up, we find at the end of the day that there is an at-risk stock that we don't collect the who, what, where, and when, the recommendations envision that we, as a federal agency, will come back to you for federally species to try to create a data collection program for that.

I think it's unlikely that we'll be doing that, but it may happen. And we would work with you on that. We would say this stock is at-risk of illegal fishing and we need more data on that. The kind of thing that we talk about with you all the time. But I think it's very

unlikely we'll do that, because I would imagine we already have a data collection program, and we won't know until we go through the process.

That'll be domestically. It's also possible that there will be a state species, in which case we'll reach out to our state partners similarly. That, whether we can actually get a program implemented, or not, remains to be seen, with our state program, partners.

Internationally, we collect, there is a much smaller subset of fisheries that we collect that who, what, where, and when, data. Some of our tuna fisheries we do. The two fish fisheries from Antarctica we do, and a few others. We usually collect them through the electronic forms that apply at the border through Customs.

But at the moment that's all we do, and it is unclear, right now, whether we have the authority to impose a stronger requirement on those international stocks. So if, indeed, we find that an international stock is subject to significant IUU fishing, and I think we will, and we find that we currently don't collect that data at the border, and I think we will likely will find that, unlike domestic fisheries, we are still working with our friends at the Customs Agency about how, how and under what authority we would go through and impose additional data collection on importers.

So I can't talk about that, because we're still working through that. But the idea is that we would do that, for a list of at-risk stocks we would either, under existing authority, or we would seek authority to impose similar data collections on importers to the kinds of data that we impose on ourselves.

So when we do that at the port of entrance, so that's, for importers, the point of first sale, point of entry, where ever you file your Customs form there, we would then, so that's, within 18 months they want that program to be up and running.

It's unclear exactly, we are working, in the next report we will spell out more of what we think that up and running looks like and what's going to happen between now and 18 months from now.

But there will be some sort of process in which we identify the at-risk stocks, which we will come back, if we think that there is one, domestically, that we need more information to come back to you. If we think there's one internationally, when we go through whatever process we identified to do that.

Within a year we are supposed to evaluate the program and come up with proposals for how you would expand it to be more comprehensive, which is to mean all fish stocks, and also, what it would look like if you were going to share it more with the consumer, which we currently are not envisioned, this system is not envisioned to do.

So that is, basically, the Traceability Program, as it's laid out there. It is an important piece, it is not the only piece in there, but it is an important tool to get at this IUU issue.

MS. SOBECK: And I'm happy to open it up to questions, and would only note that, you know, the Administration takes this seriously and has really been pushing us to deliver and to come up with these recommendations and the implementation plan.

We made it really clear that part of what makes U.S. fisheries sustainable is having a viable and real enforcement effort, and that if we wanted to expand, to encompass all of the kinds of recommendations that were made here, we would need some additional enforcement resources, and you see that reflected in the President's budget that $3 Million Dollar bump. So just mentioning that. It continues to get high-level Administration attention, so it is going to happen.

So with that, we're happy to open it up to questions and, you know, stay tuned for the implementation plan in the next few weeks, or couple months.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Kitty.

MS. SIMONDS: Just to say that, we sent in four pages of comments. And, obviously, we agree on many of these things. I guess, the problem is the how, because if you expect our territories to inspect logs and things like that, you know, they're going to need training and

funds to do that.

In fact, the biggest bust that happened out there was not on the water, but was at port in American Samoa. Those logbooks of a Spanish purse seiner was reviewed, you know, and that's how they, they had to pay $5 Million Dollars. So I mean, for us out there that's important, port state inspection.

And the other thing is that, you know, one of the things that's talked about is curbing subsidies. I, you know, China is the biggest company that, I mean nation, that subsidizes everything. I wonder how you'd go about dealing with China and curbing their subsidies?

I mean, these are really, really difficult things to do. And, obviously, when we go to these international meetings and conservation measurers are agreed upon, the U.S. is the only country that comes back and does regulations, domestic relations, you know, the foreign countries don't do that.

So I mean, that's another problem that we have out there. Because when all the countries report back in, everybody makes a checklist of yes, yes, yes, yes, but you can never, I mean, you know, you don't know, because they don't have legislation, so people are just BS'ing, is what's happening.

I mean, there's just a lot to deal with. That's all I'm saying. Because we, you know, we witnessed many of these problems ourselves out there, so I wish you luck.

MS. SOBECK: I think you're absolutely right, these solutions are not going to be easy and it's not as if we haven't been trying to tackle some of them for many years.

And I guess all I can say is, you know, we have the opportunity here to get some support from some of the other federal agencies and to, sort of, get a bit more awareness and maybe a bit more, in terms of resources.

That being said, we can't snap our fingers and have an immediate solution. You know, a lot of these are going to be over time and we're setting time frames and being pushed to meet them, so hopefully they'll be, but I hear you, and I think we tried over and over and over again at every opportunity at these Task Force

meetings to, you know, point out that our industry is sustainable and has done that at a significant price, and so we're happy to do all of these things that are, hopefully, going to result in a more level playing field. But, yes, we've got a ways to go.

MS. SIMONDS: Well here's an example, a Costco in Honolulu, they sale fish from Indonesia, and they use our Hawaiian name, Opakapaka. And that's not Opakapaka. So, you know, I suppose, as long as the stores, and some of them do that, all the fish are labeled from the Philippines, or from here, or there, that does happen in certain stores, but that's one that has always bothered us all these years about using Hawaiian names on fish that comes from other countries.

MS. SOBECK: But that's a good example of that's not a violation of federal law, right? So --

MS. SIMONDS: Not yet.

MS. SOBECK: Yes, exactly. But, I guess, I'm just saying, so the question is how are we going to address that? And I do think that there has been an educational process that there were a lot of Task Force members and members of the public, who thought that we could do a lot that we can't do, in terms of enforcement.

And that's a good example, you know, why aren't the feds in there doing something about that? And so the question is, if people want us to do that, we have to get the authority, or we have to figure out who has it and try to implement it effectively. Sam, what were you --

MS. SIMONDS: Well, what we try to do is work with the State, of course, you know, so I wasn't saying that you should do that, I was just giving you an example of, you know, one of those seafood labeling things that you had up there.

MR. RAUCH: If I could? That, I don't know the details of that, the two things that you, there is a country of origin labeling law, so all food products, unless it's processed, have, and it sounds like they do that.

But that may well be fraud, if something is marketed as one thing and it's not. But all frauds aren't federal. So that is a,

usually, fraud is a state law, or local law, issue, consumer fraud, and that's how it's prosecuted.

That is why one of the provisions, which one was it, 11, was to provide tools to state and local governments, so that they can better prosecute that kind of fraud.

A lot of that is genetic testing of the seafood. The state, they don't even know who to ask to verify whether this species is the right species. Well, we can help them with that. We can help them with kind of the model pleadings and things like that.

We can't bring cases for them, but we can make it easier for them to bring cases. And that's why Number 11 is very important to get to that kind of thing.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other questions? All right. Well, thank you, Eileen. That takes us to our next topic, and that's Update on MSA Operational Guidelines by Marian Macpherson.

MS. MACPHERSON: Okay. Hi. I'm Marian Macpherson. I work in the Office of Sustainable Fisheries, and have been working with many of you guys on the Operational Guidelines Project for a while, so I don't need to spend too much time talking about the background.

But, basically, just as the overview, what are they? They are the document that we have for explaining how the councils can work together to comply with all of our legal requirements that come from Magnuson Act, and all the other applicable laws we have to comply with.

And the first operational guidelines were developed back in 1979, and they have changed periodically throughout the years when there's been a need, change in the law, change in other situations, and the last update was in 1997, although, we did a draft in 2005, that was never finalized.

So why are we doing it now? Lots of good reasons. A big one is just to reflect the changing relationships, the working relationships that have evolved between NMFS and the councils over the last few years, we've made a lot of progress in moving ahead, in terms of teamwork and better transparency, and our guidelines need to reflect that.

Also, back in 2013, the Office of Inspector General did a review of our procedures for doing rulemaking and the Magnuson Act and they found, for the most part, we were doing things right, and that we were complying with all our requirements, but there were some ways we could improve.

And one of their recommendations was that we finalize the 2000 draft operational guidelines. So we developed a response to those recommendations, and we sent in an action plan explaining that it really wasn't appropriate to finalize the 2005 draft, because things have changed since then.

We've adopted a lot of those recommendations. We pilot tested some things that didn't work out well, and we're currently in a different spot and we think we can make better process by moving forward with something new.

So we've been working, the CCC convened a subcommittee back in 2013. This is the progress we've made on this initiative, this most recent initiative, and the schedule that we've submitted, we've been following along the schedule, was to begin with developing, take a fresh look at our goals and objectives.

Are we still, what are trying to achieve with this? And we've worked with the CCC Subcommittee to do that. We presented an options paper last February at the meeting here to, you know, illustrate different approaches of moving forward.

Out of that effort, we developed the idea of having a best practices workshop, which Fisheries Forum helped convene press in Seattle last summer where we had council people, agency people together in an facilitated room, just sharing approaches that work.

I mean, just having each region council share how the details actually are working today in their particular areas and everyone trying to learn from each other, what's working, what can we memorialize, where do we have commonalities that, you know, that we can describe, uniformly, in a national document and where are things really functioning fine through more region-specific agreements?

So based on that information, we've

put together this draft, which is highlighted in red, this is today. This is going to be most people's first opportunity to really talk with us about what the draft looks like. It's our first draft, so I just want to point that out.

We're looking for feedback on approach. Some of the details haven't even been filled in yet, if this is a good approach, then our target for finalizing this document is in September, so we've got some time to work on it. But we just want to see, are we going in the right direction, based on where we've been so far?

Okay, so what is the approach? Basically, we have a very short operational guideline document, it's four pages. It has an introductory section that sets forth our goals and objectives, and then there's a set of six overarching guiding principles and a discussion of how those can be used at the region council level.

It then includes another 26 pages of appendixes that build on some of the information in previous drafts that are not crafted as guidelines, per say, and that are intended to be able to, sort of, be living documents, because they will evolve over time as our relationships evolve.

But the idea was to lay them out there to enhance transparency, I mean, among ourselves for us to learn from each other and for the public, also, to be able to easily identify how to effectively participate.

So what are the goals? The goals that we were trying to achieve were, basically, to promote and continually improve the quality of fishery management decisions and documentations, and then also promote a better process, a timely effective, and transparent public process.

So objectives help us achieve those goals are simplifying and speeding the flow of work, increasing transparency, and where appropriate, achieve standardization, recognizing that it's not always appropriate in every situation, there are reasons for the variations that we have.

So the guiding principles, these are the heart of the draft operational guidelines.

The intent of this approach would be, this would be the part that's not so much of a living document, not as regularly changing and adapting, but these are, not necessarily carved in stone, but more permanent principles that we need to keep in mind.

It basically talks about how important our partnership is. That the Agency and the councils are working together to achieve common goals and with that in mind, we should be able to share our documentation where it's appropriate, and achieve efficiencies that way.

The concept of frontloading. That really came forward in the 2000 draft, is the idea of getting, preventing surprises at the end by having people who were going to be reviewing the document, or providing pieces of it, or input, get everybody working together, as much as possible, early in the process and providing early input.

And a lot of that is currently being achieved through the Fishery Management Action Teams and our disciplinary plan teams and that sort of thing. That was a good thing to see at the Seattle workshop of how much of that is being implemented as the best practice.

So management decisions need to be supported by facts and analysis in the record. So that just gets down to, basically, common sense, but an acknowledgment of how important the record is and how important it is to have all of our analysis of all our applicable laws available while the decisions are going through the process.

Clear and concise document. That's just an important goal, to be clear and concise, and promoting meaningful public participation. And there's a new emphasis here on making it meaningful, not just identifying opportunities for public comment, but giving the public the tools they need and the directions and the navigational tools to know how to make their participation as effective as possible and really inform the decision-making process.

With those guiding principles in mind, we then attached the appendixes where there's terminology, there's going to be some terms, you know, thrown out there.

The description of the process. And this is where, if you're looking at the '97 document and wondering where it went, a lot of that information got carried forward, which was just useful descriptors. It's been updated to more realistically reflect reality.

The descriptions of the phases is in that section. That section's been slightly modified to highlight some extra steps in the phases that we thought were worth talking about.

ROAs. That term, sorry for the acronym, Regional Operating Agreements. Every council region here, I believe, now have their Regional Operating Agreements, which set forth, you know, the plans and the relationships for who's going to be doing what during the fishery management process.

This document contains a five, or six-page overview of Regional Operating Agreements, how they're structured, what's in them, to give, you know, to identify the commonalities, give the public an idea of what they are, but then at the end the additional resources section at the bottom there actually links out to each council's individual Regional Operating Agreement.

So if you're a member of the public wanting to participate in a South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Action, you can go find out what their Regional Operating Agreement says and how the specific details of that relationship between the agency and the council's working there.

We have a section on the OAL, sorry for the other acronym, Other Applicable Laws Section. The idea is to have a very brief overview checklist identifying what all the requirements are, where they effect the process and where you can go for detailed guidance on those laws.

And then we've added a new section on rulemaking issues, kind of comparing the, and it's also in a checklist format, currently, so I'll see what kind of comments we get from you on that.

But there are several different rulemaking authorities that we have under the Magnuson Act, and the considerations that each of

them have for timing, for different comment periods, for teaming, people seem to be interested in that and so we try to provide a new section.

The documentation section would be where we provide guidance on records. We wanted to provide examples, you know, that different councils have different templates, different models for combining their FMPs, and underlying analyses.

We're looking for really good models so that people can see, you know, you can see what each other are doing, you can see if there's a model that you like, the public can see what things look like in the different regions, and then the additional resources would just be the out links to other policy directives, regional operating agreements, and other useful documents.

So really, we wanted to present this to you and get reaction on the approach and hear back from you. Do you guys want to add anything?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you, Marian. Any questions, or comments? Kitty.

MS. SIMONDS: Well, just to say, good job. I like it. It's very easy to read. Even my council members won't be bored reading this document.

So really, I mean, after, you know, what, have we been talking about this for a year-and-a-half, but I think it reads well, and I think it's good. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, Alan.

MR. RISENHOOVER: Just one quick thing, if you do have comments we need to keep it moving. So I think I'm hearing a general consensus from Kitty that folks think it's going in the right direction, and I agree. It's very aspirational instead of very, you know, got to do this step then this step then this step.

Yes, bureaucratic. So it's very aspirational. It may need some smoothing, some organizing, some this that and the other, but hopefully the Subcommittee, or working group, whatever it was, can get some comments back to us and we can get another draft out and, you know, maybe finalize this thing before September.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, thank you. Well that wraps up the items that were on the

printed agenda, but there is one other item that Alan you would like to bring up?

MR. RISENHOOVER: Yes, just a couple things. We all go to a lot of meetings and this meeting, like any other meeting, is pretty complicated to do, and yesterday was a little bit of a challenge for us.

So I just want to thank Brian, back there, who, yesterday, as near as I can tell, had no water and no electricity, but still went into the office to get all the materials, so that we could be comfortable today. I don't know if he went into the office just because he thought maybe there was heat, but he drove in.

Yes, he clipped the beard yesterday. So thank you, very much, Brian, for all your efforts. And then, also, I think you all know Bill.

And Bill has been doing CCC meetings before there was a CCC, back when we called it the councils chairs meeting and we're eventually told there were no council chairs meetings, so that resulted in the CCC.

But Bill has let me know that he's going to retire in a couple of months. So this may be, well no, this will be Bill's last CCC meeting.

So I just want to recognize him and we will do all the appropriate retirement things in a couple of months when he decides to go, but I think we're all going to head to the bar tonight where there's probably going to be a band playing, but if you see Bill in the bar tonight, and he's got an empty hand, shake it, or put a drink in it.

But, I just want to say, Bill, thanks for, you know, the ten years I've been doing this you've always been there and they've always come off well, and we've always had everything smooth. So for me, and I think the rest of the CCC here, thanks, Bill.

(Applause)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, with that, we'll recess for today and see everybody tomorrow at 9 o'clock.

(Whereupon, the meeting in the above-entitled matter was concluded at 4:51 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Council Coordination Committee

Before: NOAA

Date: 02-18-2015

Place: Washington, D.C.

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Neal R Gross

Court Reporter

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

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COUNCIL COORDINATION COMMITTEE

+ + + + +

MEETING

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THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 19, 2015

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The Committee met in the Holiday Inn Capitol, Capitol Ballroom, 550 C Street, S.W., Washington, D.C., at 9:00 a.m., Kevin Anson, Chair, presiding.

PRESENT
KEVIN ANSON, Gulf of Mexico Council, Chair
LEE ANDERSON, Mid-Atlantic Council
JOHN BULLARD, Greater Atlantic Region
ROY CRABTREE, Southeast Region
MICHELLE DUVAL, South Atlantic Council *
ED EBISUI, Western Pacific Council
CARLOS FARCHETTE, Caribbean Council
JOHN GOURLEY, Western Pacific Council
DOUGLAS GREGORY, Gulf of Mexico Council
DON HANSEN, Pacific Council
BEN HARTIG, South Atlantic Council *
JOHN HENDERSCHEDT, North Pacific Council
DAN HULL, North Pacific Council
BILL KARP, New England Council
DOROTHY LOWMAN, Pacific Council
DON McISAAC, Pacific Council
GLENN MERRILL, Alaska Region
CHRIS MOORE, Mid-Atlantic Council
TOM NIES, New England Council

CHRIS OLIVER, North Pacific Council
MICHAEL PENTONY, Greater Atlantic Region
GENO PINEIRO-SOLER, Caribbean Council
HERB POLLARD, Pacific Council
JOHN QUINN, New England Council
RICK ROBINS, Mid-Atlantic Council
MIGUEL ROLON, Caribbean Council
KITTY SIMONDS, Western Pacific Council
MIKE TOSATTO, Pacific Islands Region
BOB TURNER, West Coast Region
DAVID WITHERELL, North Pacific Council

ALSO PRESENT
SAM RAUCH, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regional Programs
BILL CHAPPELL, Sustainable Fisheries
JESSICA COAKLEY, MAFMC
KELLY DENIT, Sustainable Fisheries
BRIAN FREDIEU, Sustainable Fisheries
ROGER GRIFFIS, National Climate Coordinator
GEORGE LAPOINTE
TERRA LEDERHOUSE, Habitat Conservation
RICHARD MERRICK, Director, Scientific Programs
ALAN RISENHOOVER, Director, Sustainable Fisheries

* Present via telephone

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

(9:01 a.m.)

CHAIR ANSON: We are going to continue with the agenda and we are going to start with the first item, the Climate Science Strategy. Roger Griffis, if you are here -- you are here up front, okay. Welcome. Are you ready to begin?

MR. GRIFFIS: Sure. Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to brief you on the Draft Climate Science Strategy that NOAA Fisheries Services developed over the past year. I know that at least three of the councils have already had briefings on this and I welcome input and feedback from you all, sharing some of the questions that we got at your briefings. And I know that three of the councils have not, so we welcome your questions as well.

My goal today is to describe the rationale for why we developed the strategy, the content, some of what it says, and then specifically clarifying our request to you for input review and input on the strategy.

So, we developed the strategy, as you know, in part to respond to the growing demands and requirements for information to fulfill our mission on how climate is affecting our marine and coastal systems. The goal is to increase the production, delivery and use of climate-related information to support agency and stakeholder decisions. And as I said, our request to you is for your input on the strategy to help improve the strategy and make sure it is articulating both the information you need and how that information should be delivered.

I don't need to remind you that our world is changing. It is changing dramatically in all sorts of ways. And these are the findings, some of the key findings from the most recent IPCC 2014 report particularly related to the changing climate and its effect on oceans. And as you can see, the findings are pretty dramatic and should give us pause. The climate change in ocean acidification are profoundly altering ocean ecosystems globally. There is a projection and some current observations of negative impacts expected for fisheries globally. Some positive projected impacts expected, particularly for high latitude fisheries with

warming ocean temperatures and changing ocean conditions in high latitudes.

But these changes in climate and oceans will exacerbate other stressors and those stressors will exacerbate those impacts. And the combination of these changes present significant challenges for fishery management in changing conditions.

And as you all well know, we have known for over 100 years, perhaps 200 plus years, that climate dramatically effects ocean ecosystems. That is not news but the pace and scale and change of our global climate is projected to have some serious impacts on our marine ecosystems. So, changes in climate, increasing temperature, perhaps changes in precipitation, increasing CO2 levels dramatically and directly and indirectly affect the physical chemical conditions of our marine and coastal ecosystems.

Increasing ocean temperature, the oceans absorb about 50 percent of the increased heat that has been generated by this blanket of CO2 around the planet. So, oceans are the giant buffer of the planet at the moment and they are absorbing most, at least half of that heat load that we are trapping.

There are some consequences of that: declining sea ice, increasing sea level. Most of the sea level rise that we have observed globally is due to that warming ocean temperature. Water expands as it heats. So, the sea level rise is largely attributable to the physics of water expanding. And of course the great concern is that most of the models, until recently, have not incorporated the additional water being added to the ocean with the melting of ice caps.

Changes in fresh water in coastal areas affecting estuaries. And of course, this whole other issue of great concern of changing ocean chemistry and ocean acidification because, again, the ocean is one of the major buffers of the planet. The ocean is absorbing about 25 percent of all the human-emitted CO2 that has gone up in the atmosphere. About a quarter of that goes into the ocean. So again, the oceans are buffering but that buffering has consequences for the ocean ecosystem. And of course, those

physical conditions have serious implications, both direct and indirect on the biological resources that we are all concerned about; changing temperature, sea level, other kinds of things, salinity, can have direct effects on productivity, survivorship, species distribution, species abundance, and then the mixture of those species as well. And then of course, changes in those things can directly affect fishing activities and other human uses of the oceans, including subsistence use and public health.

So, that is the context within which the National Marine Fisheries Service developed this climate science strategy, realizing that we are facing some dramatic additional challenges in fulfilling our mission from fishery management to endangered species conservation to habitat conservation. This Draft Climate Science Strategy was developed to articulate, as clearly as we can, the challenges we face and the information that we need to be producing and providing you all so that you all can do your job for fisheries management in a changing world.

And these kinds of changes, as you know, have some implications for fishery management with climate change and variability affecting ecosystem impacts, such as productivity, the distribution of key habitats, even the interactions of those species or even the direct effects on species themselves, growth, maturation, recruitment, mortality and the distribution. Those are the fundamental building blocks, as you know, for many of the key tools that guide us in fishery management.

Changes in those things, either at an ecosystem level or on the species-specific population level can affect key things that we use in fishery management, such as the biological controls and reference points, stock identification, bycatch, rebuilding plans, et cetera.

So, there are, as you know, and as we are increasingly discovering, a cascade of potential impacts on the fishery management from these changes.

So, this strategy was developed to help identify the key needs so that we can provide that information to you for effective

fishery management in changing times.

This is kind of a cartoon version representing much of the input that we have gotten from you or your science center partners or other partners in each region, representing, kind of articulating some of those changes on a global scale. And my main point here, I will just click through it, is that no matter what region you are in, your ocean system is changing.

And one of our major challenges, as you know, is to distinguish between what we might call the natural variability or that natural cycle from a more long-term trend or shifts in that cycle, which is really what we refer to as climate change.

In this case, this climate strategy is designed to provide better information, provide you with better information on both of those aspects because we can't understand one without the other.

If you look, as I said, in the Arctic region, we have got concerns warming oceans, loss of sea ice and impacts upon fisheries, rising sea levels, as well. That is what the little thermometer is to represent, ocean temperature changes. The ruler is sea level rise.

In the Western Pacific, of course, again, concerns about increasing ocean temperatures, affecting reef systems and productivity in the broader Pacific. Obviously, sea level rise, also some concerns about protected species that depend on those shallow island areas. The west coast having a long history of tracking decadal shifts in climate and ocean conditions, a very complicated system, an upwelling system but, obviously, some concerns about probably our most well-documented example of ocean acidification and hypoxia, hypoxic waters being upwelled into those coastal estuaries and affecting shellfish; concerns about sea level rise on the west coast; and then particularly and perhaps most well-documented on the west coast are shifts in temperature, shifts in species distribution and concurrent effects on fisheries and fishing; and also lots of concerns about sea level rise and its effect on nursery habitats in the estuaries.

The blue dots representing changes in

precipitation, which also affects salinity, of course, in those coastal areas, and the productivity of those nursery areas.

So, my main point here is that we know that changes are happening but there is a tremendous need for more information to understand both what the natural variability and where that natural variability may be shifting in a more long-term climate change-related way. And the better we understand these trends, the better we confide information to you to prepare and respond to these changes in fishery management.

So, just capturing some of these changes in the observations and concerns in particular regions, many regions have been observing shifts in distribution. Some places observing changes in productivity.

In the Arctic regions, as I said, projected impacts of reduced sea ice on Arctic food webs and particularly pollock productivity. Across the Atlantic, a number of concerns but increasing research and understanding potentially projected impacts on, again, primary productivities, zooplankton and some key stocks.

Now, the subtropics, expanding species thermal habitat and expanding species distribution from south up into northern waters, the Atlantic croaker on the east coast and the Humboldt Squid on the west coast examples.

Tropical areas, climate-related stressors were a major driver in the recent ESA coral listing and so great concern about the health and future of reef systems. And the broader Pacific projected declines in the Central Pacific primary production zones and other kinds of findings.

These are just a sampling of the kind of research that has been done, the kind of projections that are being done that indicate that, that suggest that we actually need quite a bit more information to be able to prepare for and anticipate the kinds of changes that we are going to be facing, so that we can make effective management decisions.

So, and lastly, of course, probably the most challenging aspect of this is to then understand what the implications may be for the people that depend on these resources. This is,

perhaps, as I said, the most challenging part. How do we track these changes and their impacts on fishing communities and how do we better assess what is vulnerable and who is vulnerable and what is at risk? These are illustrations of two projects underway by the fisheries service, developing indicators of vulnerability for fishing communities. This is showing the east coast but it is now nationwide. And some interesting work assessing the vulnerability of fishing communities on the right, Alaskan fishing communities, given some projected changes and vulnerability of fish stocks in the Alaska region.

This is probably the most difficult and our least well-studied area to understand the implications of these changes.

So, obviously, a number of key information requirements to be climate ready, to be able to make fishery management and other decisions in a changing world.

Some key information requirements: one is having our finger on the pulse of the system to understand what is changing. We don't want to manage to a system that existed 10 or 20 years ago. We need to understand what that system is now and what it is going to be tomorrow. What is changing and can we have early warnings of what is coming up?

Why is it changing? This is absolutely critical so that we can better forecast what is coming up. If we don't understand why things change as sea temperature changes, what the connections are when one species moves and how it affects other species, we will not be able to effectively project what is coming up and plan for the future. And that is that key other point. How will it change? What will the future hold five years, 10 years, 25 years from now? I know that seems like a long time for all of us. I know fishery management doesn't usually function on a 25-year scale but we need to be thinking about what is coming and how it will change out into the future on a variety of scales.

And finally, how should we respond? How can we prepare? How can we manage to perhaps build these resiliencies in not only the natural

resources but perhaps in the fishing communities and the fisheries themselves? Can we provide you all with better evaluation of management options through management strategy evaluation through other tools so that you have the best information in front of you for your fishery management?

So, that is the context for why developed the draft climate science strategy. It was important to acknowledge that the world is changing, our marine ecosystems are changing, and we have got to have better information to be able to prepare for and respond to these changes.

The goals are to increase, then, the production, delivery and use of climate-related information across the agency to support decisions. The strategy identifies seven key objectives that we believe are core information requirements to meet NOAA Fisheries information needs in a changing climate. And it is intended to guide our science enterprise at a whole variety of levels. And in fact, it is intended to help guide that broader science enterprise that we depend on, our partners in the academic community, our partners in state agencies. We are trying to help galvanize our broader science enterprise, as well as our own fishery science centers and other tools, our partners within NOAA, help guide that enterprise by clearly articulating our requirements so that we can better harness their tools and harness their efforts, we well as shape our own.

Specifically, this national-level climate science strategy is intended to provide a framework, then for the development of regional action plans that will be developed over the coming year by each of our fishery science centers with partners. Because the answer to the question of what information is needed is really regionally-specific. These broad seen objectives, we believe, capture the seven core areas and type of information that are needed. But in fact what is needed is for each region to look at those and say which of these can we do well now; which of these are we weaker on; and what are our priorities for the next three to five years? And that is what those regional action plans are designed to do.

So, the climate science strategy, as

I said, designed to meet climate-related information requirements across the Fisheries Service mission areas. It was specifically designed by looking at not only fishery management requirements but our ESA requirements, our Marine Mammal Act requirements, aquaculture, habitat, NEPA. We looked across these and we said what is the core climate-related information this agency needs to do its job in a changing world.

And out of that, we looked across the science enterprise from the observations through the research and modeling, the synthesis and assessment, and then into the delivery of management advice. And it was out of that we developed, identified these seven core areas that we believe the agency has got to build capacity on, in order to provide the information you all need that the red arrows represent.

And so the seven areas actually track across that science enterprise because the increases, the strengthening of our science enterprise to deliver climate-related information has to come across end-to-end across that spectrum. And those seven areas that I am going to show you next cross that spectrum.

So, these are the seven areas identified in the climate science strategy, the core seven objectives that the strategy says are critical to providing the information to decision-makers in a changing world. I usually start at six because it works across the number six, the status, trends, and early warnings. This is that what is changing. One of the key areas identified by the strategy is we need to increase our ability to track the change and provide early warnings of impending changes. And that is what that first building block is.

Five is then use that information combined with process research to understand why things are changing. Those two things are critical to then four, having more robust projections of what the future conditions are going to hold and that is really critical to effective management. And then those three things enable us to provide you all with some of the more specific critical tools you need: robust management strategies, evaluations of what

the management options are, and the pros and cons of those, and also the uncertainty and the risks in each of those.

Having, three, an adaptive management process then enables us to use this information and be responsive as we see the results.

And then, finally, number one, to have climate-informed reference points, the guideposts by which we make the actual management decisions, ensure that those guideposts are informed and as realistic as we can make them, given the changes that we are seeing and the changes that we anticipate.

Finally, the base of the pyramid is the science infrastructure necessary to deliver the other layers on top. If we continue to have degradation of our fleet or other core observation capabilities, the other pieces of a science infrastructure, we will not be able to deliver this kind of thing.

So, those are the seven core elements of the draft climate science strategy. We would be happy to talk more about the details of those and I hope that you will look. The strategy has about a page and a half, two pages on each one of those, that goes into more detail and also has specific recommendations on how to move forward on each one of these.

The strategy also identifies several immediate actions. So, each of the seven objectives, as I said, has a specific example, specific actions that we believe are necessary to move forward quickly on those. Overall, though, we identify three immediate actions that we thought were just critical to move this whole enterprise forward. First, was to conduct a living marine resource vulnerability analyses in each region. Again, this is a proven approach to understand what is at risk. What are the most highly vulnerable species or communities in each of these regions that enables us to then identify what we might do about it and perhaps where the information gaps are.

Number two is maintain and develop these ecosystem status reports to track change and provide early warnings. Many regions are well on their way in doing this but this bubbled up. It was clearly one of the key tools to

enable you to both track the change and then anticipate what may be coming one, two, three years down the pike.

And then third, increase the capacity to conduct climate-informed management strategy evaluations, that is to evaluate what all of this science is saying and what the management options may be and to be able to give you the best possible evaluation of both what the uncertainties are, what are we confident about, and what the potential management scenarios may be, if you choose door number one, or door number two, or door number three.

The strategy also identifies a series of actions to move this portfolio forward over the near-term, mid-term, and longer term. The first would to be complete these region-level action plans. As I described, this is where this strategy becomes real, becomes tailored to each of your regions. Our vision is that each of the regional action plans will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the science enterprise in your region to do this strategy. And then, based on that, identify the priorities for moving forward over the next three to five years. This allows us to clearly say to both our partners, our funders, and our stakeholders that we understand the challenges, we have assessed the information we need, and we have made it specific in this region. We know what we need to do our job.

Number two, strengthen climate-related science capability nationwide. At the heart of this is also being able to use more effectively the information we have. We believe that we can better harness the information we have in new ways.

Three, is increase resources for process-oriented research. One of the critical gaps that came up over and over again is understanding why things are changing and what the implications are. There is a critical need for that kind of process research at this stage, if we are going to improve our ability to forecast or project future conditions.

And lastly, establish climate-ready terms of reference across all of our mission mandate areas, so that we are very clear, as an agency, where we should be using this

information, how we should be using it, and how effectively to use it.

Expected results. This is a snapshot of how we believe by implementing this strategy, we can more effectively fulfill our mission and help you all do your job in a better way. We believe that by improving our observations, and tracking, and early warning systems, we can do a better job of tracking ecosystem changes and provide those early warnings. We believe that implementing the strategy is going to increase our understanding of the mechanisms of change and the vulnerability of stocks. It is critical to then asking the next question of well how might we manage to reduce risks. How might we manage to increase resilience. This strategy puts a premium on improving our modeling and forecasts so that we can give you a better glimpse into the crystal ball for the future.

Climate-sensitive stock assessments and biological reference points, as you know, are critical to making effective management decisions in changing times. And we believe that the heavy emphasis in this strategy on strengthening our ability to provide you with management strategies that consider a climate and changing world is really critical to ultimately having robust management action.

So, our requests. Our requests, as I said in the beginning is we invite you, please, to look at the draft strategy. We want to make sure that it resonates with your needs. Help us strengthen it. Because this is the clearest and strongest statement by this agency to date that the agency is concerned about a changing world, that changing oceans will affect and are affecting mission and that we have a clear idea of what our science and information requirements are. We want to make sure that this represents the science and information requirements that you think are most important.

Secondly, we hope that you will join with us in developing of the regional action plans. As I said, this is where it becomes real for you and working with your fishery science centers and other partners, identify your critical needs over the next three to five years, given the kinds of climate-related changes that

you all are experiencing.

So, in summary, we have developed a strategy because there are huge demands and we know that we have core requirements to consider, ecosystem conditions, changing climate-related information in doing our mission areas. Our goal is to provide, increase our ability to provide you with the information you need to make climate-ready fishery management decisions. We hope that you will give us some input on the draft strategy and engage with us as we try to train all of our partners in helping us fill these critical information gaps. Thank you very much.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you, Roger. Any questions? Any comments? Yes, Rick.

MR. ROBINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Roger, thank you for the presentation. We appreciated the opportunity, as a Council, to have this presentation at our last meeting. And I see this initiative very much supporting a lot of the concerns that we have and efforts that we have ongoing at the regional level. Climate change has been presented as a global phenomenon that also has a lot of heterogeneity within it. There are important regional differences in the impacts. As it turns out, the mid-Atlantic is one of the hot spots around the world, in terms of anticipated extent of changes. And our approach to this has really been grounded in wanting to understand what the implications are at a regional level, with respect to anticipated changes in the marine ecosystem, anticipated implications for our managed species.

And so one of the initial engagements we had, and this goes back probably a year and a half or two years with the science center was the idea of having a risk assessment of our species. And I believe that will be completed momentarily, so we are looking forward to that.

But I think one of the challenges is figuring out on the management response side, figuring out how to set a system up that on the one hand is adaptive and responsive to changing conditions and, on the other hand, strikes an effective balance and isn't so sensitive that it chases noise. But I think one of the challenges for us is just figuring out how to maybe better

detect fundamental changes in the system, when there is a true shift in the system state or a regime shift, being in a better position to detect those types of fundamental changes, so that we can respond from a management standpoint as opposed to just using long-term averages of recruitment when in fact environmental conditions have changed. I think that is probably one of the biggest risks to us is just related back to the business of projecting performance of a stock, without taking into consideration those changing environmental conditions.

So, those are areas of interest for us. We happen to be on the east coast in-between two other councils. So, as conditions change, we are very concerned about the governance implications of that and we have been working on that over the last couple of years.

But I see this complementing, at a national level, a lot of the concerns that we have had at a regional level. Thank you.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you, Rick. Anyone else? Don.

MR. McISAAC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One maybe technical question and then a question on the regional action plans.

On slide seven you have some kind of impacts of particular areas. And at the beginning, you said well, there could be some positive impacts as well. So, for the Pacific you indicated primary production or something like that as an impact. I wasn't clear if that was a negative or a positive impact. When you think about primary production, we, of course, on the west coast, think of the upwelling zones. Slide number seven, yes, there we go.

So, we think of the west coast and the upwelling zones and these have actually been pretty strong in recent years, particularly for salmon. So, this is declines.

So, I was wondering if you could speak a little bit to what positive impacts you were referring to to begin with. And then under this one, where it is a decline in primary production zones, if that is relative to the west coast or is that the central Pacific Ocean, or Hawaii, or where?

MR. GRIFFIS: Yes, thank you for the

question. We were trying to pull out some examples of, in some cases, individual research or sets of research and that one, in particular, refers to the Central Pacific, work by Jeff Polovina, and others, to the Pacific Island Fisheries Science Center and teams that have been looking at projections of climate-related projections of what it might mean for particularly the Central Pacific. So, that is what that one refers to. And many of their projections are showing declines at various levels in the primary productivity and also the location of some of those production zones. So, that is what that refers to. I wasn't trying to refer to the upwelling system.

The IPCC spoke specifically in reference to high latitude systems, primarily subarctic systems as far as places where the projections just are showing potential increases in productivity and fisheries as well. And so if you look at the projections for productivity of subarctic systems, say Norway and across places like that, it is partly a combination of warming ocean temperatures and the impact on primary productivity there. And that was the basis for their projections but it is a narrow band, a narrow band in high latitude areas.

MR. McISAAC: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question about regional action plans, I think you have got Slide 16 talks about them being developed in 2015 and looking for input maybe from the councils. So, I think we have got some of this scheduled for our upcoming March Council meeting. In our arena, once a year, we try to take on the State of the Union address, so to speak, the state of the ecosystem so that the rest of the year will have a little information on that. We have got a fisheries ecosystem planned.

So, with regard to integrating these regional action plans into our current FEP system and when do those come about, I am wondering if you could speak a little bit more to your expectations of Council involvement.

MR. GRIFFIS: Well, we are hoping that the Council will provide input to the regional action plans. Again, these are designed to identify the core information needs, again,

building off of a climate science strategy. So, if you look at what the mid-Atlantic is doing, for example, there, they have had a series of workshops to identify both the challenges for fishery management but also the information needs in a changing oceans. And out of that, they have identified a series of information needs. And that information, I think, is, in the mid-Atlantic going to be a real anchor point for the regional action plan in the mid-Atlantic region.

So, I think many of the activities you are already doing may identify, have identified information needs that you think would be, could be brought into this process.

I am probably being a bit optimistic to think that they can be done in 2015 but we are setting ourselves a goal. The idea is that the Fisheries Science Center will lead these, that it will be as inclusive as possible, so inviting input from the Council, our regional office, our multiple partners in our science enterprise. And so, I can't speak in detail about the requirements or burden or the ask to you. I think it will be a general ask that you provide input on your views and what the priority needs are.

I think it would be useful to have you all help us assess the strengths and weaknesses of the region in doing the kinds of things that the strategy has. In your region, for example, you have a very strong, I would say a very strong state of the ecosystem report, based on years of -- you have one of the longest track records of observations of the regions. You have teams of people pulling that together. So in some sense, that may be a real strength for you and you may want to look at other areas as greater priorities for investment in the coming years. Thank you.

CHAIR ANSON: Kitty.

MS. SIMONDS: Thank you, Roger. Nice to see you again in another life.

The Council has a Climate Change Committee and the chair of the Climate Change Committee is Eileen Shea, who we know very well. And what they are doing is developing the climate change policy for the Council to adopt and they have been working for several months on this.

And so in March, the Council members

will be reviewing this draft policy and, hopefully, adopting it. What we are doing now, also earlier, we talked about how we review all of our ecosystem plans and looking at what is missing, and obviously climate change is missing from our FEPs. So, this will help the staff and others to finally get what we need to include in our plans.

And we were talking about the specific -- we know and Jeff noted for us that our longliners are catching bigeye a little farther to the east now. You know those that are fishing in the northern part above Hawaii. And so that is very interesting. Pretty soon all the bigeye will be next to the west coast.

And hopefully, we will be able to continue to fish for bigeye. We don't want it to go too much into California because then we won't be able to fish in California. So, anyway, we need to like somehow figure out a way to get those fish not to go that far.

(Laughter)

MS. SIMONDS: Hey, it's for real.

CHAIR ANSON: All right. Anyone else? Is there -- who is on the phone? Terry, Michelle, Bob, are you with us this morning?

MS. DUVAL: I'm here. It's Michelle.

CHAIR ANSON: Good morning.

MS. DUVAL: Good morning.

CHAIR ANSON: Anyone else on the phone?

All right. Do you have any questions, Michelle?

MS. DUVAL: No, I'm good. Thank you.

CHAIR ANSON: All right. Doug?

MR. GREGORY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Roger, for coming to the Gulf Council last month and giving the presentation. And now you have agreed to give the presentation and we plan on reviewing it in our Sustainable Fisheries Committee at our March/April meeting. So, I appreciate that.

To me, this is probably the most important initiative NOAA could possibly do. Everything else we do is like working on the margins. This is going to dominate the impacts of our stocks. And the biggest unknown that scares me is acidification. We don't even know

what the prey items are for our major fish larvae, juvenile fish in the oceanic environment and the impact of acidification on their prey items is going to have impacts and is going to hit us before we even know what they are. And we will be reacting to that.

So, anything that could be done to address that aspect of it, what our major fisheries are praying on, the copepods, the theropods, whatever, and the impact of acidification on that I think is going to be incredibly important. Temperature changes are tangible. They are easy to see, easy to track. So, I think they will be less challenging but they will be challenging enough. And I appreciate all this and I appreciate the initiative. Anything we can do to help, we are more than willing to do.

MR. GRIFFIS: Thank you for that. I appreciate that. I, of course, appreciate the invitation. And thank you, too, having your SSC look at the strategy I think will be very useful. Thank you.

You reminded me of two things and, Mr. Chairman, I don't know if you all have already had a briefing on the President's budget, but I was reminded that there are at least two small items, perhaps others, that do address the strategy, would fill some critical needs identified in the Draft Climate Science Strategy in the President's budget request. And so I would be happy to provide information on that at a later date, if you all didn't already get that kind of lens and look at the budget request for NOAA and the Fisheries Service.

The other thing I wanted to flag for you all is that the research arm of the U.S. Congress, the Senate, our Senate Commerce Committee recently commissioned a study by the Government Accountability Office, GAO, their research arm, specifically on climate and fisheries management.

There are three questions on it. The first question is: What has the National Marine Fisheries Service been doing to provide information to understand the impacts?

The second question specifically refers to you. It says: What information needs

do the Councils have? What actions have the Councils been taking? And so I have flagged it for you because you are named in this study and I anticipate that the study team will be contacting you, if you haven't already been contacted. We have given three initial briefings to help them, the study team get their head around these issues. We flagged a series of actions that either you have taken or information needs that the science center has been working on. So, I flag it for you as a heads up.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you. And we did receive a briefing on the President's budget but I don't believe that we got into too much details specific to your two items that you mentioned. So maybe if you could distribute the information to the group as it relates to this specific item, that would be great.

MR. GRIFFIS: Yes, I would be happy to and there is particularly -- Doug reminded me of it because there is quite a health request to increase research on ocean acidification impacts. Thank you.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you. All right, seeing that there are no other questions or comments, we are a little bit ahead of schedule. And we had a break scheduled for the next item. So, I was just wondering if we want to continue on with that, have the break now. Dr. Merrick, unfortunately, is having some transportation problems and is not here yet. But George Lapointe could give his presentation now and then maybe we could take a break after his presentation, if that is okay with everyone. All right?

All right, so George, you are up! Thank you.

MR. LAPOINTE: I was going to make a crack to Doug Gregory about reporting on some of the work around the margins after Roger's ocean acidification discussion. But you are right, it is a huge issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome everybody. I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about the electronic technologies initiative of the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Regional Electronic Technologies Plans that the regions and the Atlantic Highly

Migratory Species has put together.

It is not on my slides but the policy directive from 2013 said the regions should put together these regional electronic technology plans that contain regionally-specific information about how they plan to incorporate electronic technologies, electronic monitoring, electronic reporting and VMS. Those plans are complete for all regions and HMS, the rollout was actually yesterday. It was a NOAA email and the plans are posted. And before I go farther, I want to thank the regional offices, the Science Centers, and the Councils for all the help and input in putting those together. It was a lot of work in addition to their extra work. And I was a pest over the last couple of years but they are a great information source and a way to move forward.

And the other thing, with respect to the rollout and the people in this room, I have gotten a fair amount of interest from individuals and organizations wanting to see the plans. And so how is that going to manifest itself, I'm not quite sure but the groupies for electronic monitoring, you can rest assured, will make contact and keep things going.

I saw a note from somebody yesterday about the pressure for electronic reporting with the party charter fleet in the Gulf. And so the very reasons that the plans were put together will continue after the interest in the plans.

I put this slide together and it was in your briefing books and I apologize for it. It looked great on paper. It looks like a mess here and so I broke it into four parts to make it a little bit easier.

What is in the plans? You know with respect to electronic reporting, there is electronic reporting in every region and there is plans for expansion in Alaska to the additional state fisheries. The west coast wants to expand to all fisheries.

It says no expansion in the next two years in the Greater Atlantic Region and that is because they are doing a fisheries-dependent data modernization process that they are going to complete by 2017. I suspect they will follow shortly thereafter. But it shows a lot of

activity with electronic reporting. This is no surprise.

One of the changes I want to make to this table is to change, break it out into daily reports or electronic fish tickets and harvester reports or e-log books because I think that is an important distinction.

And the data modernization process is something that the New England or sorry, the Greater Atlantic Region is doing but there is interest in other regions as well. And this is one of the things that Mark Brady of NMFS Staff is pushing with respect to integrated -- data integration and permit matching, just so that when we move towards electronic reporting, you get the maximum amount of efficiencies out of the process, in terms of getting data in and then getting the data back out of the system.

For electronic monitoring, the Alaska region has four electronic monitoring programs in place. HMS is starting the electronic monitoring in their longline fishery of June this year. In the next couple of years, we are going to see a fair amount of electronic monitoring come in place. The fixed gear fishery in the Alaska region. The west coast groundfish fishery has four components and I have one here but probably two sectors in groundfish are going to be moving ahead with electronic monitoring in the next couple of years. Other regions are interested and we will have to see. I will discuss later I think that the interest in electronic monitoring will accelerate with the experience of the implementation of those three electronic monitoring programs that are coming online in the next couple years.

VMS we use all across the region and there are some plans to expand it.

One of the things that there wasn't much information on in the plans is the use of electronic technologies for recreational fisheries and there is a lot of interest in this. So, I just put this up here. The west coast is considering projects for electronic technologies in their recreational fisheries. The southeast region is this deep in it because rec fisheries are their biggest fishery and there is a fair amount of interest in specific components of

electronic reporting in the highly migratory species plan.

And I should have mentioned when I started that this is reporting on what is in the plans and there may be other things going on in the region that I either missed or people didn't put in their plans. And so, that is an important addition that we should pay attention to as well.

One of the big drivers for electronic technologies from the industry and from the agency is cost. And the plans have a fair amount of information on cost estimates. The Greater Atlantic Region doesn't right now because they are doing their cost analysis. And I think this is one of our collective weakest thoughts right now is we haven't done a good job of cost accounting to know what it costs to put these programs in place and move them ahead. And we are working on a cost accounting process for electronic technologies project as it moves ahead. There is a group called the Electronic Technologies Working Group internally in the agency and we are going to soon be reporting to leadership about getting that process started so that we get more concrete cost information for ourselves and for stakeholders as well.

One of the interests on the part of the Agency in their policy directive was whether the plans contain cost share components. And Alaska has cost share components in them and the west coast has it in groundfish. The south Atlantic -- the Gulf, rather, has a cost share component with electronic reporting in the shrimp fishery but this is something that is in the policy directive and we are discussing increasingly but needs more work and we will be working on it internally and you will hear about that in the future.

One of the things, when I first started the draft plans, I looked at them and it must have been on one my grouchy mornings. I said oh, what is in these things. And they actually paint, when I got past my grouchy stage, they paint a really good picture of what is going on nationally. They show this mosaic of the use of electronic technologies and that there is a lot of activity that is regionally-specific. And so, I think that it provides us the information

to move ahead with. It shows the level, a lot of interest in electronic technologies -- sorry for the redundancy -- the national picture nationally, it also shows that to move these plans ahead, we need support for implementing the regional planning components. And I suspect that you discussed the President's budget initiative for electronic technologies yesterday. And it allows comparison among the regions to focus on future electronic technologies where it lets you look at what is going on in the various regions and seeing what may or may not be appropriate for you regions in the future.

One of the things I mentioned a little bit earlier, the three electronic monitoring projects with catch accounting that are coming along, Alaska fixed gear, the west coast groundfish and east coast groundfish I think is going to give us a huge learning opportunity in the next couple years about what works and what doesn't, how you put these things together. And so I think it will inform your, our future work very significantly. And some of that will be stuff we want to learn and is positive and some of it is going to be the normal stumbling that comes with an iterative process.

We had a call, Dorothy had a call to kind of close the door on the National EM Workshop. And I think it was Dan Hull who said this is hard, you know putting all the components together of interest in the industry and determining costs and determining capability, and the science questions that people push back on. And so, we can expect or I expect this rapid evolution of information and we are going to need collaboration and communication to move forward with it. Things are going to come up that work and we want to share that with other areas. Things are going to come up that don't work and we are going to have to move our way through them in fairly short order to make these work.

Some of the things that aren't in the regional plans, one of the things that Mark Brady mentioned was the fisheries dependent data integration in the records and interest in matching processes. And clearly, it is in the Greater Atlantic region and they plan on expansion to other regions. And so this is

something I think that is, it is going to be done nationally and it just wasn't identified in some of the other regional plans.

I had put in R&D needs for implementation and then I crossed it out because I was editing this just the other day. And I think a number of the plans do identify R&D needs for EM implementation but I think I need to go back to the plans and see what kind of national picture that paints. And I am interested in people's views on what other missing components there might be. If there are things in the plans or the summaries that I missed or if there is things that you see that we need to concentrate on as well.

Some of the ongoing needs for the electronic technologies effort. I had mentioned briefly the cost accounting for all ET projects. We are coming up with a template that we are going to hopefully roll out soon through leadership to get a better cost accounting both internal costs and external costs of ET projects. Collectively, we aren't able to say this is what it costs to put EM in place or an electronic reporting process. And so we are working on that.

The cost sharing information we are looking for as well in various ET projects, both cost share provisions, which aren't -- they aren't mandatory in the policy directive but there is a discussion about where it is appropriate, where cost share provisions should be and a discussion on transitions as well. If cost sharing is applicable in a particular electronic technologies system, what is the transition plan from getting from Point A to Point B.

And then the R&D issues that we need to improve our ability to incorporate electronic technologies. For EM, clearly, there is an interest in electronic image recognition, which is being worked on and we aren't there yet. Mark Brady went to a conference about a month ago on automatic image recognition and he said, boy, we haven't made much progress in the last couple years. And so that is a huge need as we move ahead for fisheries dependent-data and fisheries independent data collection.

The issue of data storage and data transfer are big issues just because of the volume of information that is generated, particularly by EM, terabytes of information. How we store it, I think you guys have discussed who stores it, and the confidentiality issues. That is not an R&D need but how we store it and transferring that electronic data as well.

The next steps moving forward are the policy directive calls for review of regional plan progress by the Science and Regulatory Boards twice annually. And the criteria that are set up are the number of FMPs with defined fishery-dependent data collection monitoring goals, the number of FMPs reviewed to determine where additional electronic technologies would be appropriate. And as appropriate, the number of FMPs with ET incorporated in the fisheries-dependent data collection programs.

In summary, I think the regional plans, as I mentioned earlier, showed this nationwide picture of efforts on ET tailored to regional needs and capabilities. I think that our learning, the potential for learning in the next couple of years for EM programs in particular is huge and we should look forward to both the opportunity and the work that is going to entail. And then we are working on the ongoing process to evaluate progress by regions, incorporate new electronic technologies program and continue R&D.

And that is my presentation for this morning. So, I am happy to answer any questions or take comments.

CHAIR ANSON: Alan.

MR. RISENHOOVER: And just quick George said about the plans, yes, they should all be posted. You should have received a link to those. So, if you didn't let us know, we may just go ahead and repost a link. So, folks can look at all the work that went into those plans and let us know what you think.

MR. LAPOINTE: I did get, I think a lot of us got an email yesterday from the outreach folks that have links to all the plans. And I have clicked on all of them and they are all there. A little light reading.

CHAIR ANSON: Any questions? Dorothy.

MS. LOWMAN: Thank you. Thanks, George and thanks for your continuing work on this.

So, you mentioned the fact that there is likely to be a lot of learning in the next couple of years and that there needs to be a process for sharing that learning process. So, I guess you said that you identified the need but what is your thinking about how best to do that? Because not only within the regions but then opportunity for different councils who have to sort of work on what is the level of design that Council should be in and how might this work and what are some of the lessons learned.

MR. LAPOINTE: Sure. I have thought about a couple things. Clearly, just ongoing communication is part of it but I think, and I don't know the exact timing and it is not a second national workshop but I think, as programs are being implemented, getting the practitioners together, inside the agency and outside it would be a really good thing. So, the work of people saying here is what works and here is what doesn't and why in particular fisheries and to share that information because I think it would be a very useful allocation of people's time. You know, you could say we could share it all on the internet but it is not the same as getting together. So, I think that externally and internally, getting people together to say what works and what doesn't, to help with that learning process would be good.

You know working through continued communication with the Councils and communication from the Councils about what is happening I think is useful as well. I listened to your Council quite often through the webinar and it is interesting to hear the discussions. And you know your methodical process, and I mean this in a good way, of if a problem comes up you have to deal with it and if a problem comes up then you have to deal with it. And it illustrates all the steps, kind of the back office steps that you need to pay attention to in moving programs ahead.

So, I think the experience of like you are undergoing that Alaska is undergoing would really benefit other people as well.

CHAIR ANSON: Geno.

MR. PINEIRO-SOLER: Thank you. George, have you thought about a pilot project for some areas, in particular, sectors, for example, charter boat operators, and sort of the regions where there is perhaps an easier group to tackle?

MR. LAPOINTE: I think one of the things the regional plans probably missed is the amount of pilot work that is being done around the country, or pilot work or pre-implementation, depending on what you want to call it. But there is a lot of activity in different regions on both electronic reporting, well, particularly in electronic reporting, both in the commercial sector and in the for-hire sector and private rec. Some of that work is, in my view, people get a hold of technology and they think it can do everything and they kind of overdrive the system and we don't have the backup system to go along with it. The same thing happens in EM. People think that the cameras, it is like getting an NCIS camera on top of a boat and they think we can get everything. So, just all those processes going along is difficult. But there is a lot of pilot work that, again, is tailored to the region.

I have talked to, I used to call them, the Point 99 folks were working in the Caribbean about electronic reporting there. To get good reporting and electronic reporting very regionally specific and so I think there is a lot of working going on that isn't identified in these plans but is helping move things along.

And one of the things that has to be moved along at the same time as our management and science community's ability to take the data and use it and what we need is community acceptance and their desire or willingness to get electronic monitoring in place.

One of the things the GARFO plan mentions is that there is kind of an ambivalence towards electronic monitoring in a lot of their fisheries. And so, if you want to use it in fisheries-dependent data collection, you have got to bring the community along to want to incorporate it as well.

CHAIR ANSON: Sir, go ahead.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thanks, George, for your presentation. I am pretty sure on the teleconference I used the word painful as well as hard. And it is extremely hard because not only do you have to have all the right people at the table but everybody has got to work very carefully to define what kind of research or pilot project you are doing that will actually lead to implementation. And then it is just not easy at all.

My question, maybe not for you but for Alan for Sam is to what extent did the regional implementation plans influence the 2015 and 2016 budgets. And we saw some of those figures yesterday. And if so, how specifically?

In our work in developing EM, obviously there has been a lot of discovery and discussion about the need for infrastructure for the Agency for developing field services, Council staffing. It has been a huge undertaking for us and it has consumed a significant amount of time by our staff and by stakeholders, in order to get as far as we are. It is really difficult.

MR. RAUCH: So, in response to that, the plans themselves, which only came out within the last couple weeks, didn't directly influence that. The development of the plans, though, the ideas behind it, we have been talking with the regions and we know -- we weren't actually surprised by any of these plans.

The issues that you talk about did influence us. This is one of the reasons there is a budget initiative. We recognize this is not something you can just take out of hide. This is going to require additional resources. And there are two kinds of resources. There is, explicitly, the resources for the management part of that. And if you recall from all of the discussion yesterday, the budget had two pieces. One was management and one was the rest of it, recognizing it takes a lot of work to get these out of the pilot phase into implementation and work on the regulatory side.

So, those were those two components and that was influenced by a lot of the discussions that we had in developing the plan. But since the plans didn't come in, it is not that you can say if you add up these particular

actions, they will equal that budget initiative. That is not -- we had to estimate what the budget initiative would be well before we knew what the actions, the explicit actions were.

So, in the future years, there might be more of an alignment between sort of the line items and the regional plans and the budget. Right now, it was a ballpark estimate of what we needed to do that.

MR. HULL: If I might, Mr. Chairman, just to follow up. Then, since the implementation plans are now out and there is some more specific information about progress in the different regions, will that influence the decision-making about how those monies get spent?

MR. RAUCH: I think the President's budget is out. And so the first decision, of course, will be for The Hill and Congress. And we will have to see what Congress does. A lot of these plans went to The Hill as an example of how we would spend those monies that we have asked for. But we can't appropriate those monies in any more detail until the Hill sort of tells us what the funding will be.

They do influence us in determining how we want to go about things that were done by us, in terms of what we would like to see out of these plans. Because the regional implementation is a bottom-up process. It is not something -- while we can set the goal of actually implementing systems, that is just a national goal. The details are difficult, complex, thorny. It has to be worked out from the bottom-up. They have to have an understanding from industry from the Councils and all that.

So, they will guide us but in terms of the actual budget allocation, we will have to see what Congress does with that request before we figure out how to spend the money.

MR. LAPOINTE: The other thing that comes to mind from my perspective on that is as you are working on your respective EM projects is to get a better accounting of the costs. So, I mean you can imagine if I was with Congressman X's office, I would say well, what do you need to spend on EM project in your particular region. And we are getting better at getting those estimates but that is going to be one of the

things we have to concentrate on, so we not only know how to move a program ahead but what the specifics are, as we get those estimates. We don't have them in.

CHAIR ANSON: Tom.

MR. NIES: George, thanks for the presentation. Are we making progress on being able to handle and use the data and figuring out how it interacts with observer data and how it affects SBRM requirements and that type of thing? I don't hear a lot of talk about that. So, it is hard to understand where we are on that side of the deal, the downstream use of the data.

MR. LAPOINTE: I think that we are making, you know, we are going to start using it for catch counting. So, there is methodology to do that. I sat in on a meeting with the Maine Coast community sector and they are going to use a model similar to what is being done like the BC model where they audit ten percent and they match it up for the Maine regions, VTRs and other regions are moving toward the same model.

I think that the Science Center community is still working on some of those data integration issues and so that is an important element as well. And it reminds me, I should put it in a presentation. So, a lot of work has been done and there is going to be learning and continued work in that vein, as we move ahead.

That is probably something that some of the proponents of EM don't pay as much attention to early on and it is one of, I think, the learning curve issues that is tough. When I went to that meeting at the GARFO Region, my first observation to both the agency folks and the sector people was there are some issues when people talk past each other and you kind of assume that somebody is going to make it work out and that is, again, another one of those really tough issues that you have got to go stepwise on to make it work. So, not only do you achieve the benefits of using EM, in terms of people say cost and we don't know if that is going to be -- what kind of cost savings are going to be there but burden on crews and vessels and whatnot and how you integrate the science is something that we have got to continue to work on.

CHAIR ANSON: John Bullard.

MR. BULLARD: George, thank you for your help on all of this and being such a nice, loveable nag because we appreciate it and we need it.

And the cost savings, I want to probe that a little bit because there are images that people have on this that you know it is easy and the cost savings are going to be there. I think you kind of alluded to that in your last remarks there. And that there is, perhaps, widespread industry support. And as we work, for example, with that Maine sector that you have been talking to, we find some of these images, as you get into it, aren't so true or maybe they aren't so true that industry support varies. What would you expect with the fishing industry, especially in your state of Maine? Everyone has at least one opinion, maybe more. And so, it is difficult.

But one of the things that is especially difficult is this prevailing attitude that all of this is going to produce savings, when at least our feeling is maybe this will prove, I hope it proves to be wrong, is that right now it looks like it is more expensive. And I am still not exactly sure why that is but I don't know if you want to comment on it but it looks right now that this technology can produce more costs of analysis than savings.

And that may be something. I mean the folks in the Maine coast sector are interested in this for all kinds of reasons. It is a way to get observers off the boat. They want to be on the vanguard. They think there might be savings there. There are all kinds of motivations for it and some people don't want to be on it so motivations are different. But the cost savings and the prevalent factor that this produces cost savings, that can be harmful, especially if isn't true. And I just want to know what your thoughts are on it because you have dug deeper into this and all over the country on it. What are your thoughts on that?

MR. LAPOINTE: I think that is a great question, John. And unfortunately, the answer, in part, is we don't know.

That is why we are pushing so hard on the cost accounting because if you are talking to a fisherman, the costs for an industry member

might be less because they are not paying for an observer, they are paying for, you know if you use a west coast example, installation of equipment and the maintenance of the equipment. And then the Agency does what I call the back office analysis. And we haven't done a good job of saying what that is. And so if you are a proponent of EM, you will say well, Mr. Regional Administrator, what is the cost of running the program in your region? And a lot of the times, our answer is well, we can't tell you or we haven't documented it. So, we can't really argue back or counter that argument with what appears what the real costs are.

So, I think that is an incredibly important component of moving this ahead.

And then the second component is there are EM systems that are -- you know, clearly cost is an issue but the burden on the crew and the vessel is another issue as well. There are some, you know the vessel size is clearly an issue. In those fisheries it is clearly an issue in the Alaska fish gear fishery. You know, some of the boats down in the south Atlantic are open console boats that are 24 feet long. They can hardly get two crew members on. And there are some observation issues there.

And so they are testing EM systems for smaller boats. And so people have to be honest about their motivation and then we have to respond as best we can and increasingly better in terms of what the total cost is so that we can make that comparison.

CHAIR ANSON: Any other comments? Those listening in on the phone, do you have any questions? All right.

Kitty?

MS. SIMONDS: Just to say that EDF has been going to The Hill to try to get more money for this line item. And so I am wondering if other Councils were contacted by Sara. Anybody else? Any Council contacted about what it would cost for you folks to you know there is the NMFS component and there is a Council component, too.

Well, I will send you the presentation if none of you were contacted. But they are working on The Hill to get more money for that line item number 16.

MR. LAPOINTE: Kitty, there are a number of groups who are interested, obviously, in more rapid implementation of EM and other electronic technologies and EDF is one of those groups. And when I saw one of their presentations, the numbers they had were very different than we would write in this room. In New England, for instance, one of their early presentations had moving from pilot projects to every permitted vessel in the groundfish fishery like in two years, which we told them we think is a wildly, an improbable assumption to make.

MS. SIMONDS: So, did they listen to you and change things?

MR. LAPOINTE: I think they have. And I think the plans and I think outside interests in increasing EM allow us to have a better discussion. You know we may, in the President's budget may say that, what is the line, is it like $7 million for next year, $5.5 and $1.5 million for electronic technology? And they may say $12 million. It puts us all in a much better position to have the conversation as opposed to us saying we need $7 million and nobody else saying we need anything.

And so I think they are pesky stakeholders but they are there and they are helping move things in the right direction.

MS. SIMONDS: I think their figure was $2 million above the President's budget.

CHAIR ANSON: John.

MR. BULLARD: Kitty, they have certainly talked to me and one of the issues on cost is they feel it is in their interest to assert that electronic technologies save money as a way of arguing for investment in electronic technologies. And so whether it saves money or not, they think it is a very important argument to make that it saves money. And I am not sure it does but they don't want to hear that it doesn't save money because they are arguing that it is worthy of investment. That is what they -- that is their argument.

CHAIR ANSON: Anyone else? Dorothy.

MS. LOWMAN: Well, I am not sure that this deserves a lot more conversation. I do know that I think when they were working on that project they did work with different people and

sometimes there were some stakeholders. A lot of times there were people who were working on issues related to the implementation plan. I know that we had a draft of the implementation plan out that they heavily utilized in that vein.

So, I think their goal is to just try to, I think frankly, support the administration's request is really what they want to do.

CHAIR ANSON: All right, Don.

MR. McISAAC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to make one point of budgetary emphasis on a distinction of this last discussion, yesterday we talked about whether or not in fiscal year 2016 there might be an electronic monitoring line in the big table for councils. So, what we are aware of, as Kitty indicated, is that a lot of the push in Congress, not just from EDF but from others, is designed to have a specific allocation for the council activity that is required.

CHAIR ANSON: All right. Well, George -- Dorothy.

MS. LOWMAN: So, George, I have one other question. You know mentioned some R&D related to data transfer, storage, et cetera, and then you mentioned that there were other issues related to those that weren't R&D but I guess I didn't quite hear kind of what is the process to try to address some of those. Because they sort of interact even with the R&D, in terms of who might be interested, how it might be structured, et cetera, knowing who can handle it, who can hold it, who can reserve it, et cetera. So, I am wondering if you have any comments on that.

MR. LAPOINTE: Sure. We have had internal discussions on both. I mean the data storage and the data transfer issue.

And when I first got started on the project, you know going into it with little information, I said well, you know, there has got to be some way to figure out how to send that data electronically. And the data set size, as you know are huge.

And there was a conference I was at and I was talking to a guy who was working on the Google Car Project. And I said well, if somebody knows how to handle big sets of data, Google should be it. And so I sat down with this person and said, you know, what do you do when you send

a data file that is this big? He said I put it in my pocket and bring it back to the office or mail it in. And so it changed our way of thinking. And the model that you started developing on the west coast and Dana Matthews was instrumental in changing my way of thinking of just saying well, let's mail it in until we can figure something else out is one issue for data transfer.

It will be great in the future when we figure out how to send those things electronically and I think that is coming.

The data storage issue is one where I did a scale out based on some estimates I got from Dave Colpo on what is produced in the whiting fishery on the west coast and from Alaska and from the northeast. And you could be talking about tens of terabytes a year. And so the question then is how long do you keep it and who keeps it. And those are ongoing discussions. There is clearly discussions about people holding it outside the agency. But then how do you get the data and what data do you get? So, those are ongoing, incredibly important discussions.

And one of the things we just talked about recently is we may need to have an interim solution until we figure out the long-term components to allow these things to get started. Because whether it is west coast, or Alaska, or east coast, if we get two years down the road and then people say oh, we don't have data storage figured out, let's stop until we figure it out, that will not be a good thing. So, I think it is going to take continued work on how to handle it logistically and legally and it will take "the give and take" because there are opinions on this that are wide apart.

So, those are our two critical issues.

CHAIR ANSON: All right, George. Thank you very much for the presentation.

MR. LAPOINTE: Thank you.

CHAIR ANSON: We will go back or we will go to take a break right now for 15 minutes. And then after the break, we will have Dr. Merrick give his report.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 10:22 a.m. and resumed at 10:49 a.m.)

CHAIR ANSON: All right, everyone, we had a little bit of a delay due to some technical difficulties we were trying to straighten out here. But we have Dr. Richard Merrick Report on Science Centers 2013 Data Program Review and 2014 Assessment Program Review. Dr. Merrick.

DR. MERRICK: Thank you, Kevin. It's nice to be here and this is for those of you who have been around for a while, this is my sort of annual portal with where we are on the program reviews. And let's see if we can get this to go forward. There.

This began, basically, the year that I took this position. So, we are now into the fourth year of the cycle. So, FY12 was, basically, for us to get organized. Here, though, we wanted to have a thorough external review of all the centers on a single theme each year and do this on a cycle basis or cyclical basis that we will do this for six years and then start over again.

And we started the process with strategic planning with the idea that none of the centers really had a significant strategic plan. I think the Alaska Center did but that was about it. I wanted to get all of the centers thinking more strategically. There is a lot of questions that you are asking of the centers they need to be thinking about a higher level and then start doing these reviews.

So, year 2 was the first of the Magnuson reviews. And originally, we had expected to do all Magnuson one year. We recognized that actually if we could get people to come in and look at the data that is collected, it was a different sort of group than the ones that we would expect to come in and talk about their stock. So, that is why that is split up into two years.

So, basically over years two and three, we are reviewing the Magnuson stock assessment enterprise of all the centers.

And this year we are moving into the next phase, which is protected species science, and as you can see there, there is two more years in the process. And then we will pause, do a year of strategic planning and start over again.

So, to review 2013 and 2014. Here is

the schedule. Each of the centers' reviews came off pretty much on schedule. The southeast center was the very first of the reviews and we learned a lot out of that, most of which was that you can't get give the center reviewers 12,000 pages of documents and expect them to read it. And I think for all this, it was a useful exercise from the outside to work from the inside to see what was actually happening in these centers.

These reviews were open to the public and I think what we have seen as we have gone through these two years that we have actually started, in the second year they actually start to draw more participation not only from the public, there is industry in almost all of these now, but from you all, from the councils and commissions, as well as from our partners in the regional office and other agencies.

The results of each one of the reviews is a set of reports from each of the individuals that review. I recognize that the review panel is composed of three totally external reviewers from NOAA; one other reviewer from outside of NOAA -- excuse me, outside of NMFS; and then one reviewer from NMFS but from a different region. So, usually the panel is around five. Sometimes we have had up to seven. So, each one of those panelists will prepare their own individual report and that report then gets posted online for the public. The chair of the panel summarizes the results of what each of the five or so panelists found in their reviews. That gets posted as well.

And then within about a month of when the chair's summary is received, and that is supposed to be within two weeks of the close of the review, the center's director has to respond. And the center director's response has been an interesting process in developing something that I thought was really useful. A lot of the early attempts to respond were very broad and flowery, saying yes, these are wonderful reviews. We thank you very much for that. And what I have pushed them all to, and you will see that, particularly in the FY14 reviews is I want a schedule of responses of things that people are going to do, the centers are going to do to

respond back to the reviewers comments.

And we keep a record of that. And that is now posted internally. I have a spreadsheet with the databases developing on all of the reviewers' comments and then the centers' responses. These then go into the center director's performance plan. And they are monitored. I expect them to stay on schedule. There is a specific item within their plans that 85 percent of the items scheduled for that year must be completed.

At the close of the six or seven reviews, then the seventh is our Office of Science and Technology here at headquarters, which occurred sometime at the end of the fiscal year, I have about two months to review all of the reports and then prepare a national response. And basically, what that national response looks like is it summarizes all the sort of cross-cutting items that I have seen in the seven reviews. So, if it is in three or more of the center's reviews, it will go into my national response. I then am also obliged to say how and what we are going to do to respond to those comments. And it is also my performance plan.

So, that website, the headquarters' website has access to all these materials. Each one of the individual centers also maintains a website with their own specific materials.

So, some overarching themes that came out of the reviews. Actually in the two years between data collection and stock assessments, they were not that much different but they sure reflected the different part of the stock assessment process. So, strategic planning was important. Staffing was a big deal. As an example of how it is different, for the data collection period, there were staffing shortfalls recognized in all the centers. So, that is what this will pop up in the national review. And those were basically, either data processing group or in Asian growth where they had people cutting O lists. And at the same time, when we did the stock assessment reviews, we again saw similar sort of issues about workforce capacity but then it was a different kind of person.

Go down to specific responses. For example, on data management issues, one of the

responses that we are providing at the national level for FY13, those funds became available in 14 was to actually fund three additional FTEs per center to help with the data management.

With respect to surveys and sampling design, we have a number of data collection efforts that the reviewers found were not statistically robust. So they maybe collected too many age structures or too few. And there was no national approach to that. So, we are hosting a workshop this year to try to develop an overarching approach to this.

The classic example would be where they have collected 10,000 O lists from stock and the observers are cutting every one of these fish to get those O lists that we are not going to do a stock assessment for. So, we are trying to fix that.

Strategic planning, a lot of this dealt with the stock assessment priorities in scheduling that Rick Methot has been dealing with and they have discussed it all, the prioritization of stock assessments.

And then staffing shortfalls. As I mentioned, we are going to deal with that by directly hiring staff or providing funds for it anyway.

And the second year prioritization was again an issue. One of the significant issues became how to improve throughput. You all have probably seen some of the photocharts that we have put together that show how many steps there are to go from data collection to actually studying the fact and it takes a long time to do it. And there is reasons for all that but there may perhaps be critical ways to do this. So, we are going to be hosting a national working group to improve that process, at least attempt to.

Management strategy evaluations were important here and they were actually in the first year as well. And we have talked a lot about implement management strategy evaluations. We haven't done much about it. So, I have gotten a little frustrated. So, while I have told every one of the centers we are going to provide you funds to hire at least one individual who is going to be your MSE expert. It could be somebody new or you could take somebody you have

got right now, make them the MSE expert and hire somebody new to replace that person. But I want someone in every one of the centers that can work with the regional office in the centers on MSEs.

And then, I have tasked my three ST scientists, those are my senior level scientist like Jason who was talking with you all a few minutes ago, to look at this nationally and develop a national approach to how we can provide this advice. Because in some situations, we need an economist as an expert in MSEs. In other situations, it is a population dynamics expert. But I want a national approach to this, so they are working on that.

And finally, there is a need to continue to retain increased capacity for stock assessment scientists. So, we will be continuing to provide funding for additional stock assessment scientists.

So, these are the sort of things I deal with at the national level. You can take a look at each one of the centers' responses. There will be a lot more things beyond this but I reduce it down to the national level to typically a half a dozen or so sort of cross-cutting issues.

Now, in 2015, I am going to set aside Magnuson for a while so all those folks can rest and look at protected species science. The terms of reference are online. And this one is actually a little bit different than what we have done in the past in that all the centers' Magnuson responsibilities are fairly similar. But if you look at the centers' responsibilities with respect to protected resources, it really varies. There are some areas, like in the Gulf, where turtles dominate much of what is going on.

Other areas, like on the west coast, where salmon is a big issue, the northwest and the southwest centers, jointly, do salmon. So, if you look at the terms of reference at how we are going to do this, you are going to see that the species that are reviewed are going to be different between centers. And in some cases, I am combining the two centers into one review.

So, in the west coast, Salmon will be done as a joint review between the northwest and the southwest centers. Otherwise, things are

very similar. Again, a similar kind of independent panel, the same sort of period. And again, these are open to the public.

And this is one where we have really pushed out particularly to the protected resources community to become involved in. So, our expectation is that now the Commission will be at all the reviews; Headquarters Office of Protected Resources will have a representative at all the reviews; our expectation is that the ARA at the regional offices will participate in each one of their regional reviews,

And we are hoping that the SRGs, the chairs of the SRGs will participate in each one of the reviews as well. They will be there, basically, in the audience but they will be there to provide advice to the panel. In other words, the panel is external to the region. They are brought in from the outside but they are supposed to give a fresh eye to reviewing the work there. But it is important that we have local experts in the audience and talking with the panel.

Most everything is scheduled at this point. Woods Hole has now been scheduled for -- Bill, do you remember what it is -- April 12th, the week of April 12th. A couple of locations in the west coast yet to be determined but these will be posted soon.

We strongly suggest that the Councils have representatives there. Those of you who have protected resources working groups or committees, the Chair, Rick Seagraves, it would be great to have him there in the audience helping us.

Questions? Do you have questions? Kitty, nothing from the Pacific?

MS. SIMONDS: I would rather, I told you before I was so happy when you got the job; one was that you were a marine mammal expert and you need to fix some of the terrible, what shall we say, closures we have, if our fishery bumps into two of them. Anyway, but that is just background.

I am really glad that you are doing all of this. It is very necessary. In our part of the world, our piece, I hate to tell you, in that case, needs a lot of discipline. It is messy out there. And the divisions have to learn

to work together with each other because that doesn't happen. And then you could imagine when we ask for reports or assessments, I think it is better for us to just have access to all the data and then we do our own reports. Because the timing is incredibly long, not just for us, I am also speaking for the territories. So, hopefully, all of this that you are doing will change the way they do business. And now we do have a new director and so my hope is that you and I and the director will speak sometime soon to get everything out there on the table and we should have a talk face-to-face kind of thing.

DR. MERRICK: Okay. Well, in the Hawaiian Islands, we are not going to do corals this year. We will do it next year as part of the ecosystems. But the issues you have got with marine mammals, I mean you need to have somebody in the audience that can talk with the panel to raise those issues. Because the real thrust of this is not so much how you do surveys but are we providing the right kind of science to support the regional office, to support the councils and so on.

MS. SIMONDS: Right, exactly.

DR. MERRICK: So, the committee, as an interim reference, the committee is expecting to hear those sorts of things from you. This is not the kind of committee where they will just turn their backs to the audience. They are expecting to have a dialogue with the audience.

MS. SIMONDS: Well, very good, because we will give them dialogue.

DR. MERRICK: Good. Chris.

MR. MOORE: So, thanks for the presentation. I think it is great that you are ramping up the MSE capabilities in the regions, sort of the science centers, the regional centers.

I am wondering about that capability now. So, we have MSE experts, we consider experts working for you now and I am asking because we are very interested in --

So, I am wondering about the MSE capabilities, the MSE capabilities that have you now and I am wondering who those folks are because the Mid-Atlantic Council is very interested in MSEs for some of our species,

specifically the black sea bass.

So, are there folks that we can contact now, as you start ramping up efforts with the Northeast Fisheries Center? Are folks going to be there soon? What is going on?

DR. MERRICK: That is up to the schedule in the Center. Bill will be the best person to talk to about that but I know there is capability within the Center but there is no one person that is actually dedicated to it. They do it part-time. And what I want to have is somebody who is dedicated to it full-time and to build the capability of individuals who are there.

Right now, there is no one there who is dedicated to this full-time.

MR. KARP: At present, that is correct. But we are responding to your request to align ourselves and create a lead person. And we will be working with both Councils because each one of them has someone doing MSE work.

MR. MOORE: So, as follow-up, how about headquarters?

DR. MERRICK: We have no individual that that is all they do.

MR. MOORE: Okay.

DR. MERRICK: But you talk to Jason, he is very familiar with the methodologies of it. It is nothing really unique but to have somebody who isn't doing stock assessments actually have the time to do this, that is the real lift here.

MR. MOORE: So, I have another question. You talked about data issues in some of your slides. So, how is the work that you are doing complimenting what is going on in the region now on GARFO with data, to look at the way they handle data? There is, I think, a one- or two-year thing that the Regional Science Center is working on that can help us with our data issues.

DR. MERRICK: Well, one is, I am hoping that the individuals that we are drawing additional funding to the center will be able to help move that issue along. And this is actually a conversation that we started when I was there, trying to straighten this out.

But I am looking to what happens in the northeast, as an example, for other regions.

No one else, I think, has given this as strong a scrub as the northeast are doing right now. And if we look at some of the other regions, there are at least as large of problems, if not greater.

The Alaska got their act together. The southeast needs work because they are so scattered with three different Councils. So, it is very different datasets. So, help them, if you can, because they are going to help everybody else.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you. One comment. Just the folks that are listening in on the phone are having some trouble listening to the comments and questions here. So, if you can make sure you get very close to the microphone, that would help.

Chris Oliver?

MR. OLIVER: Kind of a really general question, Richard. When it is protected species science used for assessments, does that broadly include protected species science used for things like biological opinions as well?

DR. MERRICK: It would effectively be included.

MR. OLIVER: Effectively.

DR. MERRICK: It is really we are using the MMPA as the driver for this but ESA is there as well. So, when you are doing stellar sea lion surveys, for example, you are meeting both these.

CHAIR ANSON: Tom Nies.

MR. NIES: Thanks, Richard. I guess I have got two comments. One is I was actually glad to hear that you brought up the point about public participation because I was going to ask about that. Because at the two meetings I have been to in the northeast, the public participation has been pretty limited. And had Chris and me, and Bob Beal not shown up, I would almost say public participation might have been nonexistent.

So, one of the issues, I think, is location. I don't know why it is felt like the thing has to be held at the Science Center. You know it makes it convenient for people at the Science Center but not so convenient at the public.

And this next one is going to be problematic because it conflicts with the Mid-Atlantic Council's council meeting. So, that is an issue.

The other thing is that you know I struggled a little bit on the models meeting and Bill had heard me go on a rant about this. So, I will try and keep it short. You know, when you bring in outside reviewers from NOAA and I think they bring in their perception of how management should work and these reviews are not actually supposed to be talking about management but when the reviewers start writing things like well, you have got your management plans organized incorrectly, and that is affecting science, I have a problem with that because, first off, I don't really feel that that was their role; and second, that is not really something that the three of us talked about. So, you know these are conclusions that, in my opinion, were uninformed.

And we really didn't have an opportunity presented to rebut these comments. The review panel was held in May and I don't think we saw the reports until October or November, after the Science Center Director had already drafted his reply to the reviewers' reports.

So, I struggle a little bit with that aspect of the reviews. I am very glad to do them. I like participating in them. I think the Center has done an excellent job laying out their programs for the reviewers but I still have some heartburn with some of the things that go on after the reviews are over.

DR. MERRICK: Yes, I have seen the overreach as well on a number of the reviews by the reviewers. I'm not quite sure how we restrain them, other than probably the Center Directors should make sure at the beginning, tell them to stick to the terms of reference.

CHAIR ANSON: Anyone on the phone listening that has a question for Dr. Merrick?

MR. HARTIG: Yes, can you hear me? This is Ben Hartig, South Atlantic Council.

CHAIR ANSON: Yes, Ben we can hear you. If you could speak up just a little bit more, though, but go ahead.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, Dr. Merrick, thank

you very much for that presentation. In the southeast you mentioned some of the data shortfalls we have and certainly, we have been trying to identify some of the areas that you are going to identify as well, by looking at your sampling in detail and figuring out where you are collecting too many samples and where you are not collecting enough. In the southeast it is critical that we collect the right number of samples because we have some oversampling in a couple of species that we could redirect to other species.

So, I would like to thank you for having that national look on sampling across the board. Is that going to look at each Council sampling or is it just going to be a general sampling overview of how many samples should be collected?

DR. MERRICK: The goal is to come up and see trends that can be used individually within each region. So, then we would be looking at each Council, or Commission, or Center, whoever is collecting the information.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, okay. Well, we have got, I think through the CR Program, we have got a workshop coming up where we are going to look at some of this in detail and maybe we can get you some of that information and you can use it your review as well.

DR. MERRICK: Very good. What we are looking for in this, too, is are we serving properly. So, in the southeast, one of the things that was really surprising were the number of surveys in the southeast and the states that were involved in that fed into the stock assessments. They came up actually in the northeast as well. Are we doing the right set of surveys? Could some of those be stopped and new ones begun? And that is part of the MSE effort as well. I had actually asked for Bonnie to prioritize that as one of the very first things that she looks at. I know there are some issues in the southeast of other surveys that the South-Atlantic and the Gulf Councils would like to have done that are not being done now. This is a tool that could help with that.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, I appreciate that. That was a critical part that came out into the

data review. Like you say, some of your surveys aren't giving you assessment-grade information. So, you know I appreciate that review and hopefully, we get some of the sampling that provides us a bigger bang for our buck so we can actually get some assessment-grade science going into our assessment.

DR. MERRICK: And I would encourage you to pay attention to recommendations and responses that we have put out in the Center Director's and my response and holding our feet to the fire. If you don't see us doing what we said we were going to do, you should be smacking us upside the head about it.

MR. HARTIG: No, and I appreciate that. And that is one of the things that some of these are long-term goals and solutions to some of the data needs that we have. And so that was the only thing that I had is how do we have an action plan that we know that the Council is informed on how we are moving forward with some of these new data collection programs.

DR. MERRICK: Okay.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you, Ben. Anyone else on the phone that has a question?

MS. DUVAL: That covered mine.

CHAIR ANSON: All right, thank you. Just as a follow-up to that, I guess, who do you anticipate will be participating in that workshop?

DR. MERRICK: The protected resources?

CHAIR ANSON: No, the biological samples. Is it stock assessment -- Science Center stock assessment folks? Is it laboratory folks that actually do the processing? How widespread?

DR. MERRICK: I would expect that the Center Regional Office and Councils.

CHAIR ANSON: All right, thank you. Rick?

MR. ROBINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Merrick, as we have gotten into the potential transition toward ecosystem approaches to fisheries management, one of the needs that was highlighted fairly quickly was the capacity to do management strategy evaluations. So, the fact that we can look forward to having that capacity resident within our Regional

Science Centers, I think, will be an important capacity for us, as we consider moving in that direction because that has been highlighted repeatedly, as we have gone through those discussions as one of the needs that we have to support the transition standpoint.

DR. MERRICK: I recognize that and I think just having one person is not enough but it is a start. And I think as we have showed how useful the tool is, we will be able to divert resources to more fully staff that. Right now, it is kind of -- trying to sell that on The Hill, for example, without the utility of it, it is hard for people that don't understand it.

CHAIR ANSON: Chris Oliver.

MR. OLIVER: That discussion prompted a question. I could have asked you this question last week, Richard.

DR. MERRICK: Okay.

MR. OLIVER: But these reviews, generally, the question is who is going to be there, who participates in this? Is it sort of an internal review or are there external reviews involved? Who all would be in the room, I guess?

They are a big panel and the panel is composed of the five or six people I mentioned before; three scientists external to both NOAA and to the region; another NOAA but non-new scientist; and then another NMFS scientist but from a separate region. And then usually there is a Center Director that also sits in to transfer knowledge.

The audience is open to the public and, like Tom has mentioned, it is great to have Council there. And I would encourage that happen at every one of the reviews and the regional office. And then there are interest groups that are important here like for the protective resources ones, having the Marine Mammal Commission there is important. And then it is open to the public. It is a public review, as is all the information.

CHAIR ANSON: John.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Merrick, a question regarding the capacity to do management strategy evaluations. One of the challenges, I think, councils have in

dealing with or responding to emerging scientific tools and applications is the SSC's role as a peer review group and the capacity of that group to provide peer review on new tools, on emerging approaches. And I am just wondering whether you have any recommendations to councils, in terms of how they might respond to or support this effort to bring management strategy evaluation into our process relative to SSC.

DR. MERRICK: Well, so really what the SSCs do, a lot of things that verge on management strategy evaluations but are very informal. So, building that capacity probably within council's staff would really help the SSCs.

I am not asking for money right now to pay for that but my vision in the end, probably if we had capacity in all three, the Center, the Regional Office, and the Council, it would be the best way to do this.

CHAIR ANSON: Anyone else? Anyone else on the phone have a question?

All right, well, Dr. Merrick, thank you very much for the information.

DR. MERRICK: Thank you.

CHAIR ANSON: Next we will have John Henderschedt with Fisheries Forum Information Network.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And first of all, thank you very much for allowing me to give a brief presentation to the CCC. I am going to describe to you a project that we have worked on for quite some time and I am really thankful that we have the opportunity to present it to the CCC.

By way of introduction, earlier this week I sent out an email describing some important changes that are taking place at the Fisheries Forum. This includes transition of the forum from the existing partnership to the establishment of an institutional home at the Nicholas Institute at Duke University and transfer of leadership of the forum to Katie Latanich and Kim Gordon as co-directors. And Katie Latanich is here. And for those of you who don't know Katie, I really suggest that you introduce yourself to her today and get to know Katie.

So, Mr. Chairman, following several

years of planning and development, we are really excited to launch this new website and communications platform that we have called the Fisheries Forum Information Network. This project emerged from a strategic plan that we developed in 2012 and it began as a way to compliment and extend the value of the work that we do through forums and workshops. Essentially, an effort to extend the value of our investment beyond the events themselves and to reach a broader audience.

But this has grown into something that we hope is much bigger, really a virtual community within the federal fisheries management arena and this is a way to support more networking and more information sharing that occurs when there are opportunities to convene managers across regions and across institutions at forums, at regional workshops, and even at meetings like CCC meetings.

So, my goal today is to simply introduce this site to you and show you how it can be used as a resource by council, council staff and agency staff.

So, at a very basic level, the Fisheries Forum Information Network or the FFIN is the Fisheries Forum's new website. You can still find all of the materials and the resources from past work that the forum has done and its collaborations with councils and with NOAA Fisheries.

The information network includes resources, as I said, from past forums. They are archived there as well as videos and presentations.

And it is also a home for additional information like work we have done in support of Councils, for instance, the Climate Change and Governance Workshop that the Mid-Atlantic Council sponsored, as well as our collaborations, for instance, with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, in supporting the development of their strategic science plan.

Our goal is to connect people and information in a way that builds on but also outlives these one-time events in collaborations as well draws in resources beyond the work of the fisheries forum.

So, these things would include materials like information on the Mid-Atlantic Council's Stakeholder Workshop on best practices for wind energy development, the North Pacific Council's description of its process for nominating and evaluating HAPCs, which is an older document but has been of interest to other regions. And I believe figured into some of the work that the Habitat Workgroup that we will hear from this afternoon will be describing and the next project, such as the website that the National Electronic Monitoring Workshop that Dorothy organized and that George's presentation was following up on this morning.

So, these are just a few examples. They are documents, links to other websites and all of them are examples of regional innovations that are valuable to share across regions and across institutions.

What we heard from the folks that we engaged in developing this program, this website, and that includes council staff, agency staff. I would like to make a special thank you to NOAA Fisheries and to Dr. Tara Scott, in particular, who has been directly involved in the development of this project is that the greatest barrier to sharing information is time and a knowledge of what is available. And really what we are trying to do is help council members, council staff and agency staff finding and sharing good information and developing their network of peers.

So, the FFIN is organized into seven topic-based communities. For example, ecosystem-based management, catch limits and assessments, et cetera. And then each community includes announcements, a resource library and a discussion board. And the resource library is organized into subtopics. For example, with ecosystems, there might be topic headings of habitat, climate change, and forage fish. And these library entries can include files, videos, and hyperlinks, which can be tagged with key words and searched. So, the idea is to make this information very accessible in terms of both topic and community.

And I want to clarify that the FFIN is the way to link information. We are not hosting all of the information and we are certainly not

intending to generate all of the information on the FFIN. Over time, we hope to enlist the FFIN's core audience to build and to curate this collection of information resources.

So, the core audience for the FFIN, as I mentioned, consists of council members, council staff, and agency staff. And all the content that is posted on the FFIN is public but the core audience is also able to create individual accounts and profiles. And the purpose of that is to support an efficient networking experience between people who have similar interests and responsibilities and also to connect people that have questions to people who have information and answers.

So, a profile would consist of information regarding region, council affiliation, professional responsibilities, area of interest. And I should note that the one set of information on the FFIN that is not public is the profile information, unless the individual user chooses to make that public.

So, the platform itself, then, creates dynamic networks based on shared traits. For example, a list of contacts or networks that are based on shared interests. And again, it is an efficient way to stay in touch and an effective way to identify new contacts within your network.

So, going forward, as I said, we are very excited to develop the FFIN to this point. It is now live. You can visit it at fisheriesforum.org. And we really intend to develop it to be the go to resource for federal fisheries managers, in terms of information across regions and across institutions.

We want to support users to go to that site, to stay up to date, and to learn what is going on in other regions. And we also encourage councils and council staff to use the FFIN as a tool and to help your work products have greater impact and find a wider audience among colleagues.

So, on an ongoing basis, we invite your feedback and your questions. And so while this presentation was designed to simply present the concept and the high-level attributes of the FFIN, the Fisheries Forum team would be quite pleased to provide a more detailed walkthrough

and orientation to the FFIN to your council members and staff. And you can talk to Katie or talk to Kim about setting that up at a future time, perhaps at a council meeting or otherwise.

And so, Mr. Chairman, that concludes my presentation on the Fisheries Forum Information Network. I did want to mention that in early May will be the east coast forum at the Duke Marine Lab in Beaufort and the topic is risk-based management with a special focus on management strategy evaluation. So, apropos to the previous presentation from Dr. Merrick.

So, again, thank you very much for time on the agenda and I will be happy to answer any questions that CCC might have about the FFIN.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you, John. Do members have any questions for John? Chris?

MR. MOORE: I will try to speak up. This FFIN, this project is going to be extremely useful, I think, to the Council and staff. And again, just speaking for myself. I have had a chance to look at the site. There is a lot of useful information there. I am curious about the way you are going to manage the information on the site. Is there going to be one point person that will control content for all the communities or are you going to have a community leader for the seven or eight different communities that you stated?

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chris, that is an excellent question. And at present, we are at startup. It is our intent that the Fisheries Forum Team will curate that but, ultimately, we don't want to create an unnecessary delay between people identifying information and getting it on that site and the team's ability to review all of that.

And given the fact that the core community is made up of really of us, of council members, council staff, agency staff, I think the needs to have that sort of very closely controlled editorial process will not be that great. And so, ultimately, we are really looking for a self-maintaining site. To the extent that we run into difficulties with that, we would obviously have to edit it more closely.

But starting will be, basically, reviewing and posting things but quickly

transitioning to basically instantaneous posting of information.

CHAIR ANSON: Rick.

MR. ROBINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. John, as you transition from your current role with the forum into your new opportunity with the Agency, I just wanted to express our appreciation as a council and point out the fact that John and his team at the fisheries forum have allowed us to leverage our existing council resources in a way that has been very effective. John mentioned a number of different workshops but we have, in fact, had a substantial number of those that they helped facilitate. I just want to express my appreciation because they resulted, I think, in a lot of great outcomes for us but really enhanced our resources and ability to execute those types of projects.

You know when you go into a workshop, often you think it may be a fairly simple thing to execute but there is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes to make them successful. John worked behind the scenes and in front of the scenes on a lot of these workshops that we did with their support. But I just want to express our appreciation. So, thank you, John.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Rick and I do want to mention that going forward those workshops, those projects that are in direct support of a Council working through a challenge or an issue remain very central to the fisheries forums model. And so to the extent that council has identified areas where that sort of support is useful, I strongly encourage you to reach out to Katie and Kim and explore that possibility.

MR. ROBINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIR ANSON: Dorothy.

MS. LOWMAN: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So, I also want to express my appreciation. I have had the opportunity to go to a lot of forums over the years and I have seen them really grow in how they are able to really serve council members and now agency staff, too. And I think John deserves a lot of credit but also a lot of credit does go to the two new co-chairs and I noticed on the little sample thing that under Katie's profile, there was a gold ribbon -- gold most valuable and

I think that is accurate. So, I think that will continue.

But I also had an opportunity to kind of pretest this information network and one of the things that I think I had some reservations but also some interest in was the ability for core members to communicate and contact and how much sort of back and forth there would be. Because I have been on some servers that I have wanted to get off because some people seem to have a lot more time than I do for commenting but I was wondering kind of where that stands and sort of how much access, et cetera and interaction.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dorothy, the platform that we selected, which is called Higher Logic, it is basically a web-based platform that is developed for what they call connected communities has incredible capabilities to support those types of online interactions.

As I said, everything that goes on the site is going to be publicly available. And that is really with the intention of not creating the site that is perceived as the virtual back room, where council members are not being transparent in their communications between themselves.

And I expect that a lot of communication is going to take place as a result of contacts made on the site, as opposed to directly there. And I actually think that the ability to post messages is likely to be, if not receive the least amount of use, is likely to be the slowest part of that to develop.

And so we are really focused, primarily, on having an effective and an efficient clearinghouse for information and, as I say, providing a good tool for building that network. How that networking occurs after those initial contacts are made on the site is to be determined.

CHAIR ANSON: All right, any other questions for John? Anyone on the phone have a question?

All right. Well we are, again, still a little ahead of schedule and do we want to break early and then come back earlier than what is scheduled for lunch or do we want to continue

on? Is Jessica here? She is here. Any -- keep going. All right.

So, Jessica, would you mind giving the presentation on habitat workgroup update and future planning?

MS. COAKLEY: All right, talk into the mike, so I have been instructed.

Good morning everyone. My name is Jessica Coakley. I am staff with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and I am here to talk to you today about the CCC habitat workgroup.

So, first I am going to provide you with an update on the workgroup itself, go over some next steps that have been identified by the workgroup, and then the workgroup has developed some questions they would like to ask the CCC about how we are going to proceed going forward.

So back in May, 2014, the CCC agreed to form an informal habitat workgroup and the goal of that workgroup was to engage both council and NOAA Fisheries Staff on habitat issues to enable enhanced coordination on federal habitat initiatives, to have the opportunity to discuss habitat requirements and how those are being implemented in each of our councils in each of our regions, and to allow for sharing of the tacit knowledge, experiences and approaches across council staffs and across the regions because, as we all know, good things happen we get all of our council staffs together and our regions together to discuss these issues.

So, in July 2014, the workgroup was formed. We have representation from seven of the eight council staffs, from all five regional offices, as well as a representative from the habitat conservation division at headquarters and representative from the Office of Science and Technology.

We had our first webinar meeting September of 2014 and the first order of business, at that point, was to discuss logistics because other than our objectives, we didn't really have a plan going forward at that point. So, we discussed how we were going to deal with meeting management, how we were going to handle chairmanship and the workgroup agreed that it made sense to do a rotation consistent with the

CCC leadership, which would provide each council staff representative to have the opportunity to chair the workgroup and we would know what that rotation would be clearly.

The Mid-Atlantic Council staff chaired for the start of 2014 in the beginning of this workgroup. So, that is why I am here talking with you today. Starting in 2015, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is going to take over the chairmanship for 2015. So, John Froeschke over at the Gulf Council would be our chair moving forward.

Habitat Conservation Division stepped up and offered to provide Terra Lederhouse as staff as a coordinator for the workgroup, which I have to say I have really appreciated her support because she has done a great job summarizing meetings, organizing meetings for us and taking a lot of that burden off of the council staff responsible for chairing it. So, that has been really helpful.

The workgroup on that first September call identified a list of discussion topics and initially agreed to meet, both in October and November to sort of jumpstart the workgroup and jumpstart the discussion of these habitat issues.

So, on our first call, which was in October, our first topic call, in 2014 we discussed habitat areas of particular concern. We talked about the process that each of the councils used to identified HAPCs, how they are used as a conservation prioritization tool in the region and with the regional offices, and how their use could potentially be improved.

We also discussed how councils interact with headquarters in regions, with a process of formal and informal consultations are in each of those regions, which each region is a little bit different. One of the things, and I have to admit, this was part of the reason we focused on this as one of the early topics, the Mid-Atlantic Council is working with the Fisheries Leadership and Sustainability Forum to develop a report that is focused on habitat areas of particular concern. So, we used that first call as an opportunity to leverage some of those staff resources and those discussions to help feed into a larger report on habitat areas of

concern at the national level.

So, Fisheries Forum staff listened in on that call with the CCC habitat workgroup. So, as a product, it wasn't a direct product of that workgroup but that the workgroup discussions were feeding into, we are developing a report that is going to provide information on all the current methods and objectives that are used identifying habitat areas of concerns and critical fish habitat areas in each of the council regions; also, looking at different approaches that are being used abroad; looking at how the Highly Migratory Species Division identifies the HAPCs and deals with those habitat issues. And this report is going to be a synthesis of regional experiences with effective use of the habitat area of particular concern provision of the Magnuson Act.

So, Fisheries Forum has gone out to all the different staffs and used the input from that call to look at how we are communicating habitat priorities relative to HAPCs, how those are being linked with fishery management objectives and ecosystem resilience, how they are being used to focus and communicate priorities up to our regions, and how they are being used to reduce adverse impacts from different kinds of anthropogenic activities. So, that is a product this workgroup has helped in the development process with.

In November, we held another call and the topic for that call was the five-year review process. We have discussed how councils are meeting those requirements; what aspects of the five-year reviews are being included in the documentation that the councils are developing; what has worked well for the different regions; and how the processes can be improved.

This call, we had a lot of discussion about the pros and the cons of the different types of five-year reviews that are being done in the regions. And the workgroup developed some successful approaches and lessons learned that they thought were worth sharing with all the regions. They highlighted that separating the essential fish habitat technical reviews from the amendment process seemed to be helpful in terms of conducting those reviews.

There was benefit to conducting an omnibus review across all species or across all plans and including, considering those adverse effect analyses and more of an omnibus way.

Updates to essential fish habitat designations were being done in the regions, both on a plan-by-plan basis or an omnibus basis and the group saw benefits to doing those both ways on a case-by-case basis. And the group highlighted the use of essential fish habitat source documents. That is something that we use in the northeast region and those are documents that are compilations of all the ecological characteristics for a specific species by life stage, what types of habitats they use, what their food habits are. There are documents that in our region were produced by the science centers but they become sort of a one-stop shopping resource for habitat information and ecological information on those species. So, a lot of the different regions were interested in how those source documents were being developed in those regions and how those might be applied to some of those regions as well.

I want to highlight what they are calling these lessons learned or successful approaches. The workgroup emphasized that we really didn't want to be prescriptive in terms of what is being put out there. The workgroup really wanted to share the pros and cons that might work in each region and thought that that was a valuable product that we could produce.

So, for next steps, the workgroup identified four general steps going forward that I will go into in a little more detail. One was to continue these webinars and calls that we have been doing. They are typically about two hours. We recommend it going forward doing these calls quarterly and focusing on some very specific topics.

Two, the workgroup would like to develop materials that will assist the councils in meeting those habitat requirements going forward. We think, having all eight councils in all of the regions and headquarters engaged in those discussions, we could really come up with some interesting products that will be helpful across councils.

The workgroup wants to continue to discuss ways to increase the impact of the workgroup and our effectiveness.

And lastly, the workgroup would like to recommend having an in-person habitat meeting or summit, possibly in 2016 to have the opportunity to discuss in-person some of these very important habitat issues.

So, in terms of focus topics for these quarterly webinars, the workgroup highlighted the need to discuss some of these broader habitat science needs and approaches: the relationship between stock size and habitat and how that interacts with climate and habitat perturbations. The workgroup wanted to discuss GIS-analysis and modeling approaches to identify EFH and deal with some of the data gaps that we are dealing with relative to habitat. We want to discuss in more detail how we deal with our practicability analyses and what kind of information we need to support those. Research and information needs; what do we need to collect in terms of baseline habitat data? And also what do we need to collect to expand our knowledge base relative to habitat, so that we can address the larger habitat goals and objectives for our councils?

And then we want to talk about the Council and Science Center coordination on habitat research, how council priorities relative to habitat are feeding into the Science Center's research programs and what mechanisms we have to do that, how it is being done in the different regions and how we can improve that.

In terms of habitat management, the Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization and discussions of proposed habitat provisions is something the group would like to talk about. There are things proposed in the House and Senate administration bills that could have implications to how we deal with habitat. We would like to get out in front of some of that and start talking about that ahead of time.

Some of our regions have been putting deep sea coral protection measures into place in the different regions. We would like to talk about the approaches, how those provisions are being applied, how we can improve those.

Issues beyond fishing gears. So, some

areas had issues of anchoring and other non-fishing activities and how these are being integrated into the process.

Approaches to better identify habitat limited species and how the councils are targeting the development of habitat conservation through objectives and goals that could be developed.

Lastly, the group wants to talk about council engagement on habitat issues: how all the councils are interacting with their partners and other partner groups, so we can leverage all those resources to have the greatest impact; how we are engaging on federal habitat initiatives, such as the Habitat Blueprint or these coastal or national fish habitat partnerships; how we are getting engaged with those groups; and how habitat advisory panels are being used in each of the regions to engage in habitat issues and get that lower level stakeholder involvement on habitat issues from the bottom up.

In terms of our next steps, numbers 2 and 3, the workgroup would like to develop materials which are going to capture the approaches, practices, lessons learned, and needs that are being identified by the workgroup. So, we want to take the opportunity to produce some of these products and share those across each of the regions.

We would also like to increase the impact of the working group across all councils and talk about ways to promote and communicate the value of EFH, the links between habitat and fisheries, protected resources, and coastal/ecosystem management. And that may be a place where the workgroup can work across councils and work with our communications staff in groups to help ensure that that information is being communicated well to our stakeholder groups.

Lastly, the Habitat Summit, 2016 will be the 20-year anniversary since the Essential Fish Habitat provisions went into the Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization in 1996. Your workgroup, we have been doing these webinars. They have been about an hour and a half, two hours at a clip, which is kind of where people's attention spans start to get lost on a webinar.

So, we have been trying to work through that. With the distance issues, it would be great to get everyone in the room together across the councils, across the regions, bring in some invited experts and talk about some of these habitat issues in detail.

We are setting the bar really high in some room, somewhere. I am guessing kind of like this room. It won't have windows. In fact, that picture looks strangely like the meeting room in here. But we would like to have the opportunity to get the group together in-person at some point.

The workgroup developed some ideas, potential topics for a summit. The first one would be to discuss the data gaps that are out there to address habitat and EFH issues for all of our federally-managed species and highlight what we would need to prioritize in terms of data collection and what do we need to meet our council's fish habitat goals.

Acknowledging that we probably won't have all the data that we actually want, the workgroup wants to talk about modeling and geospatial approaches that are being used regionally to address all of those gaps and limits in data, how we can better characterize essential fish habitat, how we can better identify habitat areas of particular concern for all of our federally-managed species.

And given we are 20 years out from when these provisions went in place, the workgroup would like to talk about the effectiveness of essential fish habitat in meeting its originally intended goals in the Magnuson-Stevens Act and what really could be done to improve the effectiveness of the EFH, HAPC habitat process for all of our councils.

So, the questions that the workgroup has for the CCC today. Do you support the proposed path forward? We have tried to lay out what the workgroup thinks would be good discussion topics and good next steps.

Do you support a Habitat Summit? Obviously, it would involve investing council and NMFS resources and staff time to participate and organize something like that. Is that something you are supportive of?

Do you have other requests for the workgroup? So, we have sort of done our self-starting this fall, trying to figure out as a workgroup what we would like to accomplish. Do you have specific requests for the workgroup? What topics and activities and products would you like to see us producing and are there any other ideas to improve the effectiveness of the group.

So, with that, questions for either myself or for Terra or any answers to the questions that we have put out.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you, Jessica. Anyone have any comments or thoughts on the questions that the workgroup has posed?

Glenn.

MR. MERRILL: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Just maybe more of an observation. I think often when we are trying to examine habitat issues across the various councils, one of the things that can get lost a little bit is that there are a variety of different fishery management measures that have been taken that are really not called habitat measures, per se, but have habitat effects. And I think making sure that those get considered in the context of looking at various measures that are already in place and what kind of activities either the councils or the regions have undertaken would be kind of a helpful thing to keep in mind as well. I know that gets lost in our region and I suspect that might be the case in other regions as well.

MS. COAKLEY: Okay, thanks.

CHAIR ANSON: Chris.

MR. MOORE: Thanks, Jessica, for the presentation. In terms of the answers to those questions, as I understand the proposed path, I would say yes, I do support that path forward. In terms of the Summit, I think that is a great idea. I think that is something that we should plan on.

In terms of other requests for the workgroup, that is something I want to think about a little bit. I'm sure that I can come up with one or two things that you might want to consider.

In terms of an idea to improve your effectiveness, we just heard the presentation from John on the FFIN. So, I am wondering how

the workgroup is interacting with that group to actually get some of that materials into that network. And maybe you should is my point, I guess.

MS. COAKLEY: Well, I will talk to John at lunch, when we break. But actually as I was sitting looking at this, the FFIN presentation from John, David Witherell is on our Habitat Workgroup and has been involved in that. And we were just saying to one another what a great place it would be for the habitat workgroup to network and to share a lot of those materials through the FFIN process. Because we have been looking for where we should post materials, how do we make sure we are sharing all of the different activities in our regions and documents and approaches. So, I think it is a great place to get started there.

So, we will definitely work to make sure that our workgroup gets integrated through the FFIN process.

CHAIR ANSON: Doug.

MR. GREGORY: Yes, at this point, does the CCC make a motion to go forward or if there is no objections, we just go forward with these recommendations? I think the habitat effort does need to go forward, at least for another year.

CHAIR ANSON: Tom.

MR. NIES: I mean thanks for the presentation, Jessica. I would support what Doug said. I am a little ambivalent about the concept of a habitat summit without really knowing what it is for and where the funding is coming from, in light of the budget realities that some of us may be facing going forward here.

With respect to other requests from the workgroups, one of the things we have wrestled with quite a bit, and I don't believe I saw it really on a workgroup's radar is the question of how do you evaluate practicability. That is proving to be a huge issue with our omnibus habitat amendment and it is -- or I guess I missed it but I think that is something that we really need to spend a lot of time on because it is real easy to say what the industry loses because you might be changing the management area that is closed. It is very difficult to try and calculate what the benefit may be. So, you wind

up with this asymmetrical analysis but it makes it look like it is all losses as a result of habitat protection.

So, I would encourage the group to really try and dive into that.

MS. COAKLEY: Yes, and that is a topic that the group definitely highlighted that they wanted to look into.

If I can just highlight as well in your briefing materials there is a two- to three-page handout that gives a little bit more detail on the topics, the discussion topics that the workgroup identified. If you have other topics you are interested in, it might be worth taking that document back to your office and going over that list in a little more detail and passing that on to John Froeschke, who is now our new chair with the Gulf Fishery Management Council, so we can make sure that gets integrated into our discussion priorities.

CHAIR ANSON: Terra.

MS. LEDERHOUSE: Yes, just to follow-up on the question about funding for the Habitat Summit. I am with the Office of Habitat Conservation in headquarters and this is an idea that we have been thinking about for a few years anyways, getting together our NMFS staff and the council staff and the Science Centers and external partners to talk through some of these things that Jessica mentioned already about the effectiveness of the EFH program to date and some of our data gaps. So, budget pending for next year, this is something that our office is willing to commit staff time to, certainly, and hopefully funding for as well to host the Summit. So, I think the request for the councils would be the ability to send staff to participate in the summit.

CHAIR ANSON: Doug.

MR. GREGORY: Well, Gulf Council clearly has staff time and the resources to contribute to this.

I have got a question. I don't know where the phrase habitat area of particular concern started. I know the Gulf Council in their reef fish plan used that term in the early '80s, their very first FMP but today, the phrase, the word is marine protected area.

And the thing that concerns me, and I am wondering if you all discussed whether we should be calling these things marine protected areas instead of HAPCs because in my discussions with some sanctuary folks, they don't recognize these as areas that are protected. And, in essence, they are a type of marine protected areas.

And so, the terminology can be very important here. So, if that hasn't been a discussion item, I think going forward should consider that, unless there is some objections to councils to a change in terminology.

CHAIR ANSON: Tom.

MR. NIES: I don't know that I object to a change in terminology. I think the HAPC language is not in the Act but actually came out in the regulations for habitat protection. So, I believe it is in the NOAA regulations. Terra probably knows for sure.

MS. LEDERHOUSE: Yes, that is correct. It is not in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. It is just in our implementing regs.

MR. NIES: And so, we run into this debate in our region and I will try and -- the regulations don't actually specify that you have to do anything in an HAPC, which is perhaps a little odd but you can have an HAPC that doesn't actually have any additional management measures. So, I don't know if it will really qualify as an MPA if you follow that rationale. We can argue whether that makes sense or not but that is the argument that we get from some people anyway.

CHAIR ANSON: John.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I guess to provide an example to what Tom is referring to, I mean recently the North Pacific Council did identify HAPC. The net result is increased data collection and research prioritization but had no other sort of management implications or actions that came along with that designation. So, there is an example of where HAPC was established and identified but certainly would not meet, I think, most people's interpretation of an MPA.

CHAIR ANSON: Terra, do you have something to add to that?

MS. LEDERHOUSE: Yes, I just wanted to

add that this is something we discussed with the workgroup on the different approaches the councils have taken. Some have used HAPCs specifically to implement fishery management measures but other councils have identified entire habitat types as HAPCs. So, all coral or all seagrass and you can't necessarily put in a fishery management measure on a whole habitat type that doesn't have a specific area. So, there are definitely different approaches and we talked within the workgroup how it would be useful to make sure that when those HAPCs are identified in a fishery management plan that they have a specific purpose or objective associated with them.

So, for example, in the North Pacific Council, they identified these skate HAPCs because they need enhanced research in them. They don't necessarily need to implement management measurements now but they want more research happening in those areas. So, it is a good tool to use to highlight specific needs for that area.

And so you are right, it might not necessarily be an MPA but it is a good tool for highlighting it for research and other management actions.

CHAIR ANSON: Anyone on the phone have a question?

MS. DUVAL: Yes, Kevin, this is Michelle Duval. I guess maybe just more a comment on some of the questions that were posed but I do support the habitat workgroup continuing forward. I think it is important, particularly in light of the agency's newly released climate science strategy. And I think there is probably a lot of room for collaboration and overlap and leveraging of resources with regard to that strategy as well, in terms of this group's work product moving forward.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you. I have Rick, then Miguel.

MR. ROBINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just going to suggest that I think it is important to retain the distinctions between the different designations of EFH, HAPCs and MPAs because there may be different levels of protection afforded or different status afforded

to some of those different measures.

For example, if an MPA or if a site is added to the National MPA Network, that can invoke additional protection against non-fishing impacts and at least requires, under one of the executive orders, that the no-harm provision be satisfied relative to the purpose for which that MPA was established.

And some of our GRAs, our gear-restricted access areas or gear-restricted areas, had been added to the MPA network with that in mind. But I think that distinction is one that is important to retain because that can confer additional status or legal protection. Thanks.

CHAIR ANSON: Miguel, followed by Kitty.

MR. ROLON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Do you then include that ENGOs somehow in the process? For example, the Pew Charitable Fund they have a particular interest in working on habitat issues in the U.S. Caribbean and they have some funding for that. So, how do you see them playing a role in this process, if any?

MS. COAKLEY: Well, in terms of the workgroup itself, we kept that composition just to council NMFS staff but we are planning on talking in detail about how the councils work in partnership with a lot of these other ENGOs and other groups to address habitat issues. And I am guessing that if a Habitat Summit or a meeting like that is organized, we would reach out to different partner groups or stakeholders that may be interested in attending the meeting or be involved in a variety of ways.

CHAIR ANSON: Kitty.

MS. SIMONDS: I just wanted to say that the community is working well and that our staff really likes this coordination and talking to the other councils.

For us out there, even information remains largely unaddressed due to funds and things like that. So, our designations are like really broad. But the staff feels that working with this group they are into -- just not focused just on us but they are running through a whole bunch of things and also learning to work with the region. So, it is good.

CHAIR ANSON: Anyone else on the phone

have any questions?

All right, so you had a group of questions here that you asked us and got some conversations relative to going forward. Again, as Doug had stated, I am a little unsure as to whether or not we need to make an official motion to request that NOAA put it high on the priorities relative to the budget. Tom had some concern as to what specifically would be taking place. But if you all just want to take the general consensus and try to work it into 16 and then the councils would provide staff and continue to support the process.

Alan?

MR. RISENHOOVER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. And it is clear that groups thought about this a lot but would it be possible to scope and focus this a little bit?

So, there is the ongoing work, which I am hearing everybody seems to agree is good. It is a good cross-council workgroup. And then there is this are we going to do the Summit or whatever in '16.

Would it be possible for the group to kind of scope that summit a little bit more? Your four slides or five slides of next steps really would make for a very large summit. Would it be focused just on habitat science? Would it be focused on measures to protect habitat? Would it be focused on this kind of continuum from EFH to HAPCs to MPAs and that? Have you thought a little bit more about trying to focus? What is the highest priorities for the summit or is that something you need to hear from the CCC and the individual councils' staff?

MS. COAKLEY: Well, the workgroup had laid out these three general discussion topics that they thought would be the best place to focus a summit. We did talk as a group a little bit about how we could maybe use the webinars in advance to sort of prime the discussion leading up to -- through 2015 leading up to a summit, so we could do a lot of the groundwork and foundation on specific topics leading up to it to get ready to have that in-person discussion as well.

You are right, these three, in terms of dealing with the data issue, the modeling

issues and the effectiveness relative to MSA, I mean those are three big topics. So, if there are particular topics amongst here, I think that maybe the leadership thinks it would be important to prioritize, we could go back as a workgroup and fine-tune our topics and try to lay out what we think we could most effectively do in like a two- to three-day meeting and then come back with some additional documentation to the CCC with what that might look like, if that is helpful.

CHAIR ANSON: And seeing that the June meeting is coming up for CCC, is that something that you might be able to work on between now and then?

MS. COAKLEY: I think so. I think so, yes.

CHAIR ANSON: Okay, then I guess we will just anticipate further presentation, another presentation on that.

John, you had some comments.

MR. BULLARD: Yes, Jessica, thanks for the presentation. I have a question, I guess, one of ignorance, one of my specialties. But this is very timely, given, at least in our area, the work that the Mid is doing on deep-sea corals, the work that New England is doing on habitat, which is headed to a bruising conclusion in June. Then they are going to flip and the Mid will work on habitat and New England will work on deep-sea corals.

But I am wondering about a linkage between your presentation and the earlier presentation today by Roger and wondering if there is a linkage and how significant it is and whether or not habitat, as we conceive of it, is something that we conceive of as a still picture and whether climate change starts to introduce moving pictures.

Now, some things are, I am sure, due to geographic features and they are going to stay still pictures but climate change may start to introduce moving aspects to habitat. And as complex as it is, even as a still picture, all of a sudden when we think we have got it fixed in our mind, they will start to move.

And I just didn't know whether -- I am sure you have already figured this out way ahead of me, as always, but is this something that you

have already programmed in that habitat areas we know or can figure out how they are going to start moving, and those that will move, and we know how to start predicting that so that we can plan for movement of boundaries or is that a concept that is erroneous? It wouldn't be the first erroneous concept I have introduced, just one in a long series.

MS. COAKLEY: Well, I do know this is a topic that has come up in our workgroup and has come up in side conversations with members of the workgroup as well. One of the challenges with habitat for our federally-managed fish, and I think from the workgroup perspective, there is a feeling that we could be doing it better. We could more effectively identify these areas, even without climate involved. So, the group, obviously, acknowledges that climate change is a part of this and wants to have the discussions about how can we be more effective in the context of how we are applying the provisions on a whole bunch of levels. So, there is the consultation level, where we define EFH so it is a place on a map. So, when there is a project is going there, NMFS is able to respond to it.

But then there is the larger conservation, I guess, goals or objectives that we have for the council. How are we identifying those important habitat areas that may be moving and may be changing and how do we use the tools that we have to address those?

So, I think it is something that the workgroup has identified in the list of topic discussions and it is going to need to be an ongoing discussion across all eight councils and regions and headquarters. How do we make our habitat provisions more effective and more nimble with what we have now and what we may have moving forward with climate change or the impacts of other activities that might be going on?

CHAIR ANSON: All right, any other questions? Questions from those listening in? Doug.

MR. GREGORY: Yes, again, thank you for the presentation. My question is for the Mid-Atlantic Council. You mentioned the gear-restricted areas and I went online and looked at the list of MPA's network sites and those gear-

restricted areas are the only sites under the NMFS purview that are listed on there.

So, my question is did the council, itself, pursue that and why, as opposed to a HAPC or some other, or just as opposed to leaving it as a gear-restricted area?

And I am wondering if maybe our council will hope to do the same thing with our HAPCs because we do have gear restrictions in our HAPCs.

MR. ROBINS: Well, to that point, Mr. Chairman, yes, the council did initiate that. And the intent was to register it within the National MPA Network in order to afford an additional degree of protection from non-fishing impacts. And there were some concerns about adding the sites to the National MPA Registry. There were concerns about whether or not the Council, in fact, would retain control over the ability to make future modifications to those sites but we had several presentations from the National Network. And in fact, the way that program is set up, whoever makes the request to or whoever the authority is to add that to the list is the one that retains the ability to modify the boundaries of that MPA in the future.

So, that satisfied our concerns. We added those and under that executive order, it does invoke a no-harm provision. So, if another federal agency, for example, were to permit some activity within that MPA, then they would have to satisfy that no-harm provision. And that, again, is specific to the purpose for which the MPA was created.

So, it doesn't mean that nothing could happen in there. It means that the agency would have to satisfy whichever permitting agency was involved would have to satisfy that concern.

CHAIR ANSON: All right, Jessica. Members, if you have any comments to improve effectiveness or any additional topics, activities, or products that maybe the workgroup had worked on, please get in touch with Jessica.

But Jessica, thank you for the presentation.

MS. COAKLEY: You're welcome. Thank you.

CHAIR ANSON: So, we are ahead of

schedule but we are behind schedule. We are late for our lunch break. And seeing that we are still ahead of schedule, I am going to probably keep the hour and a half that we had scheduled and let's go ahead and meeting back here at 1:45 and we will continue on with the rest of the agenda on the council workgroup updates.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 12:16 p.m. and resumed at 1:50 p.m.)

CHAIR ANSON: All right, everyone, so we are down to the Council Workgroup updates and I have got people who could talk for all of the workgroups, except for Stock Rebuilding and that is our first one. So, I am going to have to punt a little bit to the group here and see if anybody has some comments on where that might be, if they are on it. Anybody have any idea about that? Chris.

MR. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Chair. There is some confusion about these working groups. So, if you remember -- well, I don't know if you remember but we formed these working groups to inform the May CCC meeting and specifically to inform our discussions about reauthorization of the Magnuson Act. So, some of those working groups disappeared after that May CCC meeting, including, I think, that one. Unless there is someone here that is on it that wants to speak it, I think they are done.

CHAIR ANSON: Anybody see it differently? Anybody see a -- Dorothy.

MS. LOWMAN: So, at lunch we were talking a little bit about whether they have to disappear or whether some just have disappeared. So, I guess I didn't think there was a requirement for them to disappear every year and be redone. So, and I can see some reasons for some to continue on and be used as needed.

For example, we have a long-range EM plan, an implementation plan of things that are coming online in the next three years or so. And I think there might be some use as we learn lessons, say from some of the work that is going to go on in 2015 to use that working group as a good way to transfer knowledge among regions as things progress. But we may not need them to do anything before the June meeting because it may

be too soon.

CHAIR ANSON: Doug?

MR. GREGORY: Yes, if I may because we have got to pick up the ball and run with it. In looking over what we did in May and in talking with Chris and Don and others, the stock rebuilding, the NEPA thing were like subsets of the MSA Legislative Committee work. And obviously, the Habitat Working Group will continue on. I think we should have the Legislative Working Group continue in that working group. And I will solicit volunteers by email after the meeting. That working group can look at two things, the MSA itself, and also National Standard 1 Guidelines, since we have to the end of June to produce comments on National Standard 1 Guidelines. And the Allocation Working Group could continue.

So, those are the three I saw continuing. Electronic monitoring, we reviewed our regional plan at our meeting and my impression is until there is some money, there is not going to be much progress toward implementing electronic monitoring. In our region, we have a council that is very interested in it. Our charter industry wants it badly but it is just money that is not available to implement it.

I think given a lot of what John Bullard said might be some of the -- so, that is the way I saw it going forward, allocation, legislative, and habitat. If there are strong feelings for EM, if you have that, Dorothy, then pick it up and run with it and we will see who wants to work with you on it.

CHAIR ANSON: Anyone else have any comments, additions?

So, Chris?

MR. MOORE: Just so I'm clear, Doug. You are going to be asking for membership from the CCC to populate the Legislative Committee, right? Is that what you are going to call it, the MSA?

MR. GREGORY: Yes, we can call it the Legislative Committee or the MSA-NS1 Committee, or whatever you would like. We can keep the name Legislative if that is what people are most comfortable with.

CHAIR ANSON: Don.

MR. McISAAC: You may be working through many of these agenda items that are on the screen here at the same time for this 2:15 to 2:45 period and then 3:00 to 4:00. So, if you are talking about the Legislative Committee and some of these other ones, I will speak to the NEPA one. I was the one who posted that document that is there.

This was kind of a hanging chad from the Virginia Beach meeting. We presented a draft there and talked about it. The white paper has been updated but it could stand a little bit more editing but it is essentially that same proposal that was there in Virginia Beach. In some discussions around the table, I think there might be one or two councils who still want to take a look at that before voting today, for example, whether that be the CCC formal position. And maybe that ought to just be delayed until June.

But if you were talking about a legislative committee being established, it could, I guess I would talk in support of that. If it includes things like the National Standard Connection, reconciling statutory inconsistencies, which was another workgroup of which the NEPA was just one of three components, I think that would be a good idea.

We heard from the legislative folks yesterday that something is going to happen, probably, between now and June. So, when we get to June, if there is an established legislative committee of this body, maybe they could think about what has happened between now and June and make some recommendations to the group. But I would maybe defer to Chris Moore, who I think was one who mentioned something about whether or not we ought to really try to formally adopt this NEPA position that is described in this white paper here today or wait until June.

MR. MOORE: Thanks, Don. Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, we would like to wait until June. So, if we could add it as an agenda item for the June meeting, I think that would work for us.

CHAIR ANSON: Okay, John Henderschedt.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you know, Kelly Denit and I will be presenting some work that the Allocation Review group as done but in terms of process and looking

forward, it might be worth mentioning now what that group envisions; and that is, the report that we are going to provide today is draft and that between now and June, we would anticipate incorporating responses from the CCC to that report, as well as just some general editing that needs to be done.

So, just from a process perspective, I would see a need for that group's work to continue at least until the June meeting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIR ANSON: Chris Oliver, did you have any comments?

MR. OLIVER: Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I am just kind of thinking about loud. Don McIsaac spoke to this workgroup and this draft product that are sort of hanging out there and I think there was some agreement that we didn't need to formally adopt it at this time. We could wait until June.

I would note that the Hastings Bill, 4742, that came out in May essentially contains what is in this white paper. So, given that, and I was thinking if we have a Legislative Committee, it would then subsume things like the NEPA issue, the National Standards 1 revisions, rebuilding a whole host of things additional could come up.

And so, I am wondering if well, two things. One, is there any merit in some individual subgroups to tackle some of these big issues, particularly that we have the National Standard 1 proposed rule out there but comments are due until the end of June. So, maybe it makes sense to see what legislation might be introduced this spring or potentially even come out of the house by June, as we heard yesterday. And I guess the legislative subcommittee could be activated at the point in which a draft bill hits the ground, although it wouldn't preclude that group from starting to look at the NS1 Guidelines, which of course overlaps with the juxtaposition between that, potentially, and draft legislation.

So, I am struggling with how and when this group works and what they work on, given these things that are going on.

CHAIR ANSON: And I agree with you.

I am having a little bit of trouble myself trying to think of what the charge would be for the group and given the timelines for some of these other things that are happening. But perhaps as you described it, Chris, maybe there is a subgroup, if you will, within that that might take a piece of the overall charge or charges that could be given to the legislative group. But certainly we would like discussion or have any thoughts or input on that. Obviously, we might want to see who is on the committee and whether or not they still are on there and whether or not we need to repopulate or have some other folks join it, if it is going to have a lot of subparts, if you will, we might need a little bit bigger committee, perhaps.

But anybody else have any thoughts, Tom?

MR. NIES: Well, it seems like the one thing we do have in front of us is the draft National Standard 1 Guidelines. And it seems like we could task a group or subgroup to at least make an effort for drafting a letter that might come from the CCC in June commenting on the guidelines. That might be a little bit difficult because I don't know that every council has had a chance yet to hold those discussions but that will probably happen over the next few months. And so maybe that group could roll as many of those discussions as possible into the drafting of the letter, so that we are not starting from square one when we walk in the room in June.

CHAIR ANSON: Doug.

MR. GREGORY: Well, whether or not we form working groups, I plan to take the compilation of the MSA comments we made last year from Chris, recirculate some of that and make sure we are all on the same page because the one thing that kept me on my toes last year and made me nervous was how quickly they hold a hearing and ask for input. It is like a week's notice. And I would hate for us to be invited to Congress to represent the CCC with a week's notice and not have something concrete.

So, I am going to be circulating that among the EDs anyway. And we are going to be working from National Standard 1 at our council level beginning in March, our March meeting. So,

that was going to be my approach to that.

I don't have a game plan going forward for the other ideas, the reconciling statutory inconsistency or allocations but I have put a lot of thought into how to handle the MSA stuff because it was so challenging last year.

CHAIR ANSON: Chris.

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, there are a lot of ideas out there now but I think if we step back and think about we are trying to do and timing.

So, let's talk about National Standards 1. I think each one of the councils is going to have a presentation over the next couple of months related to National Standard 1. So, we will all be able to meet with our councils and get our comments together. And then that can serve to inform a CCC letter that also responds to National Standard 1 Guidelines. So, we may want to have a small working group that does that.

I think Don has led a NEPA working group. I think we continue to have a NEPA working group in terms of just finalizing that white paper and getting that out there.

I think that you might want to wait, to some extent, on the legislative committee, until you have some idea with what is going on with Magnuson and then populate that.

But, again, I think we could move forward with a number of products. There is things -- the Allocation Working Group, I think that continues. We are going to have find someone to replace John in that particular working group in terms of the chair but I think that would be a good idea as well.

So, I think the Allocation Working Group, the NEPA Working Group, the National Standards 1 Working Group, all those we can do.

And the MSA stuff, that is kind of open, I guess. I think Doug's approach regarding MSA in terms of circulating materials from last year, that is a great idea. I mean that is why we put all that together on that website, so that folks can find it easily and quickly. Like I said to the folks on Tuesday, that is why we put together that matrix with all the councils' positions on those various issues. So, I think

that is going to be helpful to us.

CHAIR ANSON: Anyone else? Dorothy.

MS. LOWMAN: So, I wasn't hearing a lot of support about the EM working group. I looked up the terms of reference and the functions. And the first one on there is the EF forum where information between the regions are shared on regional initiatives. We had George's presentation and the talk about need as people who start on their first projects to share the results of those projects. As I said, I don't see that is something that needs to come back and be on the agenda in the June meeting but I do think that maybe before our next annual meeting, there will be information from the North Pacific's Collaborative Research Project, that may be of interest to other councils as they are working on how EM is designed and the struggles that may be there or the opportunities, in terms of how the council is weighing in on the design.

So, I would either say that it continues and doesn't just eliminate it. I don't know if we also start committees again. We may want to see if new people want to be on it. At this time, the Western Pacific, who unfortunately aren't here to weigh in are chairing it and providing the staff for support for it. Earlier, Kitty had indicated interest in having it continuing. So, I am offering to help keep that going forward but not make it something that we meet when there isn't anything to meet about. But I would be interested in other people's, whether there is any interest in any other councils.

CHAIR ANSON: Dan.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess in thinking about Dorothy's comments, I would agree with her that there isn't probably a necessity to put it on the agenda for June, given the progress of the state of progress that councils are in. And I should also say, obviously being new to this process, I am not sure how working groups are formed or disbanded. But I think also that in the future that it would be a good idea to revisit the subject in some fashion to share results and progress.

CHAIR ANSON: Don.

MR. McISAAC: Yes, thank you, Mr.

Chairman.

Speaking to the question of how long these committees should last or whether they be ephemeral for the life of a May fly in Idaho, the gentleman yesterday, Kyle, said that there might be a chance that the Magnuson Act would be done by the end of this year. There is a chance that might not happen as well. And so, there is a good chance that the Magnuson Act business, certainly, will continue on past the end of June of this year.

So, I think, I guess I would be in support of these committees that have been spoken of now, kind of be establish and that they continue until dissolved consciously as opposed to by the rotation to I think the Caribbean Council might be the next one in line but they just continue on.

This full Congress goes to the end of 2016. And the last time Magnuson went all the way through was right at the end. So, I just speak in favor of these groups continuing on until such time as we altogether say it looks like they are all done.

CHAIR ANSON: Don, which groups, specifically? Just the Legislative Committee, or the NEPA, or all rolled up into one? Is that what you are thinking of?

MR. McISAAC: Well, starting from the end, Dorothy mentioned the Electronic Monitoring Group. I think we should establish that. Or if there is one, continue it, even though we might not hear from any activity in June.

And then I think what Chris Moore was speaking to was a little bit more of a splitter as opposed to a lumper and that there be one for national standard, one activity. They will have to finger their way into the world of Magnuson reauthorization and couldn't help but not do that. But then a separate group for the Magnuson Act activities in general and the separate group continuing on this competing statutes so that it can just be kept separate.

And I would let Chris add if there is another splitter there that I didn't get.

CHAIR ANSON: Chris Moore.

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is no Legislative Committee. So, we do

need to form one, if in fact we want to do that.

I guess, if I am a splitter and we have four working groups that we have talked about, I think maybe just take one at a time and see if folks are interested in continuing with that particular working group.

So, allocation, that is easy. And I think Dorothy spoke to EM. That is another one.

National Standard 1 Working Group, we have kind of gone around the table on that one. That is something that I think we need to talk about a little bit more and then the NEPA working group.

And then I think Doug mentioned forming a Legislative Committee, at some point. I think that is another thing that is on the list.

CHAIR ANSON: Well, that sounds like a good plan to me, Chris. Anybody else? I mean we can go through them one-by-one and kind of see where we are. We go with the ones that are existing and look at the membership, make sure that that is still good or make changes, as necessary, and then tackle those other new ones, if you will, or revised ones and do the same thing with those.

So, that being said, then, and this doesn't preclude any of the reports. I know, John, you have a report for the allocation workgroup and we will get to that. But let's go ahead and try to take care of these administrative matters first.

So, for the Allocation Review Working Group, that is comprised, John, if you can help me out with that.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: So, Mr. chairman, currently that group is comprised of Rick Robins, Lee Anderson, Dorothy Lowman, Michelle Duval, Geno Pineiro, Terry Stockwell, and yourself. And I will, obviously, not be continuing as chair of that committee.

I did take the liberty, Mr. Chairman, of reaching out to Michelle and so that it is clear to everybody that she is not getting appointment to anything due to her absence at the meeting here. And she graciously agreed to or expressed her willingness to take the leadership of this group going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you. So, with your departure, I think everyone else, though is still active and still on that, and anticipated to be for the foreseeable future.

So, is there a need to repopulate or bring on somebody else? Do you think we can handle that with the membership that we have? Okay.

And so next would be NEPA. Don, do you have an idea as to who was on that group?

MR. McISAAC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have a snappy list like John did. I think this was a compete statutes group that dealt with NEPA and ESA, marine mammals and national marine sanctuaries. I recall that Kitty was on it. I don't know if Chris Oliver was able to evade that or not but I actually, I guess if we are talking about getting these things going again, maybe I would suggest you just ask for a show of hands. And I would still be willing to carry forward on my role.

CHAIR ANSON: Okay, let's go ahead and do that. And we will have one rep for each council, try to distribute the membership. Yes, Chris?

MR. OLIVER: I just, I guess, would note in previous workgroup formations, we didn't necessarily have eight people on it. We didn't necessarily feel the need to have someone from every council. Some of them I remember only had three or four people. The original NEPA workgroup was me and Bob Mahood and Dan Furlong, the three of us. And then sometime last May, I am trying to kind of, I have a mental block on the whole issue right now since last May, I stepped aside and Don sort of took over.

But if we are going to keep that group going, I would volunteer to re-engage with Don and whoever else wants to.

CHAIR ANSON: All right and your comments were in kind of response to my comment. I didn't mean to say eight councils need to be on the committee, just that one person from each council would be the max.

Okay, so Chris.

MR. MOORE: So, Doug and I talked about these various workgroups, the committees,

earlier. And I think it might be more efficient if Doug sent an email out saying we are forming or reforming or continuing with the NEPA working group; who wants to be on it. Because some folks have already left that may have some interest in being on the NEPA working group. So, I think, from my perspective, that might be a better way to go.

CHAIR ANSON: That is a good suggestion. Don.

MR. McISAAC: Just one slight addition to that. I know last time it was just excellent to have Chris Moore's staff to work with on these. So, that is, unfortunately, a burden that is going to fall. But if you send an email around saying here is the group and you could identify which of your staff will be putting us at their highest priority, which of your staff will be staffing it, that would be excellent.

MR. GREGORY: I assume the staff of the chair of the working group would be doing that. But --

MR. McISAAC: That is not how it went last time and it worked so good last time.

MR. GREGORY: Well, it is obvious to me that Chris is the ultimate gentleman in the group and he would probably put extra people in and all that. We will do what we can.

But I have a question, in general, about this idea of these other acts. The ESA, it seems like we got an ESA report with the work from MAFAC and that seems to be over with.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act, the National Sanctuaries Act, that seems to be like a major chore but the only thing I have seen so far is the NEPA stuff. So, whoever takes that on, that is going to be a major chore.

MS. SIMONDS: That's why you have the heavy hitters. Wink!

MR. GREGORY: So, you want to keep all those other acts and -- somebody has got to do some analysis. I don't understand where this is going. Is this -- it seems like the effort here is to get NEPA embedded into the Magnuson and I think Chris Oliver said a great deal today is we want to the Magnuson Act to be controlling our activities and not other acts.

MS. SIMONDS: Right.

MR. GREGORY: But to tackle ESA, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Sanctuaries Program, it seems quite a bit taller order.

MS. SIMONDS: Well, the thing is, I think we have to know what the Congress plans on doing. And if they are going to be thinking about working on those other Acts, well, we had better be awake. You know especially the Marine Mammal Protection Act. I told you what I thought should be done. It is too little words: get them out. That's it.

But sanctuaries, obviously, the Magnuson Act should be the Act that dominates sanctuaries.

You know we have been very good at keeping sanctuaries out in Hawaii from dealing with fisheries because we have a state who in their agreement just said they can't do any fisheries in state waters. So, obviously, if you have to deal with fisheries, you have to come to us.

So but anyway, if the Congress says we are going to be dealing with something, we should be aware. But it is not for us to just go willy-nilly working on stuff.

CHAIR ANSON: Don?

MR. McISAAC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And with regard to the ESA matter, there is a policy directive out now. Things are working quite well in the Pacific Council now. We had an example earlier in the week on how well that is working.

I think from the workgroup's perspective, though, there were some other councils who were still looking for the possibility of some change in the Act that never quite got to resolution in Virginia Beach.

The National Sanctuaries Act, I think the council has a position on the record on that from the past but it might be worth detailing, in case we are asked again about that.

And the Marine Mammal one I don't believe that the subgroup got to a point of a recommendation on that. So, it is another little simmering pan on the back of the stove.

So, I think if all of those are somewhat alive, it would be the burden of the workgroup to try to bring something succinct

forward for everybody to look at in June.

MS. SIMONDS: We tried bringing up the Marine Mammal Protection Act like when there was '96 reauthorization and kind of talked about in '06 but not to the point where it was brought to the chairs and executive directors to develop a position.

CHAIR ANSON: Chris.

MR. OLIVER: Well, there is a whole lot of issues and I think we better maybe be careful between what it might be CCC positions that get developed as necessary and suffering death by 1,000 workgroups. I don't know.

I thought the ESA workgroup was done, that the policy directive basically embraced the work that was done by MAFAC in that group. So, if there were still maybe some lingering ancillary issues, I don't know that they necessarily need a formal workgroup.

I know our person that was on that workgroup is no longer with the council. And so I don't necessarily have anybody to put on that workgroup.

MS. SIMONDS: Well, Don, who are these other councils that you are talking about that aren't in agreement with the directive?

MR. McISAAC: Well, we could probably end that debate very quickly because I thought it was the Western Pacific that still wanted something in Magnuson in ESA.

MS. SIMONDS: Oh, you are talking about whether to do something with Magnuson.

MR. McISAAC: Yes.

MS. SIMONDS: Oh, okay. Oh. Yes, okay.

CHAIR ANSON: Doug.

MR. GREGORY: Yes, I envisioned what Don was proposing as the one working group would address all these different Acts in one fell swoop. There wouldn't be a separate working group for each Act.

CHAIR ANSON: All right. So, as Chris suggested, and it looks like I had some nods around the room, Doug Gregory will work on the list of the workgroups and send out a general email asking for volunteers to select which one they would like to participate in.

So, with that then, we do have some

products that have come out of a couple of the working groups. Don, you are on the list. Have you said everything you wanted to say about that? Okay. All right.

And so, John, you have some information for the Allocation Review Workgroup that you wanted to go over now or talk about the draft?

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Mr. Chairman, if you are referring to the presentation of the draft itself, both Kelly Denit with National Marine Fisheries Service and I would like to present actually two draft guidance documents.

CHAIR ANSON: Yes, we are at that point.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Okay, Mr. Chairman, CCC members, so just to provide a little bit of background and context for this presentation, a year ago, the agency provided the CCC with some recommended terms of reference relative to establishing triggers for and conducting allocation reviews. And at that time, the CCC established a working group. We came back to the CCC at the main meeting and suggested a number of things. One was that we approached this from a perspective of adaptive management, that that provided a model that we could use in both establishing triggers for conducting allocation reviews, as well as designing those reviews and conducting them.

The other was that in terms of tasking that work we, the CCC chose to essentially bifurcate the issue into establishing trigger mechanisms that would initiate a review. And then looking at the process and the considerations in conducting the review itself.

And so, the CCC working group took on the former. In other words, we will be providing a very high-level review of a document that addresses how to trigger or different trigger mechanisms for allocation review.

And then Kelly and her team tackled the broader issue of considerations for doing the review itself. And so, we are going to provide sort of a two-part presentation; one having to do with triggers, the other having to do with a review.

And lastly, I just wanted to share that given the necessity that these two documents be complementary, that ultimately we would be able to integrate the recommendations from both of these groups, the working group and Kelly's team engaged in some discussions late in the process over the past month or two to sort of compare notes, to review drafts. And I think I can speak for both of us that that proved to be a very useful and productive process.

So, I am going to ask Kelly to provide some background information in terms of the structure and the diagram that we have developed and then we will do some brief presentations on the documents.

MS. DENIT: Great. Thanks, John. Good afternoon, everybody. I am Kelly Denit in the Office of Sustainable Fisheries, for those who don't know me.

So, when our two working groups met to talk through our respective documents, we quickly realized that we needed a bit of a map for ourselves, in how we were envisioning this process might work. And so this schematic that I have put up is what we came up with. And so we thought we would start by talking you through this from a process perspective to orient everyone and then we will go into a little bit more detail, respectively, on what the specific documents cover.

So, the first step is the actual triggers. And so those bins represent the bins that the CCC identified at their last meeting as the relevant categories for triggers that we wanted to consider.

And as part of the public input trigger, and John is going to go into this more, there was sort of a Step 1a in there, where if you are getting specific input from the public, you would have a little bit of an additional check on that input to determine before you would move into Step 2, which is the allocation review or what we have called the allocation review.

And so the allocation review is sort of this interim step, based on the conversations that we have had at the CCC meeting previously with some of the concerns in terms of workload, resources, issues, not wanting to jump all the

way in but really wanting to have a thoughtful analysis of what is going on with these respective allocations before you go that full step.

So, the allocation review is intended to take into account and really focus on the review of the FMP objectives, focus on the adaptive management approach that John mentioned; look at are your objectives up to date or do they need to be updated, are they being met; and also look at other relevant factors that have changed over the course of time that would impact your allocation, such as changes in the fishery, things like that that you would take into account.

And I should have oriented you guys here in the beginning. Along the side here, we have kind of tried to lay out where we see the two different guidance documents and how they would apply to the different steps within the process. So, the trigger guidance, obviously, is 1 and 2 and then the guidance that we have with respect to what you should look at as part of the review is covered in Steps 2 and 3.

So, if as part of doing that allocation review you see that in fact there does need to be a change, then you would move to Step 3, which is your standard FMP amendment process, digging in and looking at potential alternatives of allocation. If you determine, based on that allocation review that no changes are needed, you would circle back up to the top where your triggers are and be back, essentially, at Step 1 until another trigger is hit.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: So, Mr. Chairman, in terms of the work product from the CCC working group, again, I want to thank the members of that group for the effort that they have put forth in putting this document together. I will acknowledge that the document right now looks and reads as one that was developed by a committee. And that is really what it is and it is reflective of the fact that there is a lot of input into that document. And I think that going forward one of the things that that group would like to do is have the opportunity to just do some of the distillation and revisions that will make the document read better. But I think most

importantly is that it captures the ideas and the concepts that the group collectively wanted to reflect in this.

As we have mentioned a number of times, the basis of this approach is adaptive management that was identified a year ago. As the group thought this through, while we sort of focused inwardly to these different trigger mechanisms, it also became apparent that this notion of having up-to-date FMPs in terms of up-to-date goals and objectives is critical to the process and it ties in very closely to the discussion that we had yesterday relative to National Standard 1. And so all of the working group's recommendations are based on this assumption that the council is operating off of up-to-date and relevant goals and objectives in its FMP.

So, the document explores each step of what we would consider to be active adaptive management, as they relate to this process that Kelly walked through from identifying goals and objectives through implementation, monitoring evaluation and adaptation.

The document has some definitions. We point out, and as the diagram that Kelly went through has several steps, starting with the trigger mechanism, which may initiate a review, which then creates what we call the go-no go decision point relative to actually moving forward with a consideration of new allocation alternatives.

So, in keeping with the terms of reference that the Agency provided the CCC a year ago, the working group explored three different types of triggers: public interest-based criteria triggers, time-based, and indicator-based. And I will note that in those terms of reference, I think the term was performance-based. And in an effort to provide some clarity, the working group replaced that term with indicator-based. We were just concerned that the word performance was showing up in too many places in the document.

So, I will just walk through each type of trigger very quickly. First, in terms of public interest-based criteria, we identified three different levels of public input. The

first is ongoing and this is reflective of the normal process of councils receiving input regarding fishery performance. What councils hear through public comment, through scoping processes, through its ongoing interaction with the public. And so this one might consider to be passive public interest-based criteria.

The next level would be specific solicitation of public input regarding fishery performance and regarding allocations. So, it is a more deliberate process in which the council would specifically solicit and consider input regarding allocation outcomes but it is important to note that both of these trigger mechanisms are subject to the council's judgment and interpretation of that public input, meaning, it is discretionary. These are mechanisms through which the council considers input and decides whether or not it would choose to trigger an allocation review.

The third type of public interest trigger would be a formal petition or referendum. And this is a review trigger that is non-discretionary and that would initiate an allocation review process. And the working group has identified some important considerations, such that the use of non-discretionary triggers, like petitions, referenda, and as I will discuss shortly, time-based criteria, there are some costs and benefits that have to be carefully considered when employing those triggers. The cost is that these triggers tend to be insensitive to a council's overall workload, to their management priorities at any given time, and to the available resources and capacity of the council. The benefit is that it creates a forcing mechanism that is useful when council dynamics may otherwise reduce the ability or the political will to conduct a review.

So, the advantage to a non-discretionary trigger is one need not overcome other issues, other challenges within the process to trigger a review.

In terms of time-based criteria, this was the trigger mechanisms that I think is fair to say was the original model for allocation review. In sort of the history of our discussions, at least at the CCC, relative to

allocation review, my recollection is that we first started talking about time-based criteria. As I mentioned, the approach can prove insensitive to important strategic and operational considerations but it does eliminate the need to muster consensus to move forward to do a review.

And the working group identified several other precedents for time periods that might be used, ranging from the five-year initial review of LAPPs to the seven-year subsequent review of LAPP implementation, and finally, the ten-year durability of LAPP permits, just as other sort of reference points in Magnuson that might be used for the design of the time-based trigger.

And then finally, we have indicator-based triggers and these are the primary considerations include economic, social, and ecological factors, which are, obviously, derived from the National Standard 1 considerations of defining optimum yield.

There are clearly similarities and some overlap related to the consideration of those indicators as a review trigger criteria and more in-depth evaluation as part of an allocation review that Kelly will be talking about.

And then, finally, the document fleshes out in much greater detail than I can here, the likely indicator topics and evaluation approaches relative to indicator-based triggers.

So, finally, I will just add a few overall considerations. I will reiterate that there is a close relationship between this issue and the NS1 discussion relative to ongoing review and updating of FMP and allocation goals and objectives. It is worth pointing out that these triggers are not mutually exclusive, as described in the document; that for instance, the indicator-based trigger elements that are discussed in the document might be also applied when a council is applying an ongoing or a solicited public interest trigger. In other words, what is the frame of reference that a council will rely upon when considering either ongoing input or solicited input from the public regarding the outcomes of allocations.

And finally, that a successful

allocation review process requires transparent selection, design, and application of review triggers. In other words, whatever a council might establish is a mechanism to initiate allocation reviews that needs to be done up-front. It needs to be done in a transparent manner in a way that the public has some clear expectation of how the council will consider whether or not allocation reviews would or should be undertaken in the future.

So, we are going to leave some time for questions at the end. So, I will turn things over to Kelly.

MS. DENIT: So, I will quickly talk you guys through the guidance that the NMFS Working Group came up with and I really have to thank Wendy Morrison and Tara Scott, who did the yeomen's work on this.

So, we have put up here on the slide just an outline of the paper, which was posted on the CCC website for you all. No general surprise, we start with a little bit of background, which John has already covered, run through some of the existing national policy where there are references to reviews for allocation like the catch share policy and other places.

And then we dig into a couple of areas a little bit more. One is guiding principles. I don't think any of these will come as a surprise to you all around the table who have dealt with allocation issues.

We have already talked about updating objectives; the concept of trying to minimize conflict as much as possible, by having an open and transparent process; using the best data available. And then these last two are sort of a little bit of lessons learned kind of things, looking at how you can minimize speculative behavior. If people know that an allocation conversation is coming up, you can see that. So, what might be some things for councils to think about as part of that, as well as plan for future conditions? So, some of the concepts of looking at if we have a particular ACL, then the allocation is going to be this. If we have a different ACL, then the allocation might be that. So, you can tee some of those things up in

advance and not have to constantly go back and review allocations is one concept to think about as you are working through these.

In terms of the factors for consideration, I don't think these will be a surprise to anyone either. It is four broad categories, the ecological, the economic, performance, and social.

And so looking at I know the ecological, what is the status of the stock, looking at economic, have you achieved objectives related to economic efficiency if that was, in fact, an objective?

Looking at performance, has the proportion of catch from different sectors or different gears within the fishery changed?

And then social. What is sort of the vulnerability of different communities? Those kinds of aspects.

So, we have spelled those out in the paper. That is the really sort of quick and dirty version.

And just in terms of next steps, we are looking for feedback from you all. We have not shared our document really at all. It is pretty much straight from our brains. So, we will be running up through all the regional offices, general counsel, et cetera, to get further input. Feedback from you all today will be helpful. And then, as John mentioned earlier, looking to kind of come back to the CCC in June with something more of a polished final product for approval.

And so with that, Mr. Chair, I think we would be happy to hear the conversation, get any feedback, and answer questions.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you, Kelly. Thank you, John. Good work. John, do you have a comment?

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: I just wanted to also just open it up for other members of the working group if they feel there is any aspect of the paper that should have been included in this presentation and wasn't, just given an opportunity to add to my comments.

CHAIR ANSON: Any comment? Chris Oliver.

MR. OLIVER: I wasn't part of the

working group, so I was standing down for a second to see others.

CHAIR ANSON: Your hand went up first. Lee's hand is up now.

MR. ANDERSON: The only thing that I wanted to emphasize is that it is a two-step process and that was one of the things that wrapped up around the axle early on. You know we are doing allocations. Does that mean you start having to be making alternatives and everything? Now that you have drawn this credit for this, make it a two-step process.

So, you look at it and you use adaptive management. And if you say we are not meeting objectives, then we do a quick look at it to say if it is necessary. Then if that goes, then you go to the bigger step. So, I am quite comfortable with it.

The only thing that we didn't mention this paper, what does that do? I would think that in each step it would still take a vote of the council if we got a petition. At least in our council, we assume we have a petition. We look at it and then we say let's move ahead with the Step 1, the allocation review. And after you have the allocation review, there would be staff looking at it and then you would vote to say all right, we have enough to go on for the next step.

So, there is still council votes in all of these things but in general, the process is what the committee said and what I would recommend we go with.

CHAIR ANSON: Dorothy.

MS. LOWMAN: So, thanks. I want to add to this, just a slight modification to what Lee said. And you see it on this slide, and in some sense it is almost a three-step process. The first is what even triggers a review. And then if it a review is triggered, then that is the second step. And then the third step is after the no-go and if it is a go, you go on to the third step.

And John, I think you kind of mentioned it about having kind of a time line to kind of -- but one of the things that is in this paper that doesn't have a particular number of years right now but might be something for CCC discussion is the idea of not saying the specific

years of when you would do an allocation review but say in a specific number of years by the time a council should indicate what kind of triggers they are going to use.

So, that is all I had to add.

CHAIR ANSON: Chris?

MR. OLIVER: Yes, I just want to try to clarify a couple of things and reiterate a concern that I have been stating since we have been having this discussion.

I think I really like the two-step process because do you need to do it and then here is how you do it. But one of the concerns I have expressed a number of times is what is meant by a periodic review. Because we have so many allocations and I know everybody does but in the North Pacific my concern is if a review requires an EIS-level analysis or even a significant analysis to determine if you need to review a program, we could literally spend all of our council and council staff and lots of agency time reviewing our existing allocations and never get another thing done in our fisheries management program.

So, if I understand the first step trigger, maybe it addresses my concern because as you were talking Kelly, I was reading the paper, really reading it closely for the first time. And you look at factors that need to be considered, you know ecological factors, bycatch rates, mortality rates, impacts on habitat, ecological community impacts, economic efficiency, employment, income, performance, on and on, and on and on. I mean this is a huge analysis for any program to really look at all of these factors.

So, I just want to make sure that that is not the expectation to make the first step decision of whether a review is necessary. Now, I agree when you get to an FMP amendment level and you are actually doing a formal review, you would need to look at these kind of things. But if we had to go through all of this just to make the decision on the first step, you just wrapped the council's process up to the point where we would never get anything else done.

So, I am just looking for clarity on where that second part kicks in.

MS. DENIT: Yes, thanks, Chris. We tried to be clear in sort of the introduction to that section with the four factors that the council should make a determination of which of those factors is the most relevant for them. And we were providing a list based on a more, I am not going to say exhaustive, but a longer list. And it might be that some of those factors are not relevant, given the objectives for the particular FMP or the for the particular allocation you are looking at, in which case we would not expect the council to do an analysis on those components. So, we were trying to err on the side of here is the things that you should be looking at because we think there is a whole range. And then having the council look at that and say well, we don't think X is relevant for this reason and so we are going to focus on Y.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: And then Mr. Chairman, if I could just add to that. It is a step-wise process. So, obviously, the consideration of those performance indicators as triggers would be very high-level.

To the extent that they were explored in-depth, a council may as well do an allocation review because that is pretty much what you end up doing. And then, ultimately, it is not until an allocation review indicates the need to revisit a decision, where you are looking at new alternatives and the front-loading of a regulatory process kicks in.

MR. OLIVER: I have one follow-up. Do we, and I don't know if this is a question for you or maybe Sam, will this ultimately take the form of some type of regulation or guidelines or a policy directive, or how do you envision? What is the ultimate form of this guidance we are working on?

MS. DENIT: I don't know. I think we are still figuring that out and looking for some feedback from you all as part of that process. But, obviously, I would defer to my boss.

MR. RAUCH: So, I think the regulation is what you have just seen, is the National Standard 1 guidance to have some sort of process regular review. These would be more descriptive guidance as to how you might do that but I don't envision any further regulatory documents, other

than what we have just said in National Standard 1, which doesn't deal with only allocations. Allocations are a subset of the goals and objectives.

The first part of this, though is CCC guidance. That is you had indicated, as this body, wanted to take on the idea of the trigger questions and what guidance you might want to give to your collective councils on that kind of trigger. So, I view that as your document. We, the NMFS guidance was on the back end. Once you have met whatever trigger you are going to meet, here are factors to consider in doing the analysis. And that is more technical issues from our perspective.

But if my understanding is the CCC was intending to put out some sort of statement about here are the kinds of triggers, here is why it might be appropriate to guide the individual councils, ultimately, the individual councils will decide what to do here. But I thought the ultimate work product here, at least the first part, was a document from the CCC to give back to the individual councils.

MR. OLIVER: Can I follow up?

CHAIR ANSON: Yes, go ahead, Chris, follow-up.

MR. OLIVER: Because I was actually surprised to see, to learn that NS1 revisions actually contain a mandate to review allocations, which I thought was part and parcel to a separate discussion. So, apparently, the what has been decided and this is the how.

But the NS1 guidelines, themselves, only make some fairly vague references to the requirement to review objectives and allocations. So, are you saying then that you are going to leave it to the council, CCC, to decide what that is and that this is our draft of what we think it should be but it is not going to be part of the regulation or the NS1 guidelines? The very specifics aren't in the NS1 revisions is what I am struggling with.

MR. RAUCH: The very specifics -- the NS1 guidelines envisions that the council will have a regular process for reviewing all the goals and objectives, including allocations.

The specifics intentionally it is

vague as to what that means because that needs to happen at the council level as to what and how you structure that. I think our intent behind that is that there will be, the public will know and the councils will know when and/or how to do this. If you do the timely number it would be when. If there is some other trigger, it will be when the trigger or if there is some process. But it is known ahead of time that there is a mechanism in order to refresh and update all of the goals and objectives, including allocations.

So, I don't see, unless we tweak the language of the National Standard 1 along those lines, I don't see further explicit direction in the Federal Register directing this, assuming the councils actually take this on. If the councils do not, we will have to look at that because we do believe that making sure the allocations are in the best interest of the nation, as with all your goals and objectives, is a recurring duty of the councils.

CHAIR ANSON: Glenn Merrill, followed by Lee.

MR. MERRILL: Thanks. I'm not sure if this is Kelly or Sam. I guess one question I do have is sort of the level of the formality of the review. So, for example, when we undertake our regular FMP amendments and we do a lot for a lot of our programs that are say catch share programs or other allocated programs, as a part of that we very typically set into context how the program is operating and why we are making the specific change that we are making now.

Are you envisioning that something like that could satisfy as a level of review or is this a more formal and separate process that should be distinct from sort of the general analysis that we do of our programs when we undertake a regular FMP or regulatory amendment.

MS. DENIT: Do you want to answer that one, Sam or do want me to? Okay.

I think we are envisioning that that type of review could satisfy the requirements for this. So, for example, if you are doing a five-year review of the catch share program, that could accomplish what it is that we are talking about, in terms of this step number two of reviewing and looking at are your objectives up-

to-date; are you meeting those objectives; if not, what tweaks might you make.

So does that --

MR. MERRILL: I think so. I mean I guess thinking of programs like our allocations between the charter halibut and the commercial halibut sector. We undertake an annualized process of looking at different management measures to constrain the fleet within the allocations. As a part of that, we have a discussion about how those allocations have been managed, how the fleets are operating. You know, to some extent, that might satisfy that sort of first step examination about whether or not we need to revise the allocations. Because through that process, we receive a lot of feedback from the public, not receiving a lot of feedback say that we need to revise those allocations seems to suggest to me that that is functioning fairly well within that context.

And like I said, we would prefer to be able to rely on that as sort of a background document to point to, to say that we have looked at this and we feel comfortable that our first step is satisfied and we need not go further, rather than having to create a separate process.

MR. RAUCH: If I could respond to that, I think the issue there -- well, first of all, the councils, as we noted, the councils actually do this an awful lot. The councils go through a process virtually every major amendment they do. They do a lot of allocation reviews. They do a lot of reviewing and refreshing goals and objectives. So, I don't want you to leave with the impression that NMFS thinks that there is a huge deficiency here.

What the real problem is that the public doesn't know that is going on. In the process you laid out, Glenn, that may be a perfectly good process if the public knows that in every year, you are actually deciding whether to go forward or not and change the allocations. If they know that is an option, the end result of that may be a decision to engage in a much more robust allocation review, as opposed to if the public believes in that process that they are stuck with the allocation they get and there is debate on the edges.

If that is what they think about the review, then I don't think it is serving that purpose. If they believe that a potential outcome of the annual review is any of these broader processes, I think that would be fine.

Part of this is to let the public know that there is a set time or process in which they can reopen these decisions.

CHAIR ANSON: Lee.

MR. ANDERSON: I don't think we are talking about an annual review.

But the main thing, your question was you know all that was a list of information. We are going to look at ecological things. I take it alittle different. I really go back to the adaptive management that John came up with.

Adaptive management says you have objectives and are you meeting your objectives. And that is the way you look at it.

So for a petition, if somebody came in with a petition, the petition said we want more fish and we are good guys, you throw that petition out. If you get a petition that says your objectives say this is what you are supposed to be doing and we believe that if you made this change, that would help meet our objectives, then I would say okay, we will go ahead. Or, if they say we think you need more objectives, that is fine, too. But then we go on with that discussion.

And at the same time, those objectives force the issue but they also set the stage for what kind of research you want to collect. You made a great big list of all things that are important. But really, the way to narrow down that list is how do we know we are meeting our objectives? What bit of that information is going to be useful for us to decide whether we met those objectives?

So to me, the first step, there is a balance. And in one sense, you may be -- and I don't mean this but in one case you look at it and say here are our objectives. Do we agree with them? And if so, okay, they are the ones we like. Are we meeting them? End of story.

But you can't do it that fast. There has got to be something in there where you have done your due diligence to really look at are

they the objectives and are they being met. But there is an end to this story. It doesn't have to go on forever.

But if you do say we are not meeting our objectives, we need some new ones, and you go to the second stage, that is when you have to be a lot more careful about getting out the more research, getting into it deeper. That is the real problem of why we set up the two-stage problem or the two-stage process is to be parsimonious about the work we put into it, unless we decide we have to go on. And I know there is a balance about what is parsimonious and what is slapping your hands and wiping it off the table. And I am not advocating that.

What I am advocating is let's really do the adaptive management. Look to the objectives for what you want to do and for the data you need to collect.

CHAIR ANSON: Chris Oliver and then Dan Hull.

MR. OLIVER: And so I am just reiterating a concern that we don't allow this to turn into something that subsumes all of our time and resources. And not to be too flippant, but if we reevaluate our objectives and we determine that a primary objective is stability in allocations, have we made our job easier?

CHAIR ANSON: Dan.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I definitely concur with Chris's comments. I have a couple of thoughts and observations I guess to ask and see what other folks think.

But as you continue to work on this, it seems that you should be running some specific example through your model to see maybe they are current examples or maybe they are ones that councils have taken on and I could use our charter halibut management allocation decision of a couple years' ago as an example of a past decision that you might run through this model and see if it worked the way you thought it would.

The second thought is that if we were to take this on, I think for our council, we might have to go back and review all the objectives that we currently have to see are they up-to-date. That, by itself, would be a

significant undertaking. So, that would have to happen before we tried to develop a set time and process, as Sam described it, so the public understands how we review allocations.

Another thought is should the councils be thinking about different processes for different types of allocations? Is it so one type of process for allocations between commercial sectors versus between commercial and recreational or subsistence? How do we address that?

Species not an FMP. Halibut is not in an FMP. So, are there examples that may not fit quite right and maybe that is not the best example but it is one I thought of.

And then it is going to be a challenge, I think, to try to quantify social and economic goals and objectives, given all the factors that go into that.

So, I definitely appreciate the effort that has gone into this. I believe that at the North Pacific there is an ongoing discussion about whether objectives are being achieved but I can see, as Chris pointed out, that this could require a lot of effort by us that would take away from all the other work we are trying to do.

CHAIR ANSON: And I was on the workgroup, although most of the other members took on a lot of the writing exercise but was part of the discussion. I was under the impression that these would be a more formal process, if you will, for the councils to answer or address the question of allocation.

So, Sam, I was a little taken back in your response to Chris's question regarding how formal is that process and how much work would it be extra to what the council currently does and that it could consume a lot of the resources to get to the right questions. And you said well, it is simply just every time an amendment comes up that it goes through the same exercise. And it comes down to a communication thing with the public as to whether or not it is an allocation, you know they are actually looking at allocation.

And so if that is the case, then we are doing either a bad job of just advertising that or we will have to get into a situation where it is a lot more work that will need to be

done to answer the question.

And I had a better understanding as we went through the various conference calls and everything but that kind of struck me as odd.

MR. RAUCH: So, if I could respond, I intended to respond to Glenn's specific example, in which he proposed could we do this on a regular basis. I do not think that that is what councils will normally do. I think the councils will set out a process where they will engage -- I know your council recently looked at the catch share allocation and you are doing a lot of allocation amendments. You basically have set out a process. You have gotten a formal look and you decide whether or not to change the catch share program or to change the recreational/commercial allocation. You do that and you lay that out.

You do not sit there and say when you are looking at your annual measures, allocations are not on the table at that point. Those assume allocations.

I was only responding to Glenn's view that on an annual basis could you actually put down the catch in issue in question? Could you tell people that that is an outcome? If you wanted to handle it that way, you could. It does seem like it is a lot of extra work. I wouldn't suggest you do it that way.

I think this way, which is a longer term interval, the goals and objectives aren't going to change year after year. But many of these allocations were set in the '80s and the goals and objectives likely have changed since then that you would look at this at some longer interval. Not the annual process but if the council wanted to take the work and to do it every year and put that on the table, I think that we wouldn't say no.

But I only intended to respond to that and not to suggest that that is the way we think it needs to happen because I don't think that that is particularly efficient.

CHAIR ANSON: John?

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My comment goes slightly beyond what the working group discussed. So, they are my personal comments as a member of the CCC and not

as the chair of the working group.

But I will point out that the triggers that were discussed, that are discussed in the paper, run a full range of being almost entirely passive, in other words, utilizing the existing council process and the continual inputs and evaluations that occur within that process to completely non-discretionary, like a specific time period or like a petition.

But a lot, I think, of what we are discussing is -- I mean I used to have to write operating manuals and the rule was that you write what you do and then you do what you write. And it seems like what councils have the flexibility to do within this range of triggers is to identify what works best within their overall operating process and then just be very clear about how this question of triggering an allocation review fits into or even overlaps with other processes within the system.

So, I mean I think a lot of the concerns that are being raised are quite valid but I don't think that there is anything about the triggers that we have identified that compels a council to totally disrupt its current process to meet these objectives.

CHAIR ANSON: Anybody listening in on the phone have any questions or comments?

MS. DUVAL: This is Michelle, Kevin. I would echo what John said and I kind of feel like during our discussions of development of triggers for review that we were trying to provide I think as wide a range of flexibility as possible for councils in considering what triggers might work best for them, just in the interest of bringing more public transparency to whatever process any council sets up. I mean we did struggle a bit with the sort of do-loop of are your goals and objectives relevant, are they current for your fishery? But I think just making the assumption that they are, these are potentials paths forward for trying to provide some of that public accountability and transparency.

I never envisioned it being something that would involve an undue amount of work in terms of sucking up council staff time to go through this. And I obviously just thinking on

the fly here.

But I mean I see the trigger mechanism as a checkbox. It is a means of scheduling and ensuring that we are being adaptive in our processes. It doesn't mean it has to be done annually. Certainly, if you haven't reviewed your goals and objectives for an FMP, that is a huge job and that is what we are doing right now in the South Atlantic with our visioning project for the snapper-grouper fishery. Our goals and objectives, I anticipate will change maybe not terribly significantly, but they will change as a result of this public input process. And we deliberately made a decision to put off a discussion of allocations within the fishery until we were through with that process and had a draft vision blueprint with regard to the way forward in that fishery. So, that would help inform any allocations discussions we had as a result of that and triggers that we might use.

I see the trigger process as something that is efficient. What is going to take a long time and staff resources is if you are in a situation where you are in the Step 3 action piece that a reallocation is, indeed, deemed to be necessary.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you, Michelle. Any other comments from the group? Chris.

MR. OLIVER: I hope my comments didn't sound critical of the working group's work because you guys did a tremendous lot of work and a great job with a very difficult subject and the two-step part of it gives it a little more comfort and particularly your last comments, John, the way you characterized that first part of the trigger thing. And Michelle sort of said similar thoughts. That gives me a little more comfort level with this.

Thank you.

CHAIR ANSON: So, the workgroup had asked for some feedback. And I suspect that the goal would be to come back with, based on the feedback, a more complete or final draft, if you will and not a working draft state anymore.

So, John, do you have any thoughts on that as you depart from the group?

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: So, Mr. Chairman, I think that there are many details, many

considerations relative to the triggers that I did not have time to cover today.

So, first of all, I think it would be unfair of the working group to expect detailed responses to that document today.

I think that if the CCC provides a reasonable amount of time for councils to react to that draft, to allow for enough time to incorporate those comments, as well as do the general editing that I mentioned earlier in time to have a draft available several weeks prior to the June meeting, that I don't see any reason why the document couldn't be finalized at that meeting.

CHAIR ANSON: And Michelle, do you concur with that, as Chair?

MS. DUVAL: Oh, I hate to hear you say that word. Yes.

CHAIR ANSON: Thank you, Michelle.

Doug.

MR. GREGORY: I'm curious about how this got so tangled up with the NS1 guidelines. In the ESA guidelines, there is 26 instances of the word objective. There is only one instance of the word allocation related to objectives. And it is not in the proposed regs. It is in the explanation. And all it says is examples of reevaluations include council discussions over allocation of catch in one of the sectors.

I mean, are we making more out of this or is this like a Trojan attempt or push to force the councils to do allocation decisions? I don't understand. It is just one example. It is not in the proposal.

The thing that concerns me in NS1 is this focus on management objectives. I don't recall if our plans actually lay out a series of measurable, attainable, management objectives and how that is going to be eventually implemented if we have to do that for each action item we do under the NEPA process. It could become quite burdensome.

But I just don't understand the linkage between how allocations in NS1 in the first place but it is not in the regulation. It is just in the discussion one time.

CHAIR ANSON: John.

MR. HENDERSCHEDT: Thank you, Mr.

Chairman. I just want to be clear that throughout the discussions of the working group, we focused many times on goals and objectives and the need to update those. And it was really not until very recently when I and others had the opportunity to review the NS1 draft revisions that we saw that intersection or that relationship between the two.

So, I think I can safely say that had we not been talking about NS1 at this meeting that the comments from the working group relative to the importance of up-to-date and relevant goals and objectives would have remained the same. It was just very striking how closely that concept or that theme shares in common with the NS1 guidelines.

So, that was not intentional. It was, I would say, developed, certainly from the perspective of the working group developed entirely independently but ended up really focusing on one very critical issue of those goals and objectives.

CHAIR ANSON: Dorothy.

MS. LOWMAN: I think I would just add this. I think when we think we are talking about goals and objectives, we were talking about the goals and objectives of the plans and then thinking about allocations as mechanisms to meet those goals and objectives.

So, and what I thought when this was about do you periodically review goals and objectives, I was thinking in the same way when I heard that in the NS1 guidelines.

So, if it is more than that in the NS1 guidelines, that is kind of new information for me.

CHAIR ANSON: All right. So, I guess a process then is that you, John, Michelle, will receive the comments or anyone who has comments to forward those back to the workgroup. If you don't have their information, of course, you can get in touch with Doug with the intention of trying to incorporate those to come with the final version for the June meeting.

MS. DENIT: And just to add, Chair, if there are comments on the NMFS document as well, if they can send those to me, that would be great.

CHAIR ANSON: All right. Well, thank you, John. Thank you, Kelly.

All right, so that takes us to the Western Pacific Socioeconomic Workshop Report. Kitty, are you going to do that? Yes.

MS. SIMONDS: I believe the staff emailed you folks a copy of the draft report that Chris Hawkins did. And I guess maybe some people were confused about where this all came from.

Well, the social scientists from some of the councils were having meetings over the years and then Chris, we hired Chris from PIRO and he is our social scientist. So, he and a few of them decided that hey, why don't we have a meeting of representatives from all of the councils. And the other reason is that MFS has been holding workshops with their social scientists and the council staffers said that they weren't invited, couldn't be invited. So, why don't they hold their own?

So, they did do this but they also did invite MFS people. So, there were MFS social scientists at this meeting as well.

So, we had developed, our council had developed a five-year human communities research priority plan so that we shared those kinds of things. So, I think they planned to have a full-on report for the CCC meeting in June.

You know they basically talked about their challenges to produce this information for their plans and amendments and, obviously, the lack -- we are always talking about that, the lack of funding. So, they talked about that, too, and they felt that NMFS had a small budget in terms of dedicated funding for even the centers.

So, these are the kinds of discussions that went on.

CHAIR ANSON: Any questions for Kitty? Tom.

MR. NIES: So, I just think this is actually a really good effort. It is kind of what I think led to our idea of having the Habitat Working Group.

I know our social scientists, who we have only had on staff for about two years now, finds it very helpful to have this discussion with the people from the other regions to

exchange information on how they do things. And you know she points out at this meeting in Hawaii that having a face-to-face discussion in Hawaii in December right before Christmas was extremely valuable for posturing further coordination between them.

So, I would hope the councils, and I'm not saying we should have a meeting in Hawaii every year, but I hope the councils will continue to support this effort because we find it very helpful. And I know that it has attracted at least a little bit of attention from the social scientists at NMFS. I think they are starting to participate in it a little bit more. I really think this is a worthwhile way to try and improve it.

I don't know if it is true in other councils, our council has often been criticized in the past for not having really adequate social impact analyses in our documents. I think is a step in the right direction to help us improve it.

CHAIR ANSON: All right, nothing else on that?

So, that takes us to the wrap up and next meeting discussion. As you all are aware, the June meeting is in Key West and Doug has been working on the agenda and some activities. So, if you have any other things to add, well, you talked about it on Monday but go ahead and talk about it again.

MR. GREGORY: We will be touch with everybody to set up the list of webpage on our site for registration for the meeting. The important thing is to get an idea of how many people are coming, particularly from the NMFS group. I assume we will have at least three people from each council there.

And it will be the week of June 22nd in Key West at the Marriott Beachside, which is a very nice facility and it definitely has air conditioning. And I would like to point out that Key West in June is not as hot as most of the other parts of the country in June. Maybe Alaska is the exception or in the Pacific Northwest.

So, we are eager to have everybody down there and try to have a productive meeting. I will put the agenda together, based on the

comments I have gotten this week on topics. So, I will circulate that early for everybody to have comments on and get that done, as well as do what I can to support the various working group efforts.

Clearly, the main one for me is the legislative effort, the National Standard 1 and MSA.

So with that, I hope to keep up the communications with everybody and do almost as good a job as Chris has done, which is a hard act to follow.

Any questions?

CHAIR ANSON: Chris.

MR. OLIVER: Did you circulate information, Doug? I was making notes throughout the last two days about some potential agenda topics for the June meeting. Some, we have talked about before. Some are my own couple of things on my own wish list. Do we need to talk about that now or is that something that we are going to just evolve, as things progress?

MR. GREGORY: No, you can send those to me right away and I will put those in the initial listing to go out to everybody and go from there, if you would like. We have got plenty of time. We are finishing early today. So, either way you want to do it.

MR. OLIVER: I don't feel the need to go through all that right now. I'll do it by email.

(Laughter)

CHAIR ANSON: All right. So, just one other little item. I was asked to bring to your attention that an email was sent out just prior to the meeting starting. A fish local collaborative has sent in some comments related to GARFO strategic plan. And they had specifically requested that they supply the comments to the CCC. So, we should have gotten an email about those comments and that does what I needed it to do.

So, anyone else? Anybody have any -- Chris.

MR. OLIVER: Before you are done, Mr. Chairman, I have something. I don't know how you to refer to yourselves in other regions but in the North Pacific, all the participants in our

process, council members, and AP SSCs staff, the agency staff, the industry, all the people that typically come to council meetings we affectionately refer to as our council family. And we are losing one of our greatest members of our council family to -- well, not losing him entirely, I hope, but he is moving on, as we all know.

And I just wanted to recognize John. I have worked with John for many, many years. He has been, I say it unabashedly, one of my favorite and most effective council members I have ever seen in my 25 years. And he has served for three years on our industry advisory panel and eight years as a council member, much of that here as a vice chairman. And I think a lot of the people in this room or maybe it was our Council Coordination Committee family and John has been a key member of that, too.

So, I just wanted to express my admiration and appreciation for having worked with John. And he got away from us. Because of the circumstances of his job transition, we didn't get a chance a week and a half ago at our last council meeting to really honor him the way we typically do. And so, I thought it would be appropriate at this forum to present him with our plaque of appreciation or have the Chairman present him with the plaque of appreciation. I will let you read it, Dan, and see if you have any more comments.

MR. HULL: In recognition and appreciation of three years of service on the Council's Advisory Panel and eight years of service on the Council and for his overall dedication to the conservation and management of North Pacific Fisheries.

And Chris couldn't have said it better. John has always been a great role model for me, before I even got on the council. So, good luck in your new work, John. And I am sure everybody will appreciate your involvement.

CHAIR ANSON: Very well. Congratulations and good luck to you, John, in your new work.

And once again, just to Bill, happy retirement, Bill, very soon for you. And thank you for your work, for setting this up.

And Brian, same to you, again, thank you. Everything ran very smoothly, so I appreciate it.

And with that, I will adjourn the meeting. Thank you, everyone.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 3:25 p.m.)

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This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

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was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Neal R Gross

Court Reporter