

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

ATLANTIC HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES
ADVISORY PANEL MEETING

Silver Spring, Maryland

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

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

2 (8:50 a.m.)

3 MR. BROOKS: Good morning. This is
4 Bennett Brooks with Consensus Building Institute.
5 Welcome to what hopefully isn't going to be a long
6 -- a long time where we're having to only meet on
7 screens and phones. But I guess we're all
8 adapting to our world for now and we'll -- we'll
9 figure out together how long this is going to
10 last. But there are good technologies to keep us
11 talking, to keep us informed, and so we're going
12 to work our way through this meeting today, you
13 know, talking to each other by phone and computer.
14 But hopefully we'll be able to hear from you all
15 and you'll get good information and we can support
16 the program as it moves forward with your advice
17 and your counsel.

18 I think before I say anything else,
19 Anjanette, I want to throw it back to you just so
20 you can collectively provide a little bit more
21 guidance to folks on how we're going to manage the
22 conversation technologically and most importantly,

1 how they can signal to us that they have a
2 question or comment. So, I'll hand it off to you.

3 MS. RILEY: Good morning everybody. I'm
4 going to tee -- I'm going to take the host file
5 away from you so I can share my screen really
6 fast, and we're hoping for yes. (Laughter).

7 MR. BROOKS: Good deal.

8 MS. RILEY: I'm going to share my screen
9 so we can look at the instructions that you should
10 have received from Pete a bit ago. Bennett, can
11 you confirm you can see my screen?

12 MR. BROOKS: I can. If you'd make a --
13 if you can make it bigger that'd be good. It's
14 pretty small.

15 MS. RILEY: Oh, yes, I'm sorry. I'm on
16 a pretty large screen. Is that better?

17 MR. BROOKS: Much better. Perfect,
18 thanks.

19 MS. RILEY: Awesome. All right, so as
20 some people have noted as we've joined, everybody
21 right now is on mute. When you join, you'll be
22 automatically muted just to help prevent any

1 feedback noise. If you have a question, there's a
2 couple of different ways you can -- a question or
3 a comment that you want to make, there's a couple
4 of different ways that you can do that that we
5 will be monitoring for.

6 The first is to raise your hand. You
7 can scroll down there in the instructions. And
8 there are actually two ways to do that. It
9 depends a little bit on how you joined and the
10 configuration on your computer. So, you can
11 select the more information button that's on the
12 icons that will appear on your screen if you hover
13 your curser over the screen. For some people, if
14 you right-click on that you'll see a little option
15 that says raise hand.

16 And for others, you can open the
17 attendee, look at your specific panel, and find
18 our name. And there's, if you hover over your
19 name over here on the left, you will -- or, excuse
20 me, on the right, a little hand icon will pop up.
21 Just for that, please note that you might have to
22 expand the attendee window. You might even have

1 to click because of how many attendees there are,
2 you might have to expand the attendee window and
3 then click see all attendees in order to find your
4 name.

5 But if that is a -- just a little bit
6 too much hassle, which I totally understand, we
7 will also be monitoring the chat window. So, you
8 can click on the chat icon on the bottom and it
9 will pop up a chat window over here on your right,
10 and you could say in there I have a question. I'd
11 like to make a comment. You know, just over here
12 however you want to say it. We will be monitoring
13 that and depending on, you know, if you either
14 raise your hand or say in the chat that you have a
15 question, we will -- when Bennett calls your name,
16 I will unmute you and then you'll be able to, you
17 know, have your comment and your exchange if you
18 need to. And then I'll go ahead and put you back
19 on mute.

20 So that's the rundown for raising your
21 hand or asking a question. As Bennett said a few
22 times, just go back up to your instructions here

1 you'll see that to unlower your hand after you've
2 raised -- or excuse me, to lower your hand after
3 you've raised it, you just repeat the same process
4 you used to raise it. And we'll just ask that you
5 be vigilant about that so that we can make sure
6 that we're distinguishing between a question you
7 had 20 minutes ago, and a question you have now.

8 Some other technical things. Your right
9 panel, you should be able to see all participants
10 in this right panel, but you might have to click
11 on view all attendees. That will open as a pop-up
12 window. But you should actually be able to see
13 everybody who is here. And I'll just ask please
14 do not use the Q&A function, just the chat
15 function. The reason for that is it's just a
16 functional one to make sure that you're comment
17 doesn't get lost in a couple different -- excuse
18 me, a couple different threads. So, please just
19 go ahead and minimize Q&A and put all of your
20 questions to all panelists in the Q&A -- or in the
21 chat instead of the Q&A.

22 Bennett, I think that was it for the

1 instructions.

2 MR. BROOKS: Okay, yep, I think you hit
3 that right. So, thank you, Anjanette, so much.
4 And thanks for all the help getting us to this
5 point.

6 So, again, good morning. I want to walk
7 through the agenda in a second. But first, just
8 in terms of who's on the phone. I am not going to
9 walk through the list of everybody who's here
10 because that would be mind-numbingly boring. And
11 you're not going to want to hear drone in that way
12 -- drone on that way. But I would encourage
13 everyone to use the participant panel that
14 Anjanette just mentioned to you and then you can
15 scroll through and see which of you -- who of your
16 AP colleagues and HMS staff are on the phone. So,
17 just please wander through that. I will say,
18 however, that we have a really good mix of AP on
19 the lines. We've got commercial and rec
20 fishermen. We've got environmental organizations.
21 We've got academic researchers, state and federal
22 regional partners. So, I think we've got a good

1 cross-section for having the kind of conversations
2 we like to have.

3 I also want to note that we've got four
4 new members on the phone today and I do want to
5 give each of them a chance just to say quick hello
6 and introduce themselves. We have two rec
7 members. The first one -- and, Anjanette, if
8 you'll open them up. Evan Hipsley is a new rec
9 member. And, Evan, perhaps you could say a quick
10 word just so folks know who you are?

11 MR. HIPSLEY: Good morning from
12 Pensacola. I hope everybody's having a great day.
13 Thanks for those behind-the-scenes putting this
14 together. I'm excited to be here. I am from the
15 International Game Fish Tournaments Observers
16 board of directors. Good morning.

17 MR. BROOKS: Good morning. Great,
18 thanks, Evan. Our second new rec member is Bob
19 Humphrey. And, Bob, I'd like you to weigh in once
20 your line gets opened up.

21 MS. RILEY: You should be unmute, Bob.

22 MR. HUMPHREY: Hi. Can you hear now?

1 MR. BROOKS: Perfectly.

2 MS. RILEY: We can hear you.

3 MR. HUMPHREY: Excellent. I'm Bob
4 Humphrey. I'm from the great State of Maine. I
5 am a recreational fisherman, charter fisherman,
6 commercial fisherman, and I run a tuna tournament.
7 And I'm happy to be here.

8 MR. BROOKS: Good to have you in the
9 mix. We also have two new state reps on the
10 phone. The first, Yamitza Rodriguez from Puerto
11 Rico. Yamitza, perhaps you could say a quick
12 word?

13 MS. RILEY: Just a sec. It's scrolling
14 down.

15 MR. BROOKS: Yeah.

16 MS. RILEY: All right, you should be
17 unmuted now, Yamitza.

18 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Okay, good morning. Can
19 you hear me?

20 MR. BROOKS: Very nicely, yeah, thanks.

21 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Hello. I'm the Yamitza
22 from the Puerto Rico Department Natural Resources.

1 MR. BROOKS: Great, welcome. And then
2 our last new rep, our state consult, we've got
3 Greg Hinks with New Jersey DEP. Greg, are you
4 there?

5 MS. RILEY: You should be on unmute,
6 Greg.

7 MR. HICKS: Can you hear? Can you hear
8 me now?

9 MR. BROOKS: Yes. We can, yes.

10 MR. HICKS: Hi. Good morning, my name
11 is Greg Hinks with the New Jersey Bureau of Marine
12 Fisheries. I'm a fisheries biologist with the
13 division and just getting my (inaudible).

14 MR. BROOKS: Great. Good, well, again,
15 welcome and for the new members, normally we're
16 sitting in a grand ballroom in a giant square and,
17 you know, we get lots of chances to talk to each
18 other. So, apologies. You don't get that
19 introduction this time around. Hopefully, in the
20 fall we'll be able to get back together.

21 We also have one alternate, Amy Dukes is
22 sitting in for Wally Jenkins today. So, Amy,

1 welcome.

2 All right, so just to give us a sense of
3 our agenda today, obviously, the HMS folks have
4 had to, you know, do a good deal of adjusting on
5 the fly. And what would have been I think a
6 three-day meeting or two and a half-day meeting is
7 really a one-day meeting. And so, there's, you
8 know, some compressing and choices as to what to
9 cover. But we think we have a good and important
10 agenda that will focus in on the most timely
11 topics. And we'll sort of as much as we can,
12 mimic our usually AP meeting with presentations
13 and opportunity for questions and comments. And
14 we'll start as always with kind of overview of
15 recent activities from Randy Blankinship who will
16 walk us through that.

17 We'll then, because it is timely and
18 probably top of mind for everybody, get an
19 economic situation report on fisheries in our sort
20 of current COVID world. And we'll hear from
21 George Silva and Cliff Huff on that. We'll then
22 hear from Delisse and Nick and Rick on shark and

1 swordfish retention limits.

2 We will be putting in breaks throughout
3 the day so we don't all just go stir crazy staying
4 in a Webinar. We need those breaks to stay
5 focused. So, we'll do that. After the break,
6 we'll hear from John Graves who will give us an
7 update on the outcomes from the 2019 ICCAT annual
8 meeting. And then, again, mimicking our usual
9 meetings, we will hear from leadership and we'll
10 have either Chris Oliver or Sam Rauch with us.

11 Just before lunch -- from 12:00 to 1:00
12 we will take a lunch break so if there's other
13 work you need to do, email, phone calls, strongly
14 encourage you to focus it there so we can have
15 your attention for our portion of your day.

16 After lunch, we'll hand it off to Brad
17 who will give us a bluefin tuna update, give us a
18 sense of where Amendment 13 is at, a bit of a look
19 back at 2019, and then a closer look at 2020 and
20 see where that's at. And then touch on requests
21 for changes to catch and release regulations. Our
22 last topic will be a law enforcement update. So,

1 we'll hear from OLE and Coast Guard. And then we
2 will have public comments, as always, at the end.
3 That will be from -- for any member of the public
4 who's on that will be from 2:15 to 2:45.

5 In terms of ground rules, they are sort
6 of our usual ground rules which still apply, which
7 is, you know, the contribute, we love to hear from
8 you because your perspectives are important and
9 even if it's a little harder, we're not in person,
10 we still want to hear it. We will be pressed for
11 time the whole day so the keeping your comments
12 short is important. We don't have the advantage
13 of a visual where I can look at you and sort of
14 easily signal to you to limit your comments. So,
15 if I need to I will jump in and just ask folks to
16 fold-in so please think me rude, I just want to
17 make sure everyone has a chance to get in. But it
18 would be best if folks could sort of self-edit and
19 help us do that together.

20 A reminder particularly for members of
21 the public or any new members, this is not a
22 consensus-seeking body. We are here to share

1 ideas. We are here so that HMS staff gets the
2 benefit of your thinking and can use that to do
3 their work well-informed and smartly. So, but
4 hearing your voices, hearing where there is
5 overlap is always important for the HMS folks to
6 get a sense of how to move forward.

7 Those of us who are on the phone as
8 panelists so that's HMS staff who are talking,
9 myself, Anjanette, et cetera, you're able to
10 weigh-in as needed whenever. For the advisory
11 members and members of the public, again, as
12 Anjanette said, when you want to get into the
13 conversation, we ask you to kind of raise your
14 virtual hand or throw a comment in the chat. You
15 will be muted the whole time entirely because that
16 just helps us eliminate background noise. I'm
17 sure you've all be on these calls where someone's
18 been having a side conversation in the back and
19 just kind of destroys the whole meeting. So, we
20 don't want that to happen.

21 But when you raise your hand or you
22 throw something in the chat, I will call you in

1 and then Anjanette will unmute you so you can
2 fold-in. I want to encourage you too to also use
3 the chat. If someone said something and you're
4 like, wow, that just said exactly what I want, and
5 you want the Agency staff to be able to know that,
6 throw it in the chat. Say, you know, totally
7 agree with what Scott just said or, you know, boy,
8 Yamitza really nailed that last point or, you
9 know, just it's a good way to signal what you're
10 thinking without having to jump in the cue itself
11 as well.

12 I will attempt to run the cue the way I
13 do with a regular meeting, which is, you know,
14 kind of take the hands in the order of which they
15 come. But as always, also try to -- if we need a
16 little bit of dialogue back and forth, allow for
17 that as well.

18 Last things I want to say are one, if
19 you have technical issues during the call, please
20 either chat or email Anjanette and she will her
21 best to resolve whatever that is quickly or get
22 someone else who can. And the last thing is just

1 stay comfortable during this call. You know, it
2 is hard to be on a call for six hours even with
3 breaks. And I just want to acknowledge that and
4 just invite you to, you know, stand up, move
5 around, have snacks or water at the ready so you
6 can keep yourself focused and fed. But I would
7 ask you really hard to not multi-task. We need
8 your focus. We don't have the visuals, which I
9 usually use like having people on camera, but we
10 don't have the advantage of that today. So, just
11 please help yourself stay on focus.

12 So, I think that's all I want to say.
13 Randy or Pete, anything I left on agenda or ground
14 rules? Or, Anjanette, anything I left out on the
15 tech (inaudible)?

16 MR. BLANKINSHIP: So, this is Randy
17 Blankinship and thanks, Bennett. I'll just relate
18 it to the agenda mention for folks' awareness,
19 there is a slight change from the first draft
20 version of the agenda that we had sent out to what
21 we're going to be following today. And that is
22 that you will notice that Amendment 12 is not

1 today's agenda. And that is a function of despite
2 Herculean efforts to get that ready to be
3 discussed at this meeting, we didn't quite get
4 there. But we will be touching base with the
5 Advisory Panel later, most likely in the fall,
6 about that. But even though we didn't get it
7 quite ready for this meeting, it should be up and
8 available soon. So, I encourage you to keep an
9 eye out for that, but we won't be talking about it
10 today. So, I just wanted to point out that that
11 is an adjustment from the first version that you
12 saw.

13 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Randy, for that
14 clarification. I'm not seeing any comments or
15 questions in the chat from any AP members on
16 anything that we're up to today. So, I think we
17 can probably jump ahead. And, again, for any
18 members of the public who are on the phone, just
19 to -- or on the call, again, just a reminder the
20 conversation is focused around the table, around
21 the virtual table with our AP members and for any
22 member of the public that wants to weigh-in with a

1 comment, we have a half-hour set aside at 2:15 for
2 that.

3 So, with that I think, Randy, I want to
4 hand it back to you to give us the overview of
5 recent activities and rulemakings.

6 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Okay, sounds good.
7 And I'm going to work here to share my screen.
8 And can you all see my screen and the presentation
9 now?

10 MR. BROOKS: We do, thank you.

11 MR. BLANKINSHIP: And I need to figure
12 out how to get rid of the --

13 MR. BROOKS: Participant box?

14 MR. BLANKINSHIP: I think I got it
15 minimized to the point that it will work.

16 MR. BROOKS: Okay.

17 MR. BLANKINSHIP: All right. Good
18 morning, everybody. My name is Randy Blankinship.
19 I am the division chief for the Atlantic Highly
20 Migratory Species Management Division. I want to
21 also add to what Bennett was saying and to
22 Anjanette through all of this orientation thus

1 far, that I welcome you all to our virtual
2 advisory panel meeting. You know, this venue is
3 new for us. I'll add to what has already been
4 said and ask for your patience as we work through
5 the technology and the process and all of that.

6 I do want to specifically thank each and
7 every one of you as advisory panel members for
8 taking the time to be with us today. The key part
9 of HMS management is touching base with our
10 advisory panel and hearing input that you all may
11 have that you want to share with us about HMS
12 management. This is a critical role and part of
13 our process within HMS.

14 I want to specifically give a thanks up
15 front to Pete Cooper and to Anjanette Riley for
16 putting together the Webex and for working through
17 several tests of this technology to make it work
18 as smoothly as it possibly can. I also want to
19 thank Bennett for once again leading us through
20 the agenda. Ahead of time, and we'll probably do
21 this later again, but right now I want to thank
22 our NMFS leadership, Chris Oliver, the assistant

1 administrator for NOAA Fisheries, and Sam Rauch,
2 deputy assistant administrator for regulatory
3 programs for being with us particularly when they
4 will be speaking, both of them will be available
5 at 11:30. And I think Chris will be having some
6 comments, but both of them would be available and
7 both may speak.

8 And I want to also give a big thanks to
9 some of our other speakers today. Particularly,
10 John Graves, the ICCAT Advisory Committee chair
11 who will be presenting later. Also, some of our
12 colleagues in NFMS Office of Law Enforcement, Wynn
13 Carney and Katie Moore with U.S. Coast Guard. And
14 then, of course, the HMS Management Division staff
15 that will be presenting as well.

16 So, this virtual format, obviously, is
17 not our preference. We prefer being together and
18 having all the advantages of face-to-face
19 communication and what that has to offer. But, of
20 course, these are different times and we can be
21 thankful for the technology that allows us to be
22 able to meet remotely. And so with that, I'll get

1 into the overview presentation that we usually
2 have for our AP meetings. And I for some reason,
3 I cannot advance the -- there it goes. It was not
4 advancing for me.

5 So, in this presentation, I will be
6 providing a brief update on some of our recent
7 actions. These are things that are not agenda
8 items. So, on the left-hand side of this slide
9 you'll see some of the things that we'll be
10 talking about that include recent in-season
11 actions, pelagic longline, bluefin tuna area-based
12 and weak hook management measures final rule,
13 Amendment 5b litigation, both update on some of
14 the happenings related to the topic of sharks,
15 also an update on the biological opinions that
16 have been issued recently under the Endangered
17 Species Act, and touch base on observer waivers,
18 and then there will be some other information as
19 well. But I won't be touching on the other things
20 that are already agenda items that are listed on
21 the right.

22 So, we've been pretty busy since we last

1 met in the fall of 2019 at our advisory panel
2 meeting back in September. Since that time, we
3 published a proposed rule that's the Swordfish and
4 Shark Retention Limits Rule that we'll be talking
5 about. That's a different agenda item. We also
6 had the final rule published for pelagic longline
7 bluefin tuna area-based and weak hook management
8 measures and the 2020 shark season rule.

9 There's been several in-season actions
10 that include -- and these are listed here both in
11 what happened in late 2019, but also so far this
12 year in 2020. So, related to retention limit
13 adjustments, there's the adjustment of the bluefin
14 tuna recreational retention limit, swordfish
15 general commercial retention limit, and the
16 Atlantic aggregate for large coastal sharks and
17 hammerhead sharks retention limits back in 2019.

18 We've had some fishery closures in
19 bluefin tuna. That's the recreational trophy
20 class of bluefin tuna. The Southern Area and Gulf
21 of Mexico areas are closed. And then also in the
22 general category, looking back in 2019, of course,

1 so there was a September season, the October
2 through November season, and then in 2020, January
3 through March season that have closed.

4 And so, I'll take a moment to apologize
5 for background noise in my house where I'm working
6 remotely. I am working on my back porch. It's
7 the only place that I have away from my family to
8 be able to do this. But that means I've got some
9 cicadas calling in the background and an
10 occasional bird calling as well.

11 MR. BROOKS: And we're getting no
12 background. Don't worry, Randy.

13 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Okay, that's great.
14 Just wait a moment, it'll happen.

15 So, also we have quota transfers that
16 have been -- that have occurred. Bluefin tuna
17 transfer of reserve to general earlier this year
18 and of Gulf of Mexico sharks in 2019. There's
19 also quota adjustments. The annual quota
20 adjustment that is done adjusting for underharvest
21 of previous year, in this case 2018 underharvest
22 for northern albacore, bluefin, and swordfish.

1 And then also the 2020 annual purse seine
2 reallocation of bluefin to the reserve category.

3 And then also related to operations
4 since the fall 2019 advisory panel meeting, we've
5 had several different things that we've done.
6 We've issued 14 exempted fishing permits,
7 scientific research permits, and letters of
8 acknowledgement. Also, we've had issued shark
9 research fishery permits, five of them. We've
10 registered 127 tournaments. Also, conducted 20
11 shark identification and protected species
12 workshops. In 2020, we've had eight of those that
13 were held and we've rescheduled eight of them
14 given the difficulties of meeting together with
15 the different restrictions, you know, in different
16 localities and difficulties of travel that have
17 been happening over the last few months.

18 We've also -- we're up to Atlantic HMS
19 News subscribers at just over 5,700. And in
20 recreational shark endorsements that's a little
21 over half of our HMS angling permits have those
22 endorsements and for charter/headboat commercial

1 sale endorsements, just under half of
2 charter/headboat permits have those endorsements.

3 So, touching base on the final rule that
4 recently came out. This is related to pelagic
5 longline bluefin tuna area-based and weak hook
6 management measures. This final rule published on
7 April 2nd and was effective on that same date on
8 publication. This converted two gear restricted
9 areas into monitoring areas. That's in the
10 northeast United States closed area in June off of
11 New Jersey and also the Gulf of Mexico spring area
12 in April and May.

13 This Final Rule also removed the Cape
14 Hatteras gear restricted area and adjusted the
15 year round weak hook requirement to a seasonal
16 requirement from January to June in the Gulf of
17 Mexico in the pelagic longline fishery in order to
18 mitigate the bycatch of white marlin roundscale
19 spearfish.

20 Also, we have been -- we have
21 implemented this and have been conducting
22 monitoring for it through the daily evaluation of

1 several different data sources that include the
2 VMS data, the IBQ system, and at times, electronic
3 monitoring. Thus far, in those areas in the Gulf
4 of Mexico, which has been the area that's been in
5 effect in May and -- April and May, the only
6 pelagic longline vessels that have entered that
7 area, at least permitted for pelagic longline,
8 were participating in the Deep Water Horizon
9 Oceanic Fish Restoration Program, the participants
10 in that. And were fishing with alternative gear,
11 greenstick and buoy gear, as they were in those
12 areas. So, thus far, there have been no pelagic
13 longline vessels fishing actually with pelagic
14 longline gear in there, and there have been no
15 interactions with bluefin from sets in that area
16 since that has not been occurring.

17 So, this map shows the areas that I'm
18 talking about. They're colored yellow. So, you
19 have the area off of New Jersey up in the
20 northeast. And then you have the Gulf of Mexico
21 areas, the two boxes in yellow there. Gives you
22 some perspective on how those areas relate to the

1 existing pelagic longline closures and restricted
2 areas.

3 After the Final Rule was published, a
4 lawsuit was filed by EarthJustice on behalf of
5 Healthy Gulf and Turtle Island Network. And that
6 was filed on April 29th.

7 So, continuing on to talk about ongoing
8 litigation and just give a slight update here.
9 This is to Amendment 5b related to dusky sharks
10 and the challenge to Amendment 5b continues. In
11 response to the court's order, the United States
12 filed a remand document that we actually had
13 mentioned back in the fall that provided
14 additional explanation for the actions in
15 Amendment 5b. The plaintiffs challenged that
16 again and included an expert declaration with
17 their motion and then in turn, the United States
18 motion for summary judgment is the next step. And
19 that's due on May 29.

20 So, continuing with the subject of
21 sharks, this is an update on several different
22 things that have been occurring. And one of those

1 is related to continued discussions about shark
2 depredation in fisheries. There was a request for
3 presentations and discussion from two different
4 fishery management councils, the Gulf Council and
5 South Atlantic Council. And so, we were present
6 for the January and March meetings, respectively,
7 of those councils to talk about shark depredation
8 and hear and engage in that discussion. So, that
9 followed on an agenda item that we had at the past
10 HMS AP meeting talking about shark depredation as
11 well. So, it was a very similar discussion to
12 some of what you all -- some of you, except for
13 the new members, have heard in the past
14 discussions at AP meetings.

15 And so we are continuing to work on ways
16 to look at collecting data to help quantify and
17 better understand and mitigate shark depredation
18 issues. And we -- this is certainly something
19 that is considered to be an important area of
20 potential research from a management perspective.

21 Also happening are fin -- are bans on
22 the sale of shark fins. Several bills have been

1 in front of Congress. Also, on the state front,
2 Florida considered a ban earlier this year and New
3 Jersey had a ban that became effective on January
4 -- or becomes effective January 2021. Also, I'll
5 point out that we in the Agency have been also
6 doing some work to share information out. One of
7 those opportunities is in a message from Chris
8 Oliver that was released back in January and a
9 link is provided here that provides more
10 information related to shark fin sale bans.

11 There's also some activities happening
12 related to assessments for some sharks. The
13 Atlantic blacktip assessment is underway expected
14 to be completed later this year. And the
15 hammerhead research track is starting in 2021.

16 Shifting gears to update on recent
17 biological opinions under the Endangered Species
18 Act. There was some litigation here that we
19 reported back in the fall meeting. It was August
20 1st, there was a suit filed for failure to
21 complete consultation under the Endangered Species
22 Act on oceanic whitetip shark and giant manta ray.

1 And then a -- there was an agreement between the
2 Agency and plaintiffs in November to stay the
3 litigation pending the completion of the two
4 consultations that were happening by dates
5 certain.

6 And so since then, we've had the
7 issuance of two biological opinions, referred to
8 as BiOps. There is the non-pelagic longline BiOp,
9 which covers all HMS fisheries except for pelagic
10 longline. That was released on January 10th. And
11 then the pelagic longline biological opinion that
12 was signed on May 15th. For both of these, there
13 was no jeopardy finding for listed species. And
14 in both of them there are new incidental take
15 statements and reasonable and prudent measures and
16 terms and conditions that were presented. And so
17 we are in the process now of implementing the
18 reasonable and prudent measures and terms and
19 conditions that are primarily related to observer
20 coverage, safe handling procedures, and education
21 and outreach.

22 So, I wanted to touch a little bit on

1 some of the interesting times and the observer
2 waivers that have been issued by HMS fisheries and
3 also a little bit more broadly than that in the
4 blanket waivers. So, with the difficulties that
5 have occurred over the last few months,
6 particularly in late March going into April and
7 into May, difficulties with travel due to local
8 restrictions or state restrictions in access to
9 some areas. The Pelagic Observer Program, which
10 is operated out of Southeast Fisheries Science
11 Center and other observer programs, including the
12 program for shark fisheries, we're experiencing
13 some difficulty actually getting observers to
14 vessels. And, you know, even if they could get
15 observers to vessels, they have difficulty
16 getting, you know, with the chance that those
17 observers might not be able to reenter their home
18 state and get back home without having to self-
19 quarantine.

20 And so, as a result of that, which also
21 was an issue in other regions, the Agency had gone
22 through a process of, in different regions,

1 issuing blanket waivers. And so that was done for
2 Atlantic HMS fisheries and southeast fisheries
3 where the Southeast Fishery Science Center issued
4 two-week blanket waivers. And that was extended
5 once. And so those blanket waivers covered the
6 dates from April 6 to May 4th. So, those blanket
7 waivers are no longer being issued.

8 And the -- under the HMS regulations, we
9 have in there the ability for the observer program
10 to be able to consider and look at issuing waivers
11 on a case-by-case basis when they are not able to
12 get an observer to a vessel. And so, that
13 opportunity for waivers still exists if it's
14 needed in order to deal with certain situations.
15 But we know things are changing once again as some
16 areas are opening up and the restrictions to
17 access to some of those areas are not what they
18 used to be.

19 Observers are really very important and
20 critical to monitoring. And as commercial
21 fisheries have been determined to be certainly an
22 essential activity for food supply, it is the case

1 that observers are also an essential part of the
2 fishing activity in monitoring it and ensuring
3 that information is properly collected and that
4 the fishery is properly monitored.

5 So, moving on. This is a slide that
6 we've provided in the past. It provides links to
7 some of our updates on landings and tournament
8 information, as well as one of the new features
9 where we have listed minimum size -- minimum sizes
10 and bag limits at a different link as well. So, I
11 encourage you to take a look at this information.
12 It's handy where you can keep track of what's
13 happening as we update these landings updates.

14 So, there's a -- I talked quite a bit
15 about happening within HMS. And there's a lot
16 that's happening outside of the HMS Management
17 Division. And, of course, as I alluded to when I
18 was talking about observer waivers, we've
19 certainly recognized that things are very
20 different for, you know, in different parts of the
21 country and for you all, as well, that economic
22 conditions have changed a lot that affect some of

1 our fisheries, both on the commercial side and
2 charter vessels and headboats. And then also in
3 different ways, affects other recreational
4 fisheries as well.

5 And we've got one of the upcoming agenda
6 items we'll talk a little bit more about that.
7 But I wanted to highlight some of the other
8 activities that are happening outside of HMS that
9 are good to be aware of. One of those is the
10 pelagic longline take reduction plan and changes
11 that are coming and have been on the horizon for
12 quite some time with that plan. That the proposed
13 rule for that is -- continues to be in development
14 and is expected to be released soon.

15 Also, in the Gulf of Mexico, there is a
16 process underway for continuing to consider
17 expansion of the Flower Gardens Banks National
18 Marine Sanctuary. There was a draft environmental
19 impact statement that was published in 2016, and a
20 proposed rule for that expansion published on May
21 1st of this year. And the comment period for that
22 ends on July 3rd. And so, this would extend this

1 -- the Flower Gardens Banks National Marine
2 Sanctuary to several different small, discreet new
3 areas and extend the rules related to allowable
4 fishing activity and what's not allowed to those
5 new areas as well. And so that actually has some
6 affects related to pelagic longline and also to
7 spearfishing.

8 Also happening outside of HMS are with
9 the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council as
10 it continues consideration of Coral Amendment 9.
11 That final rule is in development. And then also
12 there is the consideration of expansion of the
13 Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary that has
14 been underway for a while. That draft
15 environmental impact statement and restoration
16 blueprint was released in 2019, and the comment
17 period ends in January. I'm sorry, so it ended in
18 -- it ended in January. And so, there's a link
19 there for more information.

20 And then also related to wind energy,
21 this is certainly a hot topic in a lot of
22 different areas where there's, you know, certainly

1 up in the northeast area, southeast area, and a
2 lot of work has been going on to work with that
3 process. HMS Management Division continues to
4 coordinate with the different regional fisheries
5 management offices and the science centers and
6 councils to assess and evaluate potential
7 fishery-related impacts of those projects.

8 So, one other thing that's happening and
9 has been ongoing is the continued work to develop
10 electronic logbook reporting and particularly in
11 the charter/headboat fisheries. Recently, for the
12 South Atlantic Council there was a final rule
13 published in February that implements mandatory
14 for-hire electronic logbook reporting. And that
15 will begin September 1st in dolphin/wahoo, the
16 coastal pelagics, and snapper/grouper fisheries.

17 Also, kind of working along a similar
18 type of a timeline in the Gulf of Mexico is work
19 towards the final rules that are anticipated soon
20 that would implement the logbook reporting
21 electronically and the VMS type-approval rule as
22 well. The intent is to implement that reporting

1 September 1st of this year and the VMS
2 requirements in 2021. That would affect Gulf of
3 Mexico charter/headboat pelagic fisheries and reef
4 fish permits as well.

5 So, the HMS Management Division has been
6 working through that process and with ACCSP and
7 then also with Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries
8 Office to incorporate the HMS catch reporting
9 aspects into this, you know, these initiatives
10 that are happening on a regional basis. And our
11 goal there is to avoid a need for duplicate
12 reporting and facilitate the reports getting
13 collected through an efficient process through
14 these new venues as well.

15 So, looking ahead on the horizon, we
16 have some dates that are coming up that include
17 Swordfish and Shark Retention Limits Proposed Rule
18 that we mentioned already. And that comment
19 period will end on June 26. We also have some
20 other things on the horizon including Draft
21 Amendment 12 that I mentioned earlier that should
22 be out soon. Draft Amendment 13 and its proposed

1 rule is expected summer of this year. Also, Draft
2 Amendment 14 is expected this summer. The spatial
3 management initiative in looking at ways to
4 collect data and conduct research in support of
5 spatial management is something that was scoped
6 last year and that we are -- continue to work on a
7 proposed rule there. That is expected in early
8 2021. And then the 2021 Shark Specifications
9 Proposed Rule is expected summer of 2020.

10 So, as usual, we have the goal of
11 communication with our meeting with you virtually
12 as well as we would if it was face-to-face and
13 that is we work towards no surprises. We try to
14 keep you all informed and we hope that you all
15 will keep us informed about things that are going
16 on in your respective areas that you represent.
17 The goal is that you as advisors for the Agency
18 are aware and informed and engaged and likewise
19 that we would be aware and informed and engaged of
20 different issues.

21 And through all of this, we know that
22 there are a wide range of different perspectives

1 and opinions about management of HMS fisheries.
2 And we ask that all of us be respectful of one
3 another's opinions and positions as we engage in
4 the discussions that we will have. As Advisory
5 Panel members, you all have a role and that is to
6 please listen and engage in discussions and then
7 also serve as a conduit to and from the
8 constituents that you represent sharing the
9 information back to them, but then also sharing
10 information from those constituents to us. We ask
11 that you bring ideas to us and certainly your role
12 on the Advisory Panel is to advise us.

13 On the Agency side, we will work to
14 ensure compliance with all of our federal
15 requirements. Also, we will be cognizant to raise
16 issues and inform you all of things that are going
17 on, and we will listen and engage in the
18 discussions with you. And take the input that you
19 all have to help us make better decisions to help
20 inform those decisions.

21 So, as you have realized, I think, all
22 of us in HMS Management Division are working

1 through mandatory telework and we are working
2 remotely. Our offices in the regions and at
3 headquarters are closed. But yet you can still
4 contact us. That's usually done most effectively
5 through email if you want to reach out to some of
6 us on staff individually, but also you can call
7 the headquarters phone line. The number's listed
8 here. The regional offices where some of us are
9 co-located, also those phones are working. And we
10 monitor the voicemails and can call you back.

11 So, we're looking forward to covering a
12 lot of ground, even with this truncated agenda. I
13 want to also mention the reality that continued
14 work on our operational activities and rulemaking
15 requires substantial amount of Agency resources
16 and we are a relatively small shop. But we do a
17 lot of work and we'll continue to do that. But
18 there is a limit to the amount of resources that
19 we have. And we are looking forward to getting
20 your input and we want to hear what your opinions
21 and input are particularly on your priorities and
22 potential solutions to the issues that we will be

1 discussing.

2 So, with that I want to thank you and we
3 can open up for some discussion.

4 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks so much,
5 Randy. We are inevitably always tight on time,
6 but I see a couple of hands here. Stephen Iwicki,
7 he's got a question or a comment here? And then
8 to Rick Bellavance.

9 MR. IWICKI: Yeah, can you hear me okay?

10 MR. BROOKS: Yeah, perfectly, thanks.

11 MR. IWICKI: Okay, so, Randy, I was
12 going to bring this up later, but I just want to
13 throw it out there. I've been working with GARFO
14 about this recreational tilefish reporting
15 requirement and they want to use basically EDTR
16 for rec guys to do this. I saw in your southeast
17 for-hire reporting you kind of brought that up.
18 The NOAA fish app, catch reporting app, is by far
19 the best thing out there for rec guys. I'm just
20 wondering are you guys talking with GARFO at all
21 about tying all these reporting things together
22 including the recreational tilefish reporting that

1 they want to start?

2 MR. BLANKINSHIP: So, yes, we have been
3 in discussions with GARFO for -- yeah, through all
4 -- well, actually, for quite some time. And they
5 have been aware of the tilefish reporting aspects
6 and so, yeah, we've been working with that process
7 on an ongoing basis in order to make sure that the
8 HMS requirements are incorporated.

9 MR. IWICKI: Okay, I appreciate it
10 because I'll tell you, they are so far off the
11 deep end on this recreational reporting for
12 tilefish. There's no way they're going to get any
13 feedback from the rec community the road they're
14 going down now. So, I strongly recommend that
15 they get with you guys, throw out your name and
16 Brad's name from the fish app discussion we had at
17 the last panel meeting. So, hopefully, that's
18 helping. I'm helping them in the background as
19 well. I'll keep you guys informed. Thanks.

20 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Okay, thank you for
21 that.

22 MR. BROOKS: Rick Bellavance.

1 MR. BELAVANCE: Hi, good morning. Can
2 you hear me okay?

3 MR. BROOKS: Yep. You're good, Rick.

4 MR. BELAVANCE: Thanks. My question or
5 my comments are also regarding the South Atlantic
6 and the eVTR reporting slide that you had
7 mentioned, Randy. So, I've been an advocate for
8 this type of reporting, electronic reporting, for
9 a while as you guys all know. And I'm starting to
10 get a little worried about the different regions
11 and how they're going about establishing protocols
12 for reporting. And I think, in particular, with
13 the southeast region, they're looking to gather a
14 lot of more socio and economic data from their
15 fishermen that the New England and the
16 Mid-Atlantic regions and HMS don't necessarily
17 collect.

18 And so, as I understand it, if you are
19 using a tool that doesn't collect the information
20 that the South Atlantic region is looking for and
21 you hold a South Atlantic -- sorry, South Atlantic
22 species permit like a dolphin/wahoo permit, you're

1 not going to be able to use that app. You're
2 going to have to go get another app to report
3 instead. And so, I'm just raising a flag here
4 that I think that if you're going to have a
5 one-stop type shopping, which we've all been
6 advocating for where one tool will work to report
7 for all your permits, then all of the data fields
8 need to be the same.

9 And having different regions want to
10 collect different things and certain things trump
11 others is going to complicate things a lot more
12 than it needs to be. I'm not sure if HMS is aware
13 that the GARFO app is not going to be acceptable
14 for South Atlantic permit holders. So, if you
15 have that app and you have a South Atlantic permit
16 and an HMS permit, you're not going to be able to
17 use it. You have to go find another app, the
18 eTRIPS app or something. And I think that there
19 needs to be a more top-down approach to getting
20 the different regions to look at collecting the
21 same data across all of the regions for limiting
22 the complications and the different need to have

1 two different apps or three different apps on your
2 phone. We're just going to be in the same spot we
3 were with other reporting, just now we're doing it
4 on our phone instead. So, just raising that flag
5 and maybe if I get a chance to -- when the
6 leadership remarks come up, I'll just add to that,
7 but I just wanted to bring it up now. Thanks.

8 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Rick. I'm going to
9 bring in one more person now just because I need
10 to keep us vaguely on schedule and I'm hoping
11 maybe if shark and sword if we just -- if we have
12 a little time before the break, I want to come
13 back and get in some folks. But I want to bring
14 in someone from a different AP constituency.
15 Shana, do you want to jump in here, Shana Miller?

16 MS. MILLER: Yes, can you hear me?

17 MR. BROOKS: Yes, I can.

18 MS. MILLER: Great, thanks, Bennett.

19 And good morning, everyone. Thanks for the
20 presentation and just wanted to make a comment,
21 you know, the reopening of the Gulf gear
22 restricted areas as part of the spacial management

1 and weak hook rule. So, we're definitely really
2 disappointed about that.

3 You know, not only does this move
4 reverse the effectiveness of that gear restricted
5 area, you know, both in reducing the mortality of
6 spawning bluefin, but also, you know, dramatically
7 reducing the discards. You know, and also
8 (inaudible) of the bycatch, and -- can you hear
9 me? I'm getting some feedback here.

10 MR. BROOKS: Yes, I can hear you.

11 MS. MILLER: Okay. It also is, you
12 know, counter to the (inaudible) addition on
13 (inaudible) in the Gulf of Mexico, and, you know,
14 there's a dubious scientific basis for the
15 evaluation component of this especially since the
16 gear restricted areas have only been in place for,
17 you know, four or five years, depending how you
18 count it. And so, there's no reason to think that
19 anything has changed that needs to be evaluated.

20 And, you know, all this concerns all the
21 while the prediction is one projection that
22 revenue will decrease by reopening those areas.

1 And, you know, who knows how all this will also
2 impact the targeted bluefin fisheries along the
3 eastern seaboard. You know, and I think your
4 point in your presentation is there hasn't been a
5 single longline set in gear restricted areas in
6 the, you know, month and a half that they've been
7 reopened. You know, also gives support to the
8 fact that we can really be uncertain where this
9 proposal was coming from and who was pushing for
10 it.

11 And so, just we need to really urge you
12 all to watch this really carefully going forward.
13 Of course, this year I'm sure the effort is
14 affected by COVID-19 to some extent, but, you
15 know, this is a big concern for us and I know that
16 you will be tracking it closely and so, you know,
17 I look forward to hearing those results. Thanks.

18 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Thank you, Shana.

19 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. I want to --
20 sorry, did you want to say something, Randy?

21 MR. BLANKINSHIP: No, that was it.

22 MR. BROOKS: Okay. I want to note we've

1 got a few people in the cue still. I've got Mike
2 Pierdinock, Sonja, Scott Taylor. What I want to
3 do is jump to the fisheries economic situation
4 report and then the swordfish. And my hope is
5 that we'll have a little time before the break and
6 for the three of you that are in the cue, I will
7 go to hopefully right before we get to the break.
8 But we're almost 15 minutes, 20 minutes behind.
9 And I want to not fall too far off here.

10 So, with your indulgence, Mike, Sonja,
11 Scott, I will toss it to you just as soon as I
12 can. And I want to note that in the cue Jackie
13 Wilson noted that the Agency is working towards
14 one-stop reporting. So, with that, I think we
15 want to hand it off to George Silva and Cliff Hutt
16 to talk about the 2020 Fisheries Economic
17 Situation Report.

18 MR. SILVA: Thanks, Bennett. Let me
19 just share my screen. Good morning. I'm George
20 Silva, the economist for the HMS Division. I'll
21 be providing a brief overview of the 2020 economic
22 situation with my colleague Cliff Hutt.

1 This presentation will be limited to
2 just providing a description of the economic
3 conditions with the goal of showing you how the
4 HMS Division is tracking this developing situation
5 and sharing with you some high quality baseline
6 information we've gathered to date. There are
7 many caveats that should be noted regarding this
8 preliminary assessment. Many of the data sources
9 are preliminary leading indicators that are likely
10 to be subject to revision. And we really won't be
11 getting into the policy implications associated
12 with much of the output.

13 Let's start by looking at the big
14 picture macroeconomic conditions that have
15 emerged. Let's start by doing that by looking at
16 restaurant sales. Why restaurant sales?
17 Restaurant activity provides us with the
18 proverbial canary in the coal mine for economic
19 shifts that have occurred in 2020.

20 For example, this chart here provides
21 the percent change in seated diners on the Open
22 Table Network from comparing the same date in 2019

1 versus 2020. As you can see, starting on March
2 10, there's a dramatic decline in the number of
3 seated diners at restaurants throughout the
4 OpenTable network across all channels in the
5 United States. And this almost goes into a
6 basically 100 percent decline by the time you get
7 to March 20th.

8 In addition, retail sales by food
9 service and drinking places declined by 27 percent
10 in March and 49 percent, versus a year ago in
11 April. Restaurant sales were down 78 percent on
12 average in the first week of April, April 1st
13 through 10th based on the National Restaurant
14 Association survey. And why is this important to
15 us? Well, 68 percent of all consumer expenditures
16 for fishery products were made at food service
17 establishments in 2017.

18 Moving on from the restaurant industry,
19 we're taking a look at travel and tourism. HMS
20 recreational activities closely tie with tourism
21 and travel. This first chart I will talk to you
22 about is TSA checkpoint travel numbers for 2020

1 and 2019. The green line represents 2019 travel
2 numbers and as you can see, the 2020 total
3 travelers that went through TSA checkpoints also
4 follows a similar pattern to the restaurant data.
5 It declined a little bit earlier in March ahead of
6 the decline in restaurant sales. But as you can
7 see, those declines continued throughout the rest
8 of March and throughout the month of April and
9 really is still continuing to this date.

10 This is one of the most timely leading
11 indicators for travel. And in addition to travel,
12 another kind of indicator is hotel occupancy,
13 which was down 39 percent in March versus the
14 previous month in 2020 -- actually, it was -- the
15 occupancy was at 39.4 percent, which is a 42
16 percent decline versus the previous month. And
17 for the week ending April 25th, hotel occupancy
18 was at 26 percent. I think one of the lowest
19 numbers recorded and that's down 62 percent versus
20 the same week in 2019.

21 So, dramatic shifts overall in both
22 retail consumption and in the tourism industry.

1 Then I jump to employment and consumer
2 confidence. As you've probably seen many of these
3 numbers in your news reports. The number of
4 people receiving unemployment was 22.8 million as
5 of May 2nd. And really this is in comparison to
6 the average of 1.7 million prior to March. The
7 unemployment rate increased 0.9 percent to 4.4
8 percent in March. This is the largest increase
9 since January of 1975. And in April, there was a
10 10 percent increase in the unemployment rate and
11 it jumped to 14.7 percent, which is the highest
12 rate and increase since the data was first
13 collected, started being collected in 1948.

14 Consumer confidence. The Conference
15 Board Consumer Confidence Index was down from 118
16 in March to 86.9 in April. This is the lowest
17 level in nearly six years. And the University of
18 Michigan Consumer Sentiment Index declined from
19 101 in February to 89 in March.

20 Both employment and consumer confidence
21 are important to fisheries in terms of employment
22 impacts the availability of crew, and then

1 consumer confidence really impacts the demand for
2 fisheries products and recreational activities.

3 The next big macroeconomic indicator I
4 want to discuss is the fuel markets. Fuel is a
5 major input into fishing operations and it also
6 affects food prices and transportation of those
7 food products. Crude oil prices have been, as you
8 can see from this graph, been all over the map.
9 Really started out pretty high -- or pretty modest
10 in January, but as it declined as a result of
11 decreased demand and increased production of key
12 international oil producers. The U.S. spot markets
13 have been volatile and even went negative for the
14 first time in history due to the lack of storage
15 for futures contracts deliveries. And some of the
16 sources that I follow still indicate that there is
17 still a lack of storage for fuel products. So, we
18 might see a repeat of this April 20th negative
19 spot price for West Texas Intermediate crude.

20 Looking at something closer to the
21 interests of fisheries, the next chart shows a
22 weekly No. 2 diesel retail prices from 2019 and

1 2020. The 2019 number is on the blue line and the
2 2020 number is on the red line. As you can see,
3 there's been a pretty significant decline in
4 diesel prices so that was one of the slightly
5 positive outcome that fuel costs have declined
6 over this time period.

7 So, given that macroeconomic background,
8 I wanted to jump next to something closer to home,
9 which is Atlantic HMS landings. We started the
10 year on a very positive note. The blue lines
11 indicate the 2019 numbers and green lines indicate
12 2020 numbers. As you can see, January was up 13
13 percent. February was up 18 percent. However, by
14 the time we get to March, HMS landing levels are
15 comparable to what they were in 2019. And it
16 probably would have been significantly higher, but
17 as you all know, the impacts of the current
18 economic situation really started being felt by
19 mid-March. And by April as the full impact of the
20 situation occurred, we see a 73 percent decline in
21 ex-vessel value of landings for all HMS species.
22 And this is based on our eDealer landings and

1 bluefin tuna landings information.

2 Looking at specific species, we can see
3 the January, February, March, and April 2019
4 versus 2020 percent changes. You can see a
5 decline in days and in bluefin starting in March.
6 This accelerated in April and was joined by a
7 steep declines in swordfish and shark in April.

8 Given these numbers that we've been
9 tracking, we contacted 22 HMS dealers representing
10 72 percent of all 2019 eDealer landings to get a
11 rapid assessment of this situation. We did this
12 in March. One hundred percent of the dealers
13 interviewed reported March revenue losses.
14 Dealers reported an average revenue loss of 76
15 percent. Thirty-three percent of our dealers
16 reported laying-off employees. Sixty-four percent
17 of dealers asked vessels to reduce or stop
18 delivering product. And 24 percent of dealers
19 reported fishermen stopped fishing on their own
20 even without being asked to. And 41 percent of
21 dealers reported customers are having difficulty
22 paying invoices. It's been a pretty dramatic

1 impact.

2 And then shifting from dealers to our
3 commercial fleet, we took a look at our VMS data
4 for a leading indicator of what was going on on
5 the water. Here we compare once again 2019 to
6 2020. February, we already saw a decline. I
7 think mainly weather-related in the number of
8 trips taken by HMS vessels with VMS units. In
9 March, it was pretty comparable to what we saw in
10 2019, but definitely activity started slowing down
11 at the end of the month. However, when we got to
12 -- when we get to April, there was a 54 percent
13 decline in the number of trips taken. I did
14 exclude the vessels participating in the Gulf of
15 Mexico restoration project to keep things kind of
16 even because those vessels were, in addition to
17 fishing, were participating in a tagging program
18 in 2020.

19 Then we jump to specifically pelagic
20 longline fleet effort for 2020. As we know, the
21 pelagic longline vessels in addition to reporting
22 hail-in and hail-out, they also report their set

1 activity. So, looking at the number of VMS sets
2 reported in February, we see it was pretty much
3 comparable to 2019 at 220 sets versus 221.
4 However, when we move into March that started
5 dropping off and we -- it dropped off down to 181
6 sets. And then when we get to April, we see a
7 dramatic decline in the number of sets taken.
8 That's a 63 percent decline in effort. And given
9 at this point and given we're short on time, I'll
10 now turn it over to Cliff Hutt to discuss some
11 additional efforts we've made to assess the
12 impacts to the HMS fleet.

13 MR. HUTT: Thank you, George. Next
14 slide. So, in addition to looking at the revenue
15 data and some of our VMS activity data, we also
16 took a couple of other efforts to actually survey
17 vessel owners and operators about the effects that
18 the COVID-19 situation was having on their
19 operations.

20 First, I'll talk about a survey that was
21 done by our electronic monitoring vendor to
22 vessels that have EM, so mostly pelagic longline

1 vessels. In late March, they reached out to all
2 of the vessels with key electronic monitoring, 38
3 percent of which were contacted reported that they
4 were continuing fishing at reduced levels.
5 Fifty-six percent reported not fishing because of
6 current conditions.

7 George, could you just advance the slide
8 some more? Just to be kind of -- all right.

9 All vessels owners contacted experienced
10 HMS revenue declines ranging from 50 to 100
11 percent. Seventy-five percent and were informed,
12 reported that they were informed to stop
13 delivering HMS catch by the dealers they typically
14 work with. And owners reported various efforts to
15 reduce their costs such as taking shorter trips.
16 Basically taking time in port to prepare for the
17 future trips.

18 I believe someone has their -- needs to
19 mute their phone with the background.

20 And basically switched their trips
21 targeting with smaller species that were more
22 likely to be in demand for the grocery store

1 market, things like red snapper and kingfish.

2 George, the next slide. We also
3 conducted a phone survey of our non-PLL commercial
4 permit holders. We wound up contacting 34 HMS
5 permit holders in the southeast where HMS fishers
6 were a bit more active for gillnet and other
7 permit holders. We talked to some of our
8 swordfish handgear, swordfish general and
9 commercial, Caribbean smallboat, smoothhound, and
10 our shark limited access permit holders.

11 Thirty of these individuals reported
12 reductions in their HMS revenue averaging 73
13 percent for March and April. Nine permit holders
14 reported laying off crew. And 19 reported dealers
15 asking them to stop or reduce the amount of fish
16 they were bringing in for sale. So, the majority
17 of them.

18 Next slide, George. And we also reached
19 out to our for-hire captains in the southeast
20 where the for-hire HMS fishery was already started
21 in March and April. This focused on vessel owners
22 from North Carolina to Texas. We have roughly

1 1,500 HMS charter/headboat permit holders in the
2 southeast. According to MRIP estimates from 2019,
3 those vessels were estimated to have taken just
4 under 1,600 for-hire vessel trips targeting HMS in
5 the months of March and April. A little over 900
6 of those were in the South Atlantic and a little
7 under 700 in the Gulf of Mexico. And these trips
8 were estimated to generate a little under \$2
9 million in revenue based on average revenue in the
10 previous Cost-Earnings study in 2015. Next slide,
11 George.

12 We contacted 24 permit holders in the
13 region of which they reported 55 percent of their
14 trips typically target HMS. One hundred percent
15 reported that their booking had been impacted
16 starting in mid to late March and that they have
17 seen roughly 97 percent of their April trips
18 canceled with additional cancellations extending
19 into May and in some cases into June. Sixty-three
20 percent of those surveyed reported laying off
21 staff or mates. And their primary impacts they
22 reported were largely due to closures in the

1 restaurant and hotel industries, which were
2 disrupting the tourism industry in their regions,
3 with some being impacted by specific county
4 closures, in particular in Dare County and the
5 Outer Banks and the Keys.

6 As far as effects to HMS angling and
7 tournaments, effects on private angling trip were
8 estimated to vary significantly from state to
9 state based on local closures and stay-at-home
10 orders. We will be able to assess this better when
11 MRIP estimates become available. While most states
12 have suspended the MRIP dockside interviewing
13 during the months of late-March and April the
14 effort survey is still continuing, so we will
15 still be able to get some estimates of fishing
16 effort during those months and how that was
17 affected. However, the LPS survey is still on
18 track to get started as scheduled in June
19 depending on what kind of state closures at the
20 time.

21 As far as HMS tournament impacts, we
22 have received reports from at least eight

1 tournaments that they had cancelled their events
2 due to the COVID-19 situation. With the earliest
3 tournament cancelled being scheduled for March 16
4 and the latest for early July. And five separate
5 tournaments have, for the time being, been
6 postponed to later dates in the year, mostly in
7 August and September.

8 Next slide, George. And here are a few
9 resources that we wanted to provide folks for
10 reference. The NMFS COVID-19 Information page,
11 which includes information about the CARES Act
12 funding that was allotted for the fishing industry
13 and how it's being distributed to the states. The
14 U.S. Government COVID-19 Resources page, and a
15 link that provides links to all the different
16 state agencies responses to COVID-19 for
17 individuals' reference.

18 And with that, we will take comments and
19 questions.

20 MR. BROOKS: Great, thanks. Let me just
21 note, Mark Mahoney wrote in the Q&A that sound is
22 dropping. So, Anjanette, I'm not sure if that's

1 something that everyone has experienced or not.
2 But I just wanted to flag that. I also wanted to
3 flag that Randy Gregory, Jason Schratwieser, and
4 Sonja Fordham, we think you didn't link your phone
5 to the computer, so when you raise your hand,
6 Anjanette can't see -- can't see who you are in
7 trying to open up the -- in opening up a cue for
8 you. So, if you're able to reconnect in a way
9 that your phone is linked with your computer, and
10 it's in the instructions that she sent around,
11 that would be helpful if you want to get into the
12 conversation.

13 So, let's just -- I'm going to go see
14 who's in the cue here and try and take a question.
15 A couple of questions here. Scott Taylor, Rick
16 Bellavance, and Sonja Fordham, your hands are
17 still at the ready. I've got you in the cue and
18 Mike Pierdinock you were in there too. I don't
19 know if you wanted to get in on this one. If
20 you'd just lower your hand if you're not for this
21 section and then that'd be helpful. Or if you do
22 want to do it, just lower it and put it back up.

1 So, anyone want to get in? Scott, I see you
2 hand's still up. Do you want to jump in on this
3 conversation? Scott Taylor?

4 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, I do. Yes.

5 MR. BROOKS: Please, jump in.

6 MR. TAYLOR: So, George and Cliff, I
7 certainly appreciate all the effort that went
8 through to point out to those who are not actively
9 involved on a daily basis in the marketing that we
10 live. It was a pretty fair representation of just
11 how dire things, you know, have been in this
12 industry. What's missing from the data some of
13 the other components that -- and you all do hear
14 me, right?

15 MR. BROOKS: We do. We do, thank you.
16 Actually, Scott, just so I can test whether that's
17 Mark's issue or not. Were you having sound
18 issues? Were you having trouble hearing Cliff or
19 George during the last presentation?

20 MR. TAYLOR: I was not.

21 MR. BROOKS: Okay, good, thanks.

22 Continue on, thanks.

1 MR. TAYLOR: You know, there's a few
2 other components in here that are affecting the
3 numbers that are maybe a little bit less obvious.
4 But, obviously, in times where we see a downturn
5 in market activity, sometimes that can be offset
6 by effort. We have had probably one of the worst
7 winters from the standpoint of production down
8 here even when we've been fishing simply because
9 the east coast box down here in Florida was so
10 unproductive for us this year.

11 I had boats sitting there. I don't
12 think that for a three-month period we produced
13 much more than 3,000 to 4,000 pounds of product
14 per trip, which is, you know, abysmal for us. The
15 fish just literally were not there. And the
16 weather was absolutely horrendous for us.

17 So, you know, besides the COVID issues,
18 that we've had a whole plethora of operational and
19 logistics issues that in years gone by have, you
20 know, sort of exacerbated, you know, you know, our
21 effort in trying to convince the Agency for a
22 level of flexibility that just doesn't exist for

1 us for four or five months of the year. You have
2 to remember that the Charleston Bump closure,
3 which was the only area that was really producing
4 any fish because the fish are migrating in the
5 stream for February, March, and April, that area
6 was not an option, which only leaves us
7 essentially the box down here. Any farther north
8 than the Charleston Bump area, you know, the
9 weather is so prohibitive normally that, you know,
10 that's why you don't see of the boats on the
11 northeast fishing.

12 But a typical trip for us here in the
13 last three months were boats leaving the dock
14 being out 16 or 17 days and maybe being able to
15 make 6 sets. Not manageable. It's not going to
16 continue. These numbers are not going to rebound.
17 I'm down from 13 boats to 4 boats active at this
18 point. And I don't know whether I'm going to be
19 able to continue, you know, with that.

20 I would say it's probably a fair
21 estimation that you all have more people in HMS
22 administrating us than we have people that are

1 actively out there fishing at this point. And
2 without some real intervention and some real
3 out-of-the- thinking box, the data that you're
4 seeing is only going to continue to decline.

5 We've been able to reinvent ourselves a
6 little bit from a marketing standpoint. You know,
7 by -- I'm sure that you all have been, you know,
8 hearing about, you know, consumer support at the
9 docks, which has helped some. But, you know, any
10 of the high-end product that would typically be
11 moving into, you know, the high-end markets, the
12 sushi bar markets, the value with the tunas, is
13 essentially still eliminated and a long time
14 before it's going to come back. And it's been
15 replaced, you know, with the retail end which is
16 at a much, much lower margin. So, we're getting a
17 far less dollar value for the product and not able
18 to overcome.

19 So, I'm not going to belabor that. I
20 know that we're limited on time. But I did want
21 to give you a little different perspective here
22 that it's not just been one thing, it's been

1 impacting the space of COVID-19 certainly was
2 impactful, but even without the COVID-19, we still
3 would have had a disaster this year.

4 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Thanks for the
5 feedback, Scott. I appreciate the difficult take
6 on it.

7 Yamitza, I see your hand raised. I'm
8 going to let you jump in and then we'll shift to
9 the shark and swordfish after your comments.

10 MS. RODRIGUEZ: -- and the economic
11 study that includes Puerto Rico.

12 MR. BROOKS: I'm sorry, Yamitza, you
13 weren't open yet. Can you start again?

14 MS. RODRIGUEZ: I just wanted to know if
15 by any chance are there plans to repeat the
16 specific economic study that eclipsed Puerto Rico?
17 We had that process done in Puerto Rico in 2011,
18 and I was wondering if Puerto Rico by any chance
19 was going to be included in that kind of study in
20 further years?

21 MR. HUTT: So, Yamitza --

22 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Mm-hmm?

1 MR. HUTT: -- this is Cliff Hutt. I can
2 say we tried to reach out to a few people down in
3 the Caribbean and I think our assessment did
4 include a couple. However, I do know that the
5 Southeast Fishery Science Center was also -- and
6 folks, economists from there and SERO were also
7 making a lot of calls themselves to other council
8 permit holders throughout the southeast region.
9 And I do know at least one of their people, Scott
10 Crosson, spoke with a number of fishermen, I think
11 both commercial and for-hire in the Caribbean, in
12 Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

13 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

14 MR. HUTT: He was focused on that. So,
15 there has already been an effort to collect a good
16 bit of data on how the current situation has been
17 affecting people there.

18 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

19 MR. HUTT: And those reports are
20 supposed to be going public I think relatively
21 soon. I don't know an exact date though.

22 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

1 MR. HUTT: Thanks.

2 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

3 MR. BROOKS: All right, we need to jump
4 -- while we shift the slides, I don't want to cut
5 you off twice, Michael Pierdinock, so if you could
6 jump in with maybe a 30 second comment as we get
7 the slides up and shift over to the shark and
8 swordfish retention limits. Michael Pierdinock?

9 MR. PIERDINOCK: Just to add to it. If
10 there's anything that can be taken in
11 consideration, your numbers show that the
12 recreational landings are down. The for-hire
13 fleet landings that are down, commercially they're
14 down, and being here up here in Massachusetts,
15 there's no doubt that everything from one end to
16 the other is down with what's being landed. If
17 there's any consideration that you could take into
18 liberalizing our bag limits this fall to help
19 everybody I hope that could occur. That's one
20 comment.

21 The other comment, this ties into what I
22 was going to ask before it ties into this. The

1 for-hire fleet up here we had some questions until
2 recently the -- at the state standpoint, we were
3 open commercially, open recreationally, but the
4 for-hire was closed. And up and down the coast we
5 have inconsistencies with the requirements for
6 each one of whether they're open, whether they're
7 closed, and the safety measures that are to be
8 required. And to try to get an answer to this,
9 whether it's today or later, if I am a for-hire
10 operator, charter/headboat with a commercial
11 endorsement, and the for-hire is closed here in
12 the state waters, can I fish federally with my
13 permit with those on the boat? That question has
14 come up and we scratched our heads whether it
15 would have been permitted in federal waters. It
16 would not have been permitted in state waters.
17 So, that a question for -- that I throw out there
18 and hopefully we could get some clarity of what
19 the federal government requires in federal waters
20 for the future.

21 MR. BLANKINSHIP: So, Mike -- yeah,
22 Mike, I'll just mention, let's follow-up with that

1 after the meeting because it's pretty in the weeds
2 and, of course, it relates to what local or state
3 requirements are. But we can follow-up with that
4 discussion afterwards if that's okay.

5 MR. PIERDINOCK: Okay, sounds good.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. BROOKS: All right, thanks,
8 everybody. Thanks, Cliff and George. Let's push
9 to shark and swordfish retention limits. And I
10 wanted to hand it off to Delisse and Nick and
11 maybe Rick Pearson's going to kind of -- Nick's on
12 this one too.

13 MS. ORTIZ: Thanks, Bennett. This is
14 Delisse. I want to share my screen. Let me know
15 if this works. Can everybody see my screen?

16 MR. BROOKS: Yep, we're good.

17 MS. ORTIZ: Okay, good. Well, good
18 morning, everybody. My name is Delisse Ortiz.
19 And I'll be giving the talk today, but before I
20 begin, I just want to give you a kind of heads up.
21 I'm on the west coast and my daughters have woken
22 up from their slumber. And so as innocent as they

1 may look, they can get pretty, pretty rowdy and
2 pretty determined. So, if you start hearing
3 nonsense, I do apologize for that or singing, or
4 shouting, or banging on the door, so.

5 And with that, I will continue. So,
6 just a heads up on the little bit of outline of
7 the talk. I'll give you a little bit more
8 background on what we're doing in this rule, which
9 is sort of revising existing swordfish and shark
10 retention limits and regulatory procedures so the
11 -- for three open access permits. So, I'll give
12 you a little background on what permits those are,
13 some proposed management options, the timeline for
14 this rule, and how to try to go about submitting
15 comments.

16 A little bit about -- there we go --
17 background. So, the first permit is the HMS
18 Commercial Caribbean Small Boat permit. This
19 permit was created about eight years ago through
20 Amendment 4. And it was created specifically for
21 the traditional small scale commercial handgear
22 fishing fleet in the U.S. Caribbean. And the

1 permit was specifically only made valid to be used
2 in the U.S. Caribbean region. The permit allows
3 -- is unique in that it allows the harvest and
4 sale of tuna, and this permit also allows the
5 retention of tunas, swordfish, and sharks. And
6 it's that retention limit of 2 -- sorry, 10, 2,
7 and 0, respectively, for these species. It allows
8 for specific gears. And right now it's for
9 vessels that are less -- it's used for vessels
10 that are less than 45 feet in length.

11 One thing that Amendment 4 also did was
12 it implemented regulations that would allow to
13 change these limits, but it was only through a
14 framework adjustment and this requires a
15 rulemaking that can often take at least six
16 months. I want to point that out because it's --
17 it will be pertinent to one of the changes we're
18 doing in this rulemaking.

19 The second and third permits kind of
20 come from Amendment 8. So, Amendment 8, just to
21 refresh your memory, was implemented in 2013 and
22 established the NOAA open access Swordfish General

1 Commercial permit. And that permit was created to
2 provide additional opportunities for U.S.
3 fishermen harvest swordfish, but using very
4 selective handgears that kind of have little
5 bycatch. The Amendment also established
6 (inaudible) six swordfish per vessel per trip
7 retention limit range. So, on the table you'll
8 see the first column regions in which the permit
9 applies, the Gulf of Mexico, Northwest Atlantic,
10 the Caribbean, and the Florida Swordfish
11 Management Area.

12 New retention limits in the third column
13 are zero to six for all these regions, but then
14 different regional retention limits were codified
15 within that range for those regions on the Gulf of
16 Mexico and in Northwest Atlantic you have a limit
17 of three, Caribbean two, and the Florida Swordfish
18 Management Area set at zero.

19 In contrast to Amendment 4, the way that
20 fish retention limits could be changed was using
21 inseason actions, which as opposed to taking six
22 months, it can be completed in a matter of days.

1 And then you have a list in the last column of
2 these -- the gears that can specifically be used
3 for the Swordfish General Commercial permit.

4 The other thing that Amendment 8 did was
5 that it allowed for these retention limits to be
6 applied to the HMS Charter/Headboat permit holders
7 so that they can fish under open access swordfish
8 commercial permit regulations when not on for-hire
9 trips.

10 And I want to just note that since the
11 implementation of this permit, NMFS has adjusted
12 the swordfish retention limit to six, which is the
13 maximum of the range per vessel per trip every
14 year.

15 Next slide. So, why this rule? Well,
16 in recent years we received comments from
17 different sources, AP members, the Caribbean
18 Fishery Management Council, territorial
19 governments, and in general discussions with both
20 commercial and recreational fishermen, to increase
21 the retention limits for these three open access
22 permits. And number one, some of the comments we

1 got with the available swordfish quota and the
2 growing interest in harvesting swordfish in both
3 Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands we essentially
4 could increase the default swordfish retention
5 limit for the Commercial Caribbean Small Boat
6 permit, which was set at two. So, a lot of folks
7 were like, well, just increase it to six
8 swordfish, similar to what is currently allowed in
9 the Swordfish General Commercial Permit. And
10 other commenters requested that we increase the
11 maximum retention limit beyond six swordfish,
12 specifically to allow for expanded use of the
13 permits in areas that require longer transit times
14 to reach fishing grounds.

15 And the second bullet, we received
16 requests to increase the shark retention limit of
17 the HMS Commercial Caribbean Small Boat Permit
18 from the existing limit, which is set at zero to
19 up to three sharks per vessel per trip. This
20 mostly in order to retain sharks for personal
21 consumption or to sell at the local market or
22 restaurants.

1 And then the third bullet addresses the
2 discrepancies in the regulatory procedures among
3 these three permits. So, currently, if we were to
4 adjust the swordfish retention limits for these
5 three open access swordfish permits, and the three
6 permits I'm referring to is the commercial small
7 boat permits, the Swordfish General Commercial
8 permits and the HMS Charter/Headboat permit when
9 folks are on a commercial trip. It takes two
10 different regulatory procedures. A framework
11 adjustment to change those limits in the
12 Caribbean, which can take up to six months, and
13 then an inseason adjustment, which uses
14 preestablished criteria to adjust retention limits
15 for the swordfish general commercial and
16 charter/headboat permits.

17 And if we use the inseason, you know, it
18 can be completed in effect within three days. So,
19 one of the aims of this rulemaking is to
20 streamline and consolidate those two regulatory
21 procedures so that we can be more timely and
22 efficient in changing those retention limits.

1 So, they're grouped into three
2 management options. The first set of alternatives
3 addresses, again, the -- is changing going from a
4 framework adjustment to change to inseason
5 adjustments for the Commercial Caribbean Small
6 Boat permits, which is the only one that doesn't
7 have that ability. The second set is looking at
8 alternatives to change the retention limit for
9 swordfish. And the third set of management
10 options is to change the retention limit
11 alternatives for sharks for the Commercial
12 Caribbean Small Boat permit.

13 So, let's look at number -- letter A.
14 Right now, the mechanism for the Commercial
15 Caribbean Small Boat permits to change retention
16 limits and mostly focuses on swordfish and shark
17 retention limits is the focus of this rulemaking.
18 It uses the framework. So, we have two
19 alternatives. Alternative A2 would be to allow
20 for inseason adjustments of the swordfish
21 retention limits using preestablished criteria
22 framework to the swordfish general commercial

1 permit. And then Alternative A3 would be to
2 change the framework adjustment for changing shark
3 retention limits and establish inseason criteria
4 using what is currently used for changing shark
5 trip limits. And we prefer, obviously, are
6 Alternatives A2 and A3.

7 For the second set of options, I'm going
8 to bring this table slowly because it can get a
9 little convoluted. On the header we have four
10 alternatives that consider modifying swordfish
11 retention limits over the three permits. And this
12 was again mostly based on public comments and the
13 need to provide more fishing opportunities to
14 harvest the swordfish quota.

15 So, we looked at the retention limit
16 range and now we're looking at the different
17 regions that I mentioned before, the Northwest
18 Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Florida Swordfish
19 Management Area, and then the Caribbean. For this
20 rulemaking, we're not changing the Swordfish
21 Management Area, so that will remain at zero
22 across all the alternatives.

1 For existing range, the Commercial
2 Caribbean Small Boat permit, which is a CCSB, it
3 didn't have a range, we just set a limit because
4 when you do a framework procedure, regulatory
5 procedure, you're just setting a limit. You don't
6 have a default retention limit and you don't have
7 a range. So, that's what we currently have in
8 place.

9 There's a zero to six range for the
10 Swordfish General Commercial and HMS
11 Charter/Headboat permits. And then we have,
12 again, the one that I mentioned retention limit of
13 three swordfish for the Atlantic and Gulf of
14 Mexico and a retention limit of two swordfish for
15 the Caribbean for all three permits.

16 So, what we're looking at in Alternative
17 2, is for making all things equal, so establishing
18 a range for the Commercial Caribbean Small Boat
19 permits. So, doing a range of zero through six in
20 the swordfish retention limit, similar to the
21 Swordfish General Commercial and HMS
22 Charter/Headboat permit. And then if you look at

1 the no action alternative originally right now the
2 default of that zero to six range is set at three
3 and two. So, the idea would be we're already
4 changing that limit every year since the permit
5 was implemented, so, the idea is just to set that
6 default already at the highest range would be six
7 instead of having to change it every year. And
8 that would be the sets for all the regions. And
9 then for the Commercial Caribbean Small Boat
10 permits, we would also start at that range, so, it
11 makes things sort of equal across the board for
12 all three permits.

13 And then for Alternatives B3 and B4, we
14 kind of upped the limit range and looked for the
15 default limits. So, instead of a 0 to 6, we make
16 a retention limit range of 0 to 18 for all
17 permits. For the Swordfish General Commercial and
18 HMS Charter Headboat permits in the Atlantic and
19 Gulf of Mexico, we would use the upper limit of
20 that range, so 18, but we would leave it at 6 for
21 the Caribbean. And then Alternative B4, is
22 similar to Alternative B3 except that you're

1 making the limit in the Caribbean 18, so you're
2 making all things equal.

3 And I just want to point out that the
4 number in this table would be the default
5 retention limit for the HMS Commercial Caribbean
6 Small Boat Permit if we're selecting the inseason
7 adjustment alternative under option A, right now
8 under a framework adjustment like I mentioned, you
9 don't have a default limit or a retention limit
10 range.

11 And this third set of options proposes
12 three commercial alternatives that consider
13 modifying shark retention limits for the
14 Commercial Caribbean Small Boat permit. And
15 again, it's based on public comments requesting we
16 increase the fishing opportunities to harvest
17 sharks under this permit. And so we kind of
18 considered a range of alternatives that took into
19 consideration a few things. First, is the
20 existing limit. The limit requested by the public
21 for those species of most interest to the state
22 and territorial fishermen, so it's smoothhound

1 fish and tiger sharks. And also higher than a six
2 for all authorized matched shark species. And
3 again, just like the previous alternatives for
4 swordfish, these alternatives described here are
5 under the assumption that the preferred
6 Alternative A3, again, changing from a framework
7 procedure to an inseason procedure, is adopted.

8 So, if we look at this table just to
9 refresh your memory, there's not a retention limit
10 range right now for the Commercial Caribbean Small
11 Boat permit shark retention limit the default that
12 is zero when the permit was implemented. We're
13 looking at Alternative C2, which would establish a
14 range of zero to three per vessel per trip. Where
15 the default retention limit set at three for, you
16 know, to catch smoothhounds and/or tiger sharks
17 combined per vessel per trip only.

18 And then Alternative C3 increases that
19 retention limit range from zero to three to zero
20 to six. And then sets a default limit of six for
21 all managed species of sharks and trips combined
22 per vessel per trip. And again, this is for

1 non-prohibited matched species.

2 And I'd like to, you know, I'd like to
3 hear from you and request comments. So, this is a
4 timeline of the rule published in April 27th. We
5 have two more public hearings, one on May 27th and
6 June 10. There's the information to access those
7 Webinars. The comment period ends on June 26, and
8 our target effective date hopefully it's the
9 summer/fall of this year, we hope to have a final
10 rule. And if you want to provide comments, again,
11 you go into HMS and the website and use the
12 keywords and, you know, give your comments. And
13 if you have any questions, you can always reach
14 either Nic, myself, or Rick regarding the rule.
15 And now I'd like to it open up for discussion.
16 Thank you.

17 MR. BROOKS: Great, thanks, Delisse, a
18 great overview. So, this is the moment where if
19 we were all in the room together, I'd probably ask
20 you to get into groups of three and four and talk
21 about it a little bit and then we'd hear what you
22 have to say. We don't have the luxury of doing

1 that today. But I want to get folks into the cue.
2 We've got about a little under 15 minutes. So,
3 one, I want to invite people to absolutely put
4 comments in the chat as one way to sort of get
5 your thoughts into the mix. And then as I call
6 you into the cue, if folks could just be as
7 focused in your comments as possible so there's
8 time for others.

9 Raimundo Espinoza, let's get you in
10 there first. And after you're done with your
11 comments, you can lower your hand. But,
12 Anjanette, if you could open up Raimundo's line.

13 MR. ESPINOZA: Hi, everybody. Am I on?

14 MR. BROOKS: You are on. You're good.

15 MR. ESPINOZA: All right, perfect. So,
16 thank you so much, Delisse, for a great
17 presentation. I believe you explained it very
18 well. You know we really appreciate all the time
19 that you guys have been putting into this and, you
20 know, it's -- I know it's something -- oh, there's
21 my kids. Okay, yep, the first one of the rowdy
22 ones. Anyway.

1 Yes, so we appreciate very much, you
2 know, this is something that on all sides there's
3 been concerns on what the -- what the alternatives
4 would be, and what the changes would result in.
5 And so, one of the concerns that, you know, I
6 believe, you know, that I've made myself heard a
7 little bit on this in the past and, you know,
8 reached out to you guys as well before. But one
9 of the concerns is mainly on the preferred
10 alternative on focusing on smoothhounds and sharks
11 and tiger sharks. And so, basically, that
12 smoothhounds for one are not a target species for
13 the U.S. Caribbean and they're mainly caught as
14 bycatch in the deep water snapper fishery. And so
15 that's one concern that this targeted fishery is
16 focused -- is going to be based on something
17 that's caught incidentally. There is a market for
18 it but there is -- it's not a targeted market.

19 And the second, tiger sharks right now
20 are about 9 percent of the shark meat demand.
21 Which means if all of a sudden -- and that is a
22 targeted fishery for tiger sharks, but they only

1 meet 9 percent of the market demand. Which means
2 if this is the only species that would be allowed
3 to be caught, that would be an ambition of 9 that
4 the rest of the 90 percent would have to go --
5 would be targeted for tiger sharks. And so, you
6 know, that's making -- it's pretty much putting
7 all the pressure on tiger sharks. The entire
8 market would be based on tiger sharks. And so,
9 while they are part of the market currently like I
10 had mentioned it's only 9 percent of the species
11 that make up that market. And so, we do feel that
12 it would be a bit of a additional unnecessary
13 pressure put on that single species.

14 Additionally, from what we've seen in
15 the shark market, I believe it's about 12 percent
16 of the shark meat in Puerto Rico that reaches
17 market is caught incidentally while 73 percent of
18 what's going to market is from the directed
19 fishery. And so, it's something that we really
20 need to consider that and so for that preferable
21 alternative. And so, I believe that, you know, in
22 the prefer -- in the best interest of gathering

1 the data of moving, of collaborating with the
2 fisheries, but also in conservation of shark
3 species, it would be probably a good idea to see
4 if what combination could be done between
5 Alternatives 2 and 3, C2 and C3, to assure -- make
6 sure that the limit of three is still maintained,
7 but that all the other non-prohibited species are
8 also allowed to be caught. And if I would be able
9 to add a little bit additionally would be if we
10 are looking to be a bit more restrictive on that
11 just depending on what species they are, I would
12 include the -- I would include for the U.S.
13 Caribbean a permit, hammerheads to be also
14 included as non -- as a prohibited species for the
15 Caribbean and small boat permits.

16 MR. BROOKS: Great.

17 MR. ESPINOZA: But that's my comments.
18 I'll leave that to allow people to speak more.

19 MR. BROOKS: Great, thank you, Raimundo.
20 Let's go to Dewey Hemilright, and then after
21 Dewey, we'll open it up for you, Sonja Fordham.
22 So, Dewey, when your line is open, jump in.

1 MR. HEMILWRIGHT: Yeah, thank you. Can
2 you hear me?

3 MR. BROOKS: We can, thank you.

4 MR. HEMILWRIGHT: I had a question. How
5 many fish, swordfish, under this category permit
6 were caught in 2019?

7 MS. ORTIZ: Which category, Dewey?

8 MR. HEMILWRIGHT: Under the Swordfish
9 General Category permit for swordfish.

10 MS. ORTIZ: Let's see. Here you go.
11 Oh, 2019, we didn't have those numbers finalized
12 at the time of the publishing, but we have up
13 until 2018.

14 MR. HEMILWRIGHT: Okay, so is this --
15 you got poundage but that don't tell you how many
16 fish.

17 MS. ORTIZ: Correct.

18 MR. HEMILWRIGHT: All right, and so
19 that's kind of one thing. The second thing is
20 boats that are used to be pelagic longline and are
21 trying different methodologies to catch the
22 swordfish now, and six fish is not very many fish

1 given that we have millions of pounds of
2 unharvested quota. Why not looking at something
3 of increasing the limit to like 15 until 50,000
4 pounds caught, and then reduce it back to six as a
5 fallback? We should be encouraging commercial
6 fishing of our swordfish with this permit in
7 various ways. Not only that, if you -- boats that
8 are able to harvest six fish or if it was more,
9 probably have the capacity to hold that. So, it's
10 not like everybody's going to go buy a boat to go
11 catch 15 swordfish so to speak. So, I would be in
12 favor of increasing that up to 18 and because it's
13 clearly you're not catching very many as you're
14 showing here you're not. Then it's probably also
15 -- how do they have to be reported under this
16 permit?

17 MR. ORTIZ: The information that we
18 receive is from the e-Dealer landing and the
19 territorial landings for the Commercial Caribbean
20 Small Boat permit.

21 MR. HEMILWRIGHT: And so none of it has
22 to do from the fishers themselves or they don't

1 have to do no logbook requirements, correct?

2 MS. ORTIZ: Correct.

3 MR. HEMILWRIGHT: So, it's all from
4 e-Dealers?

5 MS. ORTIZ: Correct.

6 MR. HEMILWRIGHT: And so does the
7 e-Dealer tell how many fish it is? Because
8 clearly you would have it from e- Dealer how many
9 fish were landed.

10 MR. ORTIZ: No, from eDealer you report
11 landings so it's how many pounds of fish are
12 landed.

13 MR. HEMILWRIGHT: Okay. But my comments
14 would be to increase it. We got millions of
15 pounds of swordfish quota and it's time to go
16 catch some and let people try other means of
17 fishing just so they make it and keep in business.
18 Thank you.

19 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Dewey. Let me let
20 Sonja. Let's hear from Sonja Fordham.

21 MS. FORDHAM: Hi, good morning.

22 MR. BROOKS: Good morning. We can hear

1 perfectly.

2 MS. FORDHAM: I can't hear myself
3 perfectly. So, I have just really quick questions
4 on this presentation and I have more questions on
5 the introduction. So, I don't --

6 MR. BROOKS: I want you just to focus in
7 on this presentation, please, right now.

8 MS. FORDHAM: Okay, that'll be pretty
9 brief. I'm still digesting the options, even
10 though Delisse was kind enough to provide us with
11 the boutique phone calls. I appreciate that. I
12 haven't quite done as much homework as I should.
13 But it does seem to me that Alternative 3 for the
14 shark retention limits are too general and broad,
15 and it seems they may include species that are of
16 particular conservation concerns. So,
17 specifically I'm learning about shortfin makos,
18 but be included in that pelagic category and then
19 also oceanic whitetips considering that you just
20 in the Atlantic prohibited in the pelagic
21 fisheries. So, I don't know how that translates
22 to this fishery at issue here. But I would be

1 opposed to allowing retention of those two species
2 in particular.

3 And then I just had a question about the
4 -- what kind of assessment or other population
5 status information that NOAA's relying on for the
6 tiger sharks in the Caribbean and then also is
7 there more than one species of smoothhound in the
8 region? I haven't checked that yet either. Thank
9 you.

10 MR. BROOKS: Great. Delisse, do you
11 have a quick quota feedback on that one?

12 MS. ORTIZ: Yes. So, just to review
13 right now the landings for the Caribbean are
14 taking out of the Gulf of Mexico quota. So, any
15 species that's landed is currently taken from
16 there. So, for tiger sharks, we just used the
17 general landings that are overall taken from their
18 management group, which we don't -- so, right now
19 tiger sharks are not a separate species. They're
20 not a separate assessment for tiger sharks.
21 They're under the non-large coastal shark
22 management group, which has been assessed and so

1 within that quota, like tiger sharks has never
2 been a factor in terms of going over quotas or
3 harvest levels.

4 So, overall, we think that there should
5 be a capacity to the availability of the resource
6 to harvest tiger sharks. And as far as smooth
7 dogfish go, the assessment said that the stock is
8 healthy and so, we think that in the analysis,
9 those two species can withstand any harvest
10 pressure at incidental levels in the Caribbean
11 region.

12 And then the second -- what was the
13 second question? What type of smooth dogfish?

14 MS. FORDHAM: I wanted to know if
15 there's more than one species? Is there are like
16 Caribbean smoothhound or something? And then for
17 Alternative 3, if that covers oceanic whitetips
18 and shortfin makos?

19 MS. ORTIZ: Okay, so for smooth dogfish
20 there's not, as far as I'm aware, a new species
21 that has been discovered in the Caribbean. It's
22 mostly some what I've seen or heard is smooth

1 dogfish.

2 MS. FORDHAM: Okay.

3 MS. ORTIZ: And then the third question
4 was if pelagic --

5 MR. BROOKS: Oceanic whitetips.

6 MS. ORTIZ: -- would now include oceanic
7 whitetip and shortfin mako. And right now the
8 answer to that would be that they are included,
9 but whatever restrictions we have in place for our
10 other permits would fall under the same -- we
11 would abide by the same regulations under the
12 Commercial Caribbean Small Boat permit. So, any
13 restrictions on shortfin mako would apply and any
14 restrictions on oceanic whitetip or smoothhounds.

15 MS. FORDHAM: But if the oceanic
16 whitetip is prohibited for just pelagics, does
17 that mean they could be landed?

18 MR. ORTIZ: It could be landed, correct.

19 MS. FORDHAM: Yes, I asked it, okay.

20 MR. BROOKS: All right, I want to thank
21 -- thanks, Delisse, thanks for the questions,
22 Sonja.

1 I'm going to field five minutes from our
2 break. So, if anyone absolutely needs a 15 minute
3 break, please feel free to jump off right now.
4 But I want to try to get in as many people left in
5 the cue as we can until ten of. Bob, we haven't
6 heard from anyone from the academic research side
7 of the world yet. So, I'll patch you in there.
8 Bob Hueter.

9 MR. HUETER: Good morning. Can you hear
10 me okay?

11 MR. BROOKS: Yeah, perfectly, thank you.

12 MR. HUETER: Great, okay. Okay, so,
13 good morning, everybody. It's good to hear
14 everybody's voices, albeit at my desk at home.

15 So, Delisse, thank you for this -- thank
16 you for the presentation and I want to chime in
17 and I'm more or less in agreement with both Ray
18 Espinoza and with Sonja. First of all, it's good
19 to see at least HMS acknowledge that a zero
20 retention limit for sharks in the Caribbean is not
21 working because it's not being adhered to. Sharks
22 are being landed. There's no question about that.

1 And when I saw the tiger shark proposal before the
2 meeting, I was -- I really couldn't understand
3 where that came from. But now I -- now, with
4 Delisse's explanation about the Gulf of Mexico
5 quota, now it makes -- it doesn't make sense, but
6 at least I understand where it came from.

7 The reason that tiger sharks there's a
8 lot of quota for tiger sharks is because people
9 don't want to land tiger sharks. There's not that
10 state of market for it. And as Ray said, it's
11 only 9 percent. It comprises only 9 percent of
12 the market in Puerto Rico.

13 So, this whole thing about using the
14 Gulf of Mexico quotas is simply a matter of
15 convenience. There's really no scientific
16 validity for it. And I would urge us to get away
17 from that approach as soon as possible. The
18 smoothhounds, per Sonja's questions, smoothhound
19 taxonomy is kind of a mess. We're probably
20 dealing with multiple species. So, it's hard to
21 say at this time what the status is of
22 smoothhounds. In the Gulf though they are in very

1 good shape. That's true in the Gulf of Mexico.
2 But in the Caribbean, hard to say.

3 So, I think that neither alternative C2
4 or C3 are on target. I think somewhere in between
5 as Ray said. So, I would advocate allowing all
6 the nonprohibited large coastals, all the
7 nonridgeback large coastals and the small
8 coastals, with the exclusion of hammerheads, as
9 Ray said, because there is an issue with,
10 obviously with scalloped hammerheads paying a
11 vulnerable DPS in Caribbean. And there are
12 fishermen we know through our studies, Ray's and
13 my studies, that there are a fair number of
14 juvenile scalloped hammerheads that are being
15 brought into market, despite the zero retention.
16 So, I would exclude the hammerheads. Leave the
17 other allowable species, HMS species, in. And I
18 would exclude pelagics completely. This is a
19 small boat fishery. They are fishing pretty close
20 to shore. They don't really need the pelagics.
21 And we have too many concerns about that group,
22 specifically, shortfin makos and oceanic

1 whitetips.

2 So, something in between C2 and C3.

3 Neither one of these really float my boat and I'd
4 like to see something that's a little bit -- makes
5 a little bit more sense for that particular
6 region.

7 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Bob. Thanks, Bob,
8 appreciate it. Marty Scanlon?

9 MR. SCANLON: Can you hear me?

10 MR. BROOKS: Yep, we can hear you,
11 Marty.

12 MR. SCANLON: Welcome aboard the
13 Provider here, by the way. My problem really is
14 in regards to the Swordfish General Category, you
15 know, retention. And I disagree with what Dewey
16 has to say there with that. I think we need to
17 focus more on if we want to catch our U.S.
18 swordfish quota, we need to concentrate on giving
19 better access, reopening closed bottom to the
20 pelagic longline industry at this time. That's
21 what we should be focusing on.

22 And the reason why I say that and part

1 of the problem that we have right there is like
2 when Dewey asked about how many fish that is, is
3 that there is no VMS. And we argued this point
4 (inaudible) Amendment 8 process that there is no
5 VMS on those boats. And those boats -- any boat
6 that's landing swordfish commercially in the
7 United States should be, you know, equipped with a
8 VMS machine at the very least. And they should be
9 under the same requirements as the pelagic
10 longline industry and because of hailing out what
11 their directed species are and hailing back in.
12 And you can use those same VMS units for
13 electronic, you know, logbooks. So, that would
14 solve a lot of the problems, the issues in there.
15 And we should not even consider or even discuss
16 increasing the landings of those -- that category
17 until they bring that requirement up-to-date and
18 in compliance and equal to what the pelagic
19 longline industry is subjected to.

20 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Marty. Appreciate
21 that. Greg Hinks, let's see if we can squeeze you
22 in with a quick comment before we go to a break.

1 MR. HICKS: All right, thanks. I just
2 wanted to see what the thought was behind the
3 preference for Alternative B2 for the swordfish.

4 MR. BROOKS: Delisse?

5 MS. ORTIZ: Yeah, we were looking at
6 comments and sort of balancing what was currently
7 being done right now. So, right now we adjusted
8 the retention limit to six. And also trying to
9 figure out, you know, if to this rulemaking if,
10 you know, these vessels or the capacity to want to
11 hold more or need to hold more was necessary. So,
12 meaning going from, you know, 6 to 18.

13 MR. BROOKS: Great, thanks. I want to
14 note just two comments in the chat, both from
15 Raimundo. One, just totally agreeing that
16 electric -- to your comments a moment ago, Marty,
17 saying electronic monitoring is needed for every
18 age in the fishery. And also a comment that if
19 local vessels were under 45 feet do not have the
20 capacity for more than six swordfish per day.
21 That would be a stretch already he says.

22 So, with that I want to get us to the

1 cue -- to the break. And I want to thank everyone
2 for their presentations and for working with,
3 again, a tough, a less than ideal situation here.
4 We will reconvene at 11:00 sharp. John Graves, a
5 heads up that you've got from 11:00 to 11:30. And
6 we will need to end pretty much your section at
7 11:30 sharp because that's when we'll need to turn
8 to leadership. So, we will start at 11:00 and
9 hand it off to John and then I know I've still got
10 Scott and Sonja who have some comments that if we
11 can get to from the early -- earliest
12 presentation, we'll try to get there if we can.
13 So, let's go to break and we'll be back at 11:00
14 sharp.

15 (Recess)

16 MR. BROOKS: All right. So I think we
17 should just jump in here because I want to keep us
18 on track for the leadership section. Randy, are
19 you on and ready for me to move forward here?

20 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yes, I am, let's go.
21 That sounds great.

22 MR. BROOKS: So let's hand this off to

1 Don Graves to talk about the 2019 ICCAT meeting.
2 For folks who have had their hand raised, I think
3 these are all left over with the exception of
4 Scott and Sonja I know. But if you all could
5 lower your hands just so as we get to a new
6 conversation I know I've got a fresh set of hands.
7 So that's Scott, we have Lisa, Sonja, Greg,
8 Raimundo, all your hands are still raised. Thank
9 you, Scott.

10 And with that, John, I hand it off to
11 you and your presentation.

12 DR. GRAVES: All right, thanks a lot
13 Bennett, and good morning everybody. I apologize
14 to the ICCAT Advisory Committee Members and many
15 of the new staff who've heard this talk, which
16 seems like a long time ago, which was on March
17 11th when we had just cancelled the ICCAT Advisory
18 Committee Meeting on very short order and managed
19 to have a Webinar for this presentation. And so
20 you can extend your break for those of you who
21 have heard it before.

22 But what I'm going to try and do is to

1 cover what has happened, what happened at the
2 ICCAT Commission Meeting back in November, and for
3 the new members on the Advisory Panel, essentially
4 the member nations of ICCAT are managing the
5 Atlantic Highly Migratory Species, and so what we
6 agreed to at ICCAT, we then have to implement
7 domestically. So that's sort of the overarching
8 thing that we're working with here.

9 So if we roll back the calendar to
10 November and look at what the U.S. priorities were
11 at the time going into the ICCAT meeting, bigeye
12 tuna was a major issue. The year before there had
13 been an assessment by ICCAT and it continued to be
14 overfished with overfishing occurring, and ICCAT
15 did not manage to put in any management measures
16 that year. So it was a high priority issue for
17 2019. And in addition during 2019 there had been
18 an assessment of yellowfin tuna.

19 Marlins were an issue, there had been,
20 in 2018 there had been an assessment of White
21 Marlin, in 2019 an assessment of blue arlin. The
22 measure that was managing them was expiring and so

1 we wanted to get in a new measure that would allow
2 rebuilding because in the case of the Marlins they
3 were overfished, although overfishing wasn't
4 occurring for white marlin, and it was at least
5 fully fished if not slightly overfished for blue
6 marlin.

7 There had been an assessment update for
8 shortfin mako in 2019, and the condition was
9 worse. And we thought we needed to increase
10 management measures, so that was an important
11 priority.

12 The Convention Amendment Procedure,
13 which had been going along for about 10 years
14 trying to update ICCAT with other international
15 management, that process we were hoping to come to
16 completion at this meeting. And then sort of some
17 of our standard motherhood and apple pie, trying
18 to improve monitoring, control, and surveillance
19 measures. We wanted to hold countries accountable
20 for the actions they take. So the Compliance
21 Committee, advancing harvest control rules,
22 management strategy evaluation, and also pushing

1 ahead with bycatch issues.

2 So that was an awful lot to try and get
3 accomplished at the meeting in eight days, and we
4 had a two-day workshop specifically on Panel 1,
5 which are the tropical quotas, before the start of
6 the official Commission Meeting.

7 So we go over, we've had a delegation of
8 people. That sounds like a lot but those were 35
9 people that were pretty much exhausted at the end
10 of the 10 days. And so we were led by our
11 Commissioners, Drew Lawler, Geno Pineiro, and Ray
12 Bogan. We had an incredible support staff from
13 NOAA, Department of State and USTR. And then on
14 the private sector we had participants from the
15 ICCAT Advisory Committee.

16 And so if you haven't been there, and
17 Dewey and Walt, I think this was your first time
18 there, it's amazing that anything gets done in a
19 way, but it puts domestic management in a very
20 good light I think.

21 So 47 of 52 parties were in attendance
22 at the meeting. The United States had leadership

1 roles at ICCAT. Derek Campbell was the chair of
2 the Compliance Committee. Deidre Warner-Kramer is
3 the chair of the Convention Amendment Working
4 Group. And Oriana Villar is the chair of the
5 Online Reporting Working Group.

6 So out of this Commission Meeting over
7 the days we had 12 recommendations and five
8 resolutions that were adopted. And we adopted the
9 Convention Amendment Protocol, which was the
10 biggy.

11 So what I'd like to do is to spend a
12 little time focusing on some of the major species
13 issues that are relevant to the Advisory Panel
14 here, and then I'll also just give a little
15 background on some of the other panels, and then
16 end it there.

17 So we started, you know, we really
18 needed to get something done with bigeye tuna.
19 Bigeye tuna is overfished, overfishing's
20 occurring. Most of you are familiar with the
21 situation. What is happening is that the Skipjack
22 Fishery has increased over time, a surface fishery

1 with purse seine, also fishing on FADs. When that
2 happens there's a bycatch of small bigeye tuna.
3 And so while the overall catches of Bigeye Tuna
4 may not have gone up, there's been a change in the
5 selectivity of the fishery so there's been an
6 increase in the take of small fish and then
7 there's been a slight decrease in the number of
8 the larger adult fish that are taken on the
9 longline gear.

10 And so the trouble we had with bigeye,
11 that we also have with yellowfin tuna, is we don't
12 have country-specific quotas. So a sharing
13 arrangement had been made until allocation is a
14 huge issue and it's getting more and more
15 contentious, not only at ICCAT but in all
16 international fishery management organizations.

17 So as I mentioned, we had failed to get
18 consensus, and that's the way that ICCAT operates,
19 at our meeting in 2018 on a tropical tuna measure,
20 but we had made progress on one. So the chair of
21 that panel, Panel 1, tried to get input from
22 parties during the year. And so we were starting

1 with the chair's proposal with some amendments.
2 But while the chair passed that around it turned
3 out that there were three different groups that
4 had competing proposals to amend the chair's
5 proposal.

6 So one of those was a combination of
7 Latin American parties. Another one was a group
8 of West African parties, and then the EU. So we
9 started off with this two-day workshop, or
10 intersessional meeting on Panel 1, and we actually
11 wasted almost all of the first day trying to
12 figure out how to proceed. And the panel
13 leadership, the chair for this particular panel,
14 Côte d'Ivoire, was of no help in moving things
15 forward. And so in the end the idea was to
16 develop a bracketed document so that we wouldn't
17 reach consensus on any of the particular numbers
18 in there but we would have a range of numbers and
19 hope we'd be able to come back to that. And so
20 they went through this many-paged document,
21 essentially item by item, and allowing time for
22 countries to have their interventions. And there

1 would be endless interventions of similar
2 countries saying the same things, but, you know,
3 no one was really keeping tallies on that.

4 And there was a lot of, behind the
5 scenes there were a lot of things going on. The
6 Latin American countries were definitely being set
7 up by the Spanish purse seine fleets to represent
8 them. Because a lot of these countries were
9 getting very detailed into the proposed management
10 measures yet they don't have any reported landings
11 of bigeye tuna. And so, you know, the Spanish
12 purse seine fleet has seen that, you know, the
13 EU's share will eventually go down and they're
14 going to have to reflag and go elsewhere. And so
15 they essentially took, they've set up other
16 countries to represent them.

17 And we got down to the very last day of
18 the meeting and it was very unsure whether we were
19 actually going to have a measure in place to go
20 on. But we did get one, and it surely was not
21 what the United States wanted, but it was better
22 than just rolling over the measure, the existing

1 measure that was there.

2 So I'll go over some of the major
3 points. This is a 21-page document and you can
4 get it off the ICCAT website if you're interested.
5 But the big thing was the TAC. The TAC had been
6 at 65,000 metric tons, the United States wanted to
7 have a 50,000 metric ton TAC, but we were one of
8 the more conservative nations. And where we ended
9 up was for this year, 2020, we reduced from 65,000
10 down to 62,500, and next year we'll go down to
11 61,500.

12 But just the TAC is sort of meaningless
13 unless they are country-specific quotas. And this
14 was, again, there were a few major players that
15 had quotas, but the rest were held to sort of not
16 exceed certain levels. And it was those countries
17 that were not exceeding the certain levels that
18 essentially were contributing to the great overage
19 that we were having on the TAC. So everybody had
20 to have a limit.

21 And so the way that it was agreed to
22 with those countries that in the previous measure

1 that had a quota share over 10,000 metric tons,
2 they took the 21 percent reduction. Those parties
3 that had a limit of 3,500, a catch limit of 3,500
4 metric tons had a 17 percent reduction over their
5 recent catch, which was typically over a four-year
6 period. And those CPCs that had a limit of 1,000
7 metric tons had a 10 percent reduction. And those
8 that have an average recent catch under 1,000
9 metric tons were to endeavor not to increase.

10 And essentially that's where the United
11 States fell, was under this 1,000 metric tons.
12 But we noted that previously we had been under not
13 to exceed 1,575 metric tons, and this entire, this
14 took many days of negotiations. And I want to
15 point out that this catch limit is only for 2020.
16 So it will have to be renegotiated for 2021.

17 And then in terms of yellowfin, the
18 yellowfin TAC has been at 110,000 metric tons for
19 some time. That was still okay based on the
20 assessment. But it has been exceeded, and again
21 there are no country-specific limit for that so
22 the idea was that this year the catch limits are

1 going to be developed, country-specific catch
2 limits for yellowfin tuna in addition to
3 continuing to put into place some kind of catch
4 limits for bigeye tuna. So leaving a lot for this
5 year.

6 And for those countries, if they have an
7 annual catch limit of more than 1,000 metric tons,
8 to submit an annual capacity fishing plan to show
9 how they're going to operate their fishery. Which
10 is, of course, no problem for the United States.
11 If a country exceeds its catch limit in the one
12 year, that overage is reduced from its catch limit
13 the next year. In two consecutive years, there's
14 a 25 percent penalty. And that's been sort of our
15 standard ICCAT practice for some time.

16 In terms of rolling over if one has a
17 limit and catches less than their limit, they can
18 roll over 10 percent of that. And so that's,
19 again, in an overfished fishery, you want to
20 minimize any kind of roll over. So that's been
21 capped at 10 percent.

22 Fish aggregating devices have been a big

1 issue. The surface fishery for skipjack has moved
2 and is fishing extensively on FADs because they
3 certainly make the fishery more efficient. But
4 they also result in increased catches of very
5 small bigeye tuna. So there are a lot of plans
6 that were put out there to regulate FADs. ICCAT
7 has been trying some time and area closures
8 without much success, for several years.

9 So it went to an Atlantic wide FAD
10 closure was agreed upon. And so that was for two
11 months this year and it will be three months next
12 year.

13 In terms of FAD limitations, for this
14 year it will be 350 FADs per vessel and next year
15 it will be 300 FADs per vessel. And consistent
16 with some of the other tuna RFMOs, there'll be an
17 annual FAD Management Plan for those boats that
18 are using FADs, primarily purse seine vessels.

19 In terms of observer coverage, so if
20 you're going to be having a closure on FAD
21 fishing, you have to have 100 percent observer
22 coverage for the purse seine fleet, and on the

1 pelagic longline fleet it's increased up to 10
2 percent and that could be human or video or
3 electronic, and there's going to be some decisions
4 over this year as to what FAD constitutes.

5 There are a lot of others, monitoring
6 control and surveillance measures that were put in
7 place, and I could spend the rest of my time here
8 talking about that, but I won't. But I do want to
9 put, to make this thing work at the end, Japan has
10 not been catching all of its bigeye quota, so it
11 was willing to make some transfers, as were some
12 other parties just to try and get this through.
13 So having Korea transferring to Chinese Taipei,
14 that wasn't a big deal, or Japan to China, because
15 those countries are basically pelagic longline
16 fleets, so they're fishing on adult fish.

17 But the last one, the transfer from
18 Japan to the European Union of 300 metric tons,
19 was of concern because Japan, they would be
20 fishing on adult fish, so 50 kilogram fish or so,
21 and transferred into the European Union where that
22 actually would be, they're going to be fishing,

1 that's going to be the bycatch in the skipjack
2 fisheries, so those are going to be very small
3 bigeye tuna. So, you know, the number of
4 individuals that were transferred was not
5 reflective of the tonnage. And it just goes to
6 exacerbate the growth overfishing that's going on
7 for that fishery.

8 There was supposed to be a Panel 1
9 intersessional meeting in April, that's been
10 postponed, as have many of the ICCAT
11 intersessional meetings. And in fact there's a
12 good chance that the ICCAT meeting, the Commission
13 Meeting in November will not be held in person.
14 So that's Panel 1.

15 Going on to Panel 2, which are the
16 Northern Temperate Tunas which in the Atlantic
17 we're talking about the two stocks of bluefin tuna
18 as well as northern albacore.

19 So I will talk a little bit more about
20 this later on, but the SCRS sanctioned by the
21 ICCAT will conduct a stock assessment update of
22 bluefin this year. Because the measure that we're

1 currently in, the last assessment was three years
2 ago and the TAC was set for three years. And so
3 this update will provide TAC advice for 2021 and
4 2022.

5 So then we went back and we revisited,
6 in 2018 we spent a lot of time at the ICCAT
7 meeting working on a bluefin measure, and it took
8 an incredible amount of time. And it's a 47-page
9 measure or something like that, ridiculous. And
10 so as we were going through it, and sometimes we
11 were in drafting sessions in plenary until 10:30
12 at night. There were some things that were
13 inconsistent in the document and there were some
14 errors. So what we ended up doing was spending an
15 awful lot of time in Panel 2 at this meeting going
16 through this entire document, item by item, making
17 changes.

18 And I want to point out that in 2018
19 when we had this measure, there was a lot of
20 interest at least in those CPCs fishing on the
21 Eastern stock of the bluefin, was with the
22 increasing TAC. They wanted to release a lot of

1 the measures, the management measures that were on
2 there. And that's great except the forecast is is
3 that if you look at what's going on at, it's
4 believed that at the next assessment, that if
5 we're fishing at that 0.1 that we're going to end
6 up having to decrease the TAC. So you don't want
7 to release a lot of these management measures to
8 only have to reapply them later on. But that's
9 essentially what happened.

10 And so we spent an incredible amount of
11 time at this last meeting catching the errors that
12 were made. And it's mind-numbingly boring. And
13 it fits a picture that ICCAT had actually on their
14 website during a Panel 2 session, and it has
15 allowed the U.S. delegation sitting in there, and
16 you can see how actively engaged they are, as
17 countries are going around wordsmithing item by
18 item.

19 So in addition, we adopted a resolution
20 on bluefin tuna control traceability measures that
21 establishes a working group. Many of you can
22 recall that there was a considerable IUU harvest

1 of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean and so how
2 did this get through ICCAT and how is it, can we
3 essentially how are we going to do a better job of
4 policing our fisheries. And so the first meeting
5 of this working group was in March, and it will
6 continue.

7 In terms of northern albacore, that's a
8 management strategy evaluation. We are now using
9 a harvest strategy for northern albacore in ICCAT
10 but we still needed to identify exceptional
11 circumstances, and the panel's chair will be
12 developing a proposal that was considered at the
13 meeting in March.

14 Panel 3 is southern albacore, and of
15 course the United States had a little catch of
16 southern albacore many years ago but we don't
17 anymore. And the way that the panels are set up
18 in ICCAT is pretty strange. So there wasn't
19 really much to report for this one, only that
20 those countries that had carry forward wanted to
21 roll that over and also to share the underages.

22 And then we get to Panel 4 which is our

1 swordfish, marlins, sharks, and a lot of bycatch
2 issues in this panel as well. So it's a very
3 important panel. And so with swordfish,
4 Resolution 19-14 just set up the initial
5 management objectives for the North Atlantic
6 Swordfish Management Strategy Evaluation. So
7 getting that into place as we're starting to
8 develop the harvest strategies for northern
9 swordfish.

10 In the case of billfish, we did a
11 consensus recommendation. We started off with two
12 competing measures, one by the United States, one
13 by the European Union. One of the goals of the
14 United States' measure was to get rebuilding of
15 the overfished stocks and to make sure that we
16 reduce fishing pressure and to reduce the TACs.
17 But we also, the United States is in a position
18 with blue and white marlin where we have a total
19 of 250 fish for a recreational fishery. And so
20 we've already made our cuts, and so we don't want
21 to have sequential cuts upon those. And so we
22 wanted to defend that 250 fish. And of course

1 when we actually went to 250 fish in 2000, many of
2 the people that were there that understood the
3 cuts that we were making at that time, aren't
4 there anymore, and so there's this feeling that if
5 other countries are going to feel the pain, we
6 should feel some pain as well.

7 And so I think we did a pretty good job,
8 we did preserve our 250 combined blue marlin/white
9 marlin/roundscale spearfish.

10 MR. BROOKS: John, just a quick time
11 check. You got about eight minutes left.

12 DR. GRAVES: I got it, not a problem.
13 Thanks. So where we went with the billfish was we
14 dropped the TAC from blue marlin from 2,000 to
15 1,670, and white marlin from 400 metric tons to
16 355. So again, that should stop overfishing, and
17 we have country-specific catch limits. So
18 countries are going to have to report on these.
19 And then there's no carry forward of the
20 underages, and it requires live release to the
21 extent possible. Which is something that
22 countries have been supposed to do since 2000,

1 although some countries have simply caught their
2 quota that they could and then once they reached
3 their quota, released the animals. And of course
4 that's not the best way to reduce the fishing
5 mortality on the stock as a whole.

6 In terms of sharks, we once again put
7 up, Mexico presented, fins attached, naturally
8 attached. We had 32 co-sponsors but, again, no
9 consensus because distant water fleets didn't want
10 to go along with it, and so no decision. It was
11 decided not to take a vote, and so it just
12 continues once again to go and see what happens
13 this year.

14 Recommendation 19-07, North Atlantic
15 blue shark, this amended Rec 16-12 which just had
16 CPCs' specific catch limit, including the limits
17 in there. And so essentially we now have a hard
18 TAC and we have a country-specific catch limit.
19 As you can see it's really the EU that is catching
20 or retaining the vast majority of these. And so
21 that leaves 870 metric tons for others. The
22 United States was a little bit concerned because,

1 you know, they're talking about landings. What if
2 you go from landings to talking about discard
3 mortality, are we going to be dinged for that.
4 And does that 870 include that. And so the way
5 that the measure stated it we should be clear on
6 that. But it really doesn't address the dead
7 discards, but it is good in that this is I believe
8 the first TAC for Blue Shark by any of the RFMOs.

9 South Atlantic blue shark, it set the
10 TAC at 28,923, it had just been a not to exceed
11 before, and they'll address allocation of the TAC
12 in 2021.

13 Shortfin mako, of course that was a big
14 priority for the United States. There were two
15 competing proposals, well actually three. There's
16 one by the United States and Curacao, one by
17 Senegal and nine other co-sponsors, and one by the
18 EU.

19 Senegal's proposal, which was
20 essentially no retention, had the most support.
21 It also had a, they had put in a TAC for the South
22 Atlantic. There was lots of discussion among the

1 proposals, but there was no consensus. And so the
2 chair, Fabio from Brazil for Panel 4, introduced
3 his own, that essentially rolled over the existing
4 recommendation. But under this recommendation,
5 you know, we are continuing to overfish an
6 overfished stock. So this is, they're supposed to
7 have a Panel 4 meeting to discuss this this year,
8 but whether that happens or not, we'll see.

9 In terms of sea turtles. Sea turtles or
10 our circle hook proposal. We have 11 co-sponsors,
11 we thought we had a good shot at it in 2019
12 because similar measures have been adopted by the
13 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and
14 through WCPFC. But we did not reach consensus on
15 it. And again, Uruguay tends to be pretty
16 problematic.

17 Compliance. Last year was a light year
18 for compliance. Every other year we have a
19 two-day intersessional compliance meeting right
20 before the meeting starts. But we reviewed
21 performance of various countries. Countries have
22 to, you know, those countries that have been cited

1 the year before, they have to then respond and
2 then indicate what they were doing to take care of
3 those issues.

4 And so that process worked pretty
5 smoothly. But identifications were maintained for
6 Dominica and there were new identifications for
7 Costa Rica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guinea Bissau,
8 Guinea Republic, Guyana, and Namibia. And the
9 important thing with these is if these
10 identifications are not correct then they can lead
11 to trade restrictive measures. So identification
12 is a big thing.

13 So for the lesser sins, we have letters,
14 they used be letters of concern, we can no longer
15 say concern. But those were sent to 37 parties.

16 And the rest of this is just, you can
17 read it later on. Some of you have already heard
18 it. Permanent Working Group, which really it
19 takes into account, port states authority
20 measures, monitoring, control and surveillance, we
21 had several items that were adopted that had been
22 played around for a few years at ICCAT.

1 So observer safety, we finally got that,
2 as well as companion measures, a resolution by
3 Norway. Voluntary exchange of inspection
4 personnel. This is something we had already put
5 in place, the United States had been pushing for
6 this for some time. And now we have it, including
7 bluefin farms and traps.

8 Vessel sightings, lost and abandoned
9 fishing gear. Those were adopted. But the U.S.
10 put up a draft recommendation on transshipment,
11 limiting transshipment, but we did not get it in
12 by the deadline that was suggested for the
13 commission, so it wasn't considered at that
14 meeting but will be taken up if we have an
15 Integrated Monitoring Measures Working Group
16 meeting this year.

17 Various items on the electronic Bluefin
18 reporting was undertaken. And then there was,
19 again, Japan has put in, some other countries, the
20 idea of expanding our catch documents programs to
21 include Swordfish and bigeye tuna, but that didn't
22 go anywhere yet.

1 STACFAD is just really the underlying,
2 the infrastructure of it, the budget. And the
3 budget seems to be fine but it was increased 5
4 percent.

5 And so we move to plenary, and the big
6 deal in plenary, the plenary session was that the
7 convention amendment was adopted. So
8 congratulations to Deidre and her team. Deidre
9 was the chair of the amendment working group, and
10 then Bill Gibbons-Fly and several others from
11 state were very important in getting this through,
12 and it was a many-year process. So well done on
13 that.

14 And then commission elections, that was
15 a complete disaster. There wasn't consensus on
16 that so for the first time we just rolled over all
17 of the positions. And then the next meeting is
18 scheduled for Antalya in Turkey where we met once
19 before many years ago. And whether actually that
20 meeting happens or not, we don't know yet.

21 So just very quickly, I've been asked to
22 make a small public service announcement from John

1 Walter, and unfortunately he can't be here to
2 present. And this was in response to a comment
3 regarding where the progress is on ICCAT's
4 development of Bluefin Tuna management strategy
5 evaluation objective or harvest procedures.

6 So most of you are familiar with
7 management strategy evaluation objective, and
8 that's essentially to make the process for the
9 management of bluefin tuna more automatic and not
10 have to discuss the merits of the science, but for
11 the group as a whole to decide on indices right up
12 front and then have management actions that will
13 essentially go into place automatically, depending
14 on what the indices indicate. And so this process
15 has been going on, and then the whole harvest
16 strategy process involves tight coordination
17 between management, stakeholders, and the
18 scientists. And so this process is ongoing at
19 ICCAT, and it has been used already by an RFMO so
20 for southern bluefin tuna the CCSBT has done that.
21 And what it ended up doing is it tends to add
22 stability to the fishery, predictably, and easier

1 setting the TAC levels.

2 So that's where we're hoping to go with
3 ICCAT. As I said, we've already done it at ICCAT
4 for northern albacore, next is bluefin tuna, and
5 then hopefully swordfish.

6 So this just shows you where we are in
7 the process. We will be doing, the scientists
8 will be doing an update, stock assessment update
9 this year. Currently for this current year, 2020,
10 we're under the existing measure where we have a
11 TAC of 2,350 for the West and 36,000 for the East.
12 And then SCRS will be doing a strict update which
13 will set the TAC for 2021 and 2022. And then it's
14 hoped that a management procedure will be able to
15 be incorporated by 2022. And the advantage over
16 the single, sort of these two stock things that
17 we've been doing is that this new procedure will
18 incorporate a lot of what we've learned about
19 mixing and movement of fish, of eastern and
20 western fish into eastern and western fisheries.

21 So if stakeholders here in the AP are
22 interested, there are some workshops that are

1 being held by Dr. Steve Cadrin on getting
2 stakeholder input, and also the National Marine
3 Fishery Service will likely have some additional
4 workshops coming up. And of course I assume those
5 will be heavily advertised.

6 So with that I'm out of my time. If you
7 have any questions about the Commission meeting,
8 please feel free to email me, and if you want some
9 more detail about the Bluefin Tuna MSE, please
10 email John Walter. And with that, that's it.

11 MR. BROOKS: John, thank you so much. I
12 know it's always a challenge to ask you to confine
13 such a long detailed meeting into 20 or 30
14 minutes, but you do a marvelous job, so thank you.

15 I think we will not take questions now
16 again as John suggested. If you have questions on
17 any of it, please reach out to him directly. And
18 at this point, one of the benefits of this weird
19 world is that no one is traveling as much so we
20 actually get real, we get the theme of NOAA
21 leadership in the mix for our calls today.
22 Normally we only get one, but we've got both Chris

1 Oliver and Sam Rauch, the rest had to leave.

2 And so, Chris and Sam, if we can hand it
3 over to you. And I think just sort of do the
4 panel the way we normally would, which is invite
5 you all to share some thoughts and reflections and
6 comments and then we'll open it up to the AP
7 members for whatever questions or comments they
8 have for you.

9 MR. OLIVER: Hey, this is Chris. Just a
10 quick sound check. Can you hear me?

11 MR. BROOKS: We can hear you perfectly.
12 Thanks, Chris.

13 MR. OLIVER: Great. Thanks. And
14 thanks, John, for that report. I was able to be
15 online for the last 15 minutes and hear a good
16 part of it.

17 I'm glad to have the chance to meet with
18 you all today. And I just want to start by
19 thanking you for your time and energy in managing
20 Atlantic HMS' highly migratory species. And state
21 that your advice and perspectives are not just
22 extremely valuable, they're absolutely essential

1 to our ability to effectively and properly manage
2 these stocks. So appreciate that, and your
3 flexibility with regard to these extraordinary
4 times in being able to join this virtual meeting.

5 As you are aware, everybody's making
6 similar adjustments, we're all kind of living in a
7 virtual world right now. Councils and commissions
8 are all doing Webinars in order to maintain and
9 accomplish their essential priorities.

10 My typical day is back to back to back
11 teleconferences, video conferences, Webinars all
12 day long and into the evening. So it's a weird
13 time and I know it's affected all of us in
14 different ways. And I know very negatively
15 impacting both our commercial and recreational
16 fisheries and associated industries and businesses
17 that support them.

18 I wasn't able to be online for your
19 presentation earlier today on fisheries economic
20 situation report, but, you know, we spend a lot of
21 our energies lately on near-term COVID response,
22 vis a vis the CARES Act. For example trying to

1 get some immediate relief that we can. But I
2 think that this effort that we have under way to
3 this sort of economic sector assessment is really
4 going to help us in the longer term when we come
5 out the other end of this to be able to revive and
6 sustain our fisheries, some of which are getting
7 seriously negatively impacted.

8 In the meantime we're trying to do the
9 best we can, sustainably manage our fisheries and
10 maintain our management science essential mission
11 priorities. Obviously challenging when we're all
12 in a virtual telework situation. We're dealing
13 with, you know, trying to keep observers where we
14 can. We're dealing with trying to keep surveys
15 where we can but we're trying to provide
16 regulatory relief where we can. And I spent a lot
17 of my morning talking about surveys and the fact
18 that our white ships are tied up for the moment
19 and probably for another month or two, and where
20 we can plug the holes in those research and data
21 streams.

22 Just turning a little bit to the recent

1 executive order that was announced on the American
2 seafood competitiveness and economic growth. Part
3 of that involves our administration's regulatory
4 agenda to aim at regulatory reform and reducing
5 unnecessary regulatory burdens that continues to
6 be an administration focus and one of my goals,
7 personal goals.

8 You recall maybe in 2017 when I first
9 came on board we went through a process soliciting
10 public input, counsel input, etcetera, to identify
11 unnecessary or overly burdensome regulations. And
12 this process under the executive order will be
13 similar to that again. And although the
14 Magnuson-Stevens Act step sized it and finds that
15 HMS management doesn't fall under the purview of
16 the fishery management council, we would take any
17 HMSAP recommendations or recommendations from the
18 public into consideration. And I know that some
19 of the rulemaking initiatives that we have or
20 currently undertaking have exactly resulted from
21 such recommendations and discussions with the
22 HMSAP. And we will continue to be open to receive

1 public recommendations and would continue to
2 presume to utilize the HMSAP meetings as our
3 primary opportunity to engage in discussion and
4 receive input about potential recommendations that
5 we receive consistent, obviously, with the
6 Magnuson Act, Tuna Convention Act, and other
7 applicable laws and regulations. So we certainly
8 don't want to in any way exclude the ability for
9 this regulatory reform initiatives to reach into
10 HMS, and ideally through of the developer of the
11 AP.

12 So a lot's happened since you met in
13 September. Had some big issues, publication of
14 the final rule for the Bluefin Tuna area based
15 management rule. We anticipate a proposed rule
16 this summer for Amendment 13, and look forward to
17 hearing your comments on the rule before we
18 finalize it.

19 I would say, you know, conducting
20 research and data collection to determine these
21 appropriate spatial management approaches is a
22 continuing priority. And I think that's reflected

1 in this final Bluefin Tuna area based management
2 rule.

3 We also continue to be aware of the
4 challenges of shark management and our work on
5 Amendment 14 on quota management for sharks, you
6 know, shark depredation being a growing concern
7 across many fisheries. So there's never a
8 shortage of challenges that we're dealing with,
9 and certainly in the current environment it makes
10 dealing with them all the more challenging. And
11 so with your help we're going to be able to
12 address them.

13 So I just want to make those brief
14 comments. Thank you again for taking time from
15 your schedules. I know many of you are dealing
16 with impacts to your business, your fishing
17 related activities and, you know, you're taking
18 time out of your schedule and other commitments to
19 attend these meetings and provide this input and
20 advice to us. So appreciate you being able to
21 join and happy I was able to join you for a little
22 bit.

1 And with that I'll just stop and see if
2 we can open it up. Sam, do you have any other
3 comments, we can just open it up to questions
4 people might have for you or I?

5 MR. RAUCH: I do not have any other
6 comments, Chris.

7 MR. BROOKS: Bennett here. Then let's
8 open it up. And, Chris and Sam, we have you until
9 the top of the hour; is that right?

10 MR. RAUCH: Yes.

11 MR. BROOKS: So we'll say about 20
12 minutes. So let's see what kind of comments or
13 questions folks might have.

14 Greg Hinks, your hand was up, was that
15 leftover or do you want to be something in or this
16 conversation?

17 MR. HINKS: Sorry, that was leftover.

18 MR. BROOKS: Great. Okay. So let's go
19 first to Scott Taylor and then Bob Hueter. So
20 let's open it up. Scott Taylor.

21 MR. TAYLOR: This is pretty new for all
22 of us. I haven't had the opportunity to meet you

1 yet, Chris. The first year that you were actually
2 at the AP, and I have some of their AP, were quite
3 a number of years, it was one of the first
4 meetings I missed and then the whole gang got
5 here, are the same topics as then. I wasn't able
6 to attend that.

7 But what's first and foremost on our
8 agenda here is, you know, we heard a lot again
9 today about some measures, particularly for the
10 Caribbean Small Boat and other measures to help us
11 to address some of the Swordfish quota issues that
12 are substantial and they are going to be even more
13 significant looking forward as we continue to have
14 attrition in the fleet. In general for the
15 industry but as well also from the economic
16 inability for this need to be financially
17 competitive and successful.

18 That those of us that are involved in a
19 fishery on a daily basis, you know, we started
20 out, we hold about 17 Atlantic permits, we had 13
21 active boats, and right now we're down to four or
22 five that are fishing. And quite frankly, it's

1 just because it's not economically viable to do
2 that. And in the absence of us getting some
3 relief to be able to fish for Swordfish where the
4 swordfish live, we are never going to be able to
5 catch our quota.

6 This has been an ongoing problem that
7 all the regulatory stuff which we have been
8 working for the 12 years that I've been part of
9 the AP has not borne any significant regulatory
10 reform to address the core issue, which is just
11 that we can't fish where the swordfish bottom is.
12 When these regulations were put in place they were
13 put in place for a varying amount of reasons, but
14 certainly it was with the overall general health
15 of the swordfish stock itself, which has now
16 recovered. But there was never any sunset of
17 these regulations that were put into place in
18 order to give us back the very area where we need
19 in order to be able to catch this quota.

20 The numbers are invisible, they continue
21 to fall. The fleet is the only, the swordfish
22 pelagic fleet, our longliners, are the only option

1 that the U.S. has if it wants to not lose this
2 ICCAT quota eventually and fill our numbers. I
3 mean it isn't going to happen out of buoy fishing,
4 it isn't going to happen out of (inaudible), it
5 isn't going to happen out of small boat permits,
6 it has to come from the fleet that has the ability
7 to be able to target the fish.

8 We have implemented huge regulatory and
9 restrictive measures for accountability that
10 exists, you know, with the EM and with everything
11 else. We have been begging for the opportunity to
12 show that we can mitigate by-catch in these areas,
13 and all that we're looking for, whether or not
14 it's your research or whether or not it was
15 through the EFPs that we were involved with that
16 ultimately politically became a hot potato. To
17 demonstrate we can harvest these fish in a
18 responsible and environmentally minimal impact
19 way.

20 I appreciate your thoughts.

21 MR. BROOKS: Thank you so much, we
22 appreciate it. We actually have a couple of

1 questions that were submitted. Let me pop one of
2 those in, or two of those in, and then we'll get
3 back to the que.

4 There was a question from Mark Sampson,
5 I'll just read it to you. It's actually more of a
6 question or comment. The cooperative shark
7 tagging program has been a valuable resource of
8 education and outreach for commercial and
9 recreational fishing. Recently it's been
10 difficult to get tags due to funding limitations.
11 This program should continue, it should not be cut
12 due to lack of funding or other issues. Again,
13 from Mark Sampson.

14 Chris or Sam, would you care to respond
15 to that or comments?

16 MR. OLIVER: I don't have any response
17 to that question you just read. I'm not sure I
18 understood it, but just on the swordfish issue, I
19 appreciate those comments. You know, here we are
20 looking, saying we want to do regulatory reform
21 and we're not getting our swordfish quota caught
22 partly because of regulatory restrictions. And,

1 you know, I've never fully understood how much of
2 that, you know, not being able to obtain our quota
3 is market related issues versus regulatory issues.
4 But to the extent we can, we should be doing
5 everything we can to promote the fuller harvest of
6 that resource.

7 And you know, I think, yeah, we ran into
8 political issues with some of the EFPs we were
9 looking at that would have, you know, let us use
10 of that assessment, look at bycatch rates that you
11 were referring to. I hope we can continue to look
12 at those. I think the bluefin tuna area based
13 management final rule does show that we can move
14 forward with some of those, albeit in the face of
15 some, you know, fairly significant opposition from
16 a number of quarters. And so we can do that, and
17 I just want to say that I very much appreciate and
18 take those comments to heart.

19 MR. BROOKS: I have another question
20 here. This note is from Mike Pierdinock, he's a
21 charter/headboat operator. Question: Because of
22 reduced landings over the last few months, is the

1 agency considering increasing retention limits to
2 recreational for hire fleet for the fall?

3 Again, question. Because of reduced
4 landings the last few months is the agency
5 considering increasing limits this fall for the
6 rec for hire?

7 MR. OLIVER: Well Sam may weigh in here.
8 I think that we can look at modifying retention
9 limits for certain species. Bluefin tuna may be
10 one of them. And I guess this is fishing season
11 for tuna, we need to look at the data we have and
12 consider the determination criteria outlined in
13 the regs to make those decisions about end season
14 adjustments to retention limits. I think other
15 species like sharks, not something that can as
16 easily be done as an end season action.

17 Open to any recommendations from the AP
18 on ways we can take those things into
19 consideration. Any addition thoughts on that,
20 Sam?

21 MR. RAUCH: Yeah. I would say if this
22 were a council, it's not, but similar, that kind

1 of request we would take the opinion of the
2 council as to whether or not either to use
3 existing authority, or if we don't have it,
4 whether we should issue an emergency rule.

5 There have been certain fisheries in
6 which, due to COVID, landings are significantly
7 depressed. And they're looking at end of season
8 or carry overs. There may not do all that, but if
9 it can be done and it doesn't have environmental
10 consequences, negative consequences or things that
11 we can't avoid, we'd like to try to do them.

12 So if the AP would like to make a
13 recommendation to that effect, I certainly think
14 we could consider it. I'm not going to guarantee
15 that we could do anything like that, but that is
16 the kind of thing we've been looking at for other
17 councils at other fisheries.

18 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Sam. Bob Hueter,
19 we can answer that, open up Bob Hueter.

20 MR. HUETER: I have a question for
21 Chris, but first a quick comment. I want to check
22 in with what Mark Sampson said about the

1 cooperative tagging program. My understanding is
2 this program budgets for about 200K per year and
3 thousands of recreational anglers and some
4 commercial fishermen are engaged. The payoff for
5 it is very high in terms of not only scientific
6 data, but involvement in conservation at
7 fisheries. So I think NOAA should explore some
8 innovative options for funding that. I'd be happy
9 to be part of that conversation.

10 My question for Chris is I want to
11 commend you, Chris, for the very clear and
12 science-based communication you put out earlier
13 this year about the shark fin, the U.S. Domestic
14 shark fin industry. I thought it was right on
15 point and it actually I think helped us pass a
16 bill here in Florida that ended up being a
17 rational approach to regulating the shark fin
18 industry in terms of dealing with imports, which
19 is a problem, rather than the domestic sales.

20 My question to you is, what is NOAA
21 doing on Capitol Hill to actively advise, if not
22 promote, or at least advance, a similar rational

1 approach in Federal legislation, and specifically
2 bills such as the Rubio-Webster Bills that have
3 been in committee for some time? Thank you.

4 MR. OLIVER: Yeah, this is Chris. Short
5 of lobbying, which we are really not allowed to
6 do, we have provided technical drafting assistance
7 on some of those bills, we've provided position
8 papers on those bills. I think that may be the
9 one time, one of very few times that we actually
10 came out with a fairly strong statement in
11 opposition to a bill, including testimony that I
12 believe was provided by Alan Risenhoover at that
13 time at a hearing on the Hill.

14 So we've been pretty consistent and
15 pretty firm on our position on those Federal
16 legislative packages as well.

17 MR. BROOKS: Sam, do you want to add
18 anything there or should I go to the next member?

19 MR. RAUCH: No, I think Chris said it
20 well.

21 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Tim Pickett, let's
22 get you into the conversation here.

1 MR. PICKETT: Yes. Thanks guys, and
2 thanks for the goal review, Mr. Oliver. I'm just
3 kind of, you know, outgoing couple of the
4 sentiments that Scott highlighted there. You
5 know, a big one in terms of the deregulations in
6 removing the regulatory burden here, you know, is
7 there was a lot of effort and a lot of money spent
8 in developing, you know, the cameras, developing
9 VMS, the IVQ, you know, and they're not being
10 utilized as tools, in my opinion, to, you know,
11 first of all, change the optics of the industry.
12 And second of all, exactly the way Scott's saying
13 about giving bottom back, you know. There's
14 always mechanisms to take something away, but
15 there's not really a mechanism to then, you know,
16 put it back in.

17 I am of the opinion that all these tools
18 we have here need to start getting used for the
19 whole fleet. You know, I think this epidemic
20 issue that we have here has brought a lot of
21 attention as to where our things come from.
22 Certainly from, you know, being a manufacturer of

1 equipment, you know, it has given a lot of folks,
2 you know, focus to us because we build stuff in
3 the U.S. And I think food wise people are paying
4 a lot of attention to where there food comes from.
5 It slowed down, you know, it slowed down imports a
6 little bit, people are, you know, kind of
7 embracing (audio skip) period of time to, you
8 know, help bolster the industry and give a little
9 bit back to the industry here because people are
10 starting to pay attention as to where there food
11 comes from.

12 You know, like Scott was saying earlier,
13 you know, there's guys talking about there's a
14 little bit more engagement of the public here.
15 And I think it's a great time to take advantage of
16 that and to promote people to endorse U.S.
17 fisheries and, you know, a lot of people are
18 really scared. I work a lot with the recreational
19 community too, you know. The pelagic longline
20 fleet is a monster in a dark room right now. And
21 for people to really see that it's not a monster
22 to be scared of, you gotta turn the light on at

1 some point, you know. So that's just my general
2 comment.

3 And, you know, we know how to close
4 things. If things get really bad you can close it
5 back down. But we have a lot better ability to
6 measure things now with all these tools that we
7 have, you know, to make sure things don't get out
8 of control, you know.

9 That's just my general comment, it
10 wasn't really a question, you know.

11 MR. OLIVER: I agree with your comment.

12 MR. BROOKS: Just want to flag that
13 David Kerstetter and a few have waited as well
14 with response work for the cooperative shark
15 tagging program and voiced similar concerns
16 related to the Billfish Tuna cooperative tagging
17 center.

18 Mark Sampson, you're in the queue,
19 assuming maybe you want to try to amplify the
20 point of the question that was raised earlier.
21 Let's open up for Mark.

22 MR. SAMPSON: Yes. All right. Thank

1 you very much for bringing it up and allowing me.
2 Yes, I just want to very quick remunerate somewhat
3 of what has already been said.

4 You know, the program has been around
5 since 1962, and that's where (audio skip) a lot of
6 us I think. I'm not going to speak to the
7 research end of it because I think that you all
8 know a lot better what the research has come out
9 of that program as provided. But as far as how
10 well it's worked for recreational fishermen, I
11 will speak from my personal experience, basically
12 that's what got me interested in shark
13 conservation, being involved somewhat in shark
14 research and education and so on and so on.

15 I know from (audio skip) shark fisherman
16 being involved in (audio skip) so long that I'm
17 not alone in that. So many recreational
18 fishermen, whether for hire or private fishermen
19 have taken more than just a passive interest in
20 shark conservation, live handling practices and
21 all that just as they were involved in the tagging
22 program.

1 Also, you know, from a conservation end
2 of it, I guarantee there's a lot more sharks that
3 have been released over the years because on board
4 they had tags, would have tagged that shark, in
5 other words they were a for hire situation or a
6 private citizen. That was a decision, for the
7 decision (audio skip) tag it, and so on.

8 So it's been such a wonderful program
9 that has worked for our conservation shark and
10 getting recreational fishermen engaged and
11 interested in research and conservation that if
12 there is funding problems it's best to have all
13 this stuff. I thought that it kind of sounded
14 that way and I just hope that if that's a problem
15 experienced in the future, before the program
16 might start to waiver a bit, that either if the
17 agency needs to reach out to recreational anglers
18 and say, hey, you know, we need help here or
19 something, I know there is a lot of us that could
20 help.

21 I just wanted to bring that up there
22 while we have some great audience here.

1 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Mark. And I'll
2 note that our are way of saying from the U.S.
3 Caribbean, they support the cooperative shark
4 research program as well.

5 And we probably have time for one more
6 quick comment or question. Dewey Hemilright,
7 let's get you into the mix.

8 MR. HEMILRIGHT: Can you hear me?

9 MR. BROOKS: Yes, we can. Thank you.

10 MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you both for
11 listening to our comments today. This past year
12 I've been to the ICCAT for the first time and it
13 was pretty eye-opening for me just taking part of
14 the delegation and see the hard work that the U.S.
15 Does.

16 That being said, we are a very small
17 monitor harvest employer in the big picture in the
18 Atlantic and with our international fisheries.
19 It's tough when we have a 95, 90- page compliance
20 guide that we have to fish with under for U.S.
21 Fisherman's for these highly migratory species and
22 at the same time imports from other countries have

1 little or no standards.

2 What can be done? And is there any acts
3 on the book that are laws that can be done to
4 level the playing field so not to ban it, but to
5 level the playing field that the same imports of
6 highly migratory fish that come into our country
7 have to meet or exceed the same standard by which
8 U.S. Fisherman are obligated to and have to fish
9 under.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Dewey.

12 MR. RAUCH: Maybe I could. So there's
13 two aspects, two tools that we have at the moment
14 to the extent that the standards are imposed to
15 protect marine mammals. Not turtles, but marine
16 mammals. We do have an extensive program to try
17 to ensure that imports meet U.S. standards. We
18 have authority to do that under the Marine Mammal
19 Protection Act. They've created a new regulatory
20 program that in 2022 we might start putting import
21 restrictions on there. Right now we are working
22 with other countries to try to bring them up to

1 the U.S. standard. And we expect reports from
2 other countries this fall, and then I think that
3 if the countries are not complying with U.S.
4 Marine Mammal standards, they get put into place
5 in 2022, import restrictions. So there's that
6 opportunity there to the extent that there's a
7 marine mammal concern.

8 To the extent that the imports are
9 illegal or high yield fishing, we do have an
10 ability to trace that and use that process for IUU
11 traceability if there are. I'm not sure it's
12 illegal, it is more they're not fishing in the
13 same level as our protective standards.

14 So I think that tool is available for
15 other fisheries. I don't know that it is that
16 significant for swordfish, but that is out there
17 as well if at some point we think that swordfish
18 is subject to a lot of IEU imports. I think the
19 moment of significant action is the upcoming work
20 with other countries on marine mammal imports to
21 make sure that they have the same marine mammal
22 standards as the U.S.

1 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Sam. We are just
2 past 12:00, so I know we need to let both of you
3 go. So there are other folks get in or get back
4 to the que, and apologies that we don't have the
5 time to do that.

6 But certainly encourage everyone again
7 to show us the comments in the chat so HMS staff
8 sees it and they can share it with leadership as
9 well.

10 But, Chris and Sam, thanks so much as
11 always for making time. Randy, I don't know if
12 there's anything you want to fold in before Chris
13 and Sam get out.

14 MR. OLIVER: Yeah, I have to sign off.
15 This is Chris. Again, sorry I can't stay on
16 longer. I'll get with Sam and follow up on the
17 shark tagging research program too. I don't know
18 exactly what the funding bottleneck is or how
19 extensive the tags are, but Sam and I will take a
20 look into that and follow up on that.

21 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Chris, very much.

22 MR. RAUCH: Thanks you all, have a good

1 rest of the meeting, I gotta sign off.

2 MR. BROOKS: Thank you. Randy, we're
3 slated to go for lunch. I know there were two
4 people who wanted to get into the queue early
5 after your initial presentation. That was Sonja
6 and Scott. What I'd love to do is just sort pull
7 more names from lunch and let them get in and then
8 we'll break for lunch and reconvene at 1:00. Does
9 that work?

10 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yeah, that works for
11 me.

12 MR. BROOKS: All right. So Scott and
13 Sonja, I'll ask each of you to be succinct so we
14 can all get to lunch but we want to give you a
15 chance to weigh in on the piece that you didn't
16 get to talk about. So, Sonja.

17 MS. FORDHAM: Thanks. Great. All
18 right, is that better?

19 MR. BROOKS: That's better, thank you.

20 MS. FORDHAM: Okay. I just had two
21 questions that point to some management
22 suggestions. I appreciate the information on the

1 biops but I somehow missed that. But I did
2 participate in NOAA's ESA recovery workshop for
3 oceanic whitetip sharks last year. And as we
4 mentioned earlier today, NOAA banned the retention
5 of oceanic whitetip sharks, but only in Atlantic
6 pelagic fisheries, after the ICCAT ban like a
7 decade ago. And through those ESA workshops and
8 also past AP meetings, there have been calls from
9 some stakeholders to prohibit retention of oceanic
10 whitetips in all U.S. fisheries, which would see
11 us closing a loophole and kind of a no brainer
12 first step to better protection for the species,
13 especially now that NOAA has to develop recovery
14 actions under the ESA.

15 So my first question. And I'll get them
16 both, but my first question is just about any
17 progress or updates on that potential for closing
18 that loophole.

19 And then my other question was related
20 to the landings reports that were reviewed in the
21 opening presentation and kind of a similar point.
22 That it seems to me that it's increasing

1 inadequate to keep this category known as other
2 pelagic sharks other than porbeagle and blue for
3 reporting the landings of oceanic whitetip,
4 shortfin makos, and common threshers in the
5 aggregate. Especially considering they're all now
6 (inaudible) U.S.A listed, makos being a big
7 mortality reduction and common fisheries haven't
8 been assessed. And of course common threshers are
9 easily distinguishable from the other two. So at
10 the same time U.S. Is reporting landings in
11 shortfin makos and other pelagic sharks by species
12 by ICCAT.

13 So my question is just about the
14 disconnect with the domestic landings reports, and
15 if there are or could be any plans for amending
16 the system so that the reports that NOAA puts out
17 to the public can show the breakdown of landings
18 by species. Again, that's oceanic whitetip,
19 shortfin makos and common threshers. And of
20 course I continue to argue the first two should
21 get prohibited, but this seems like a key step
22 that short of that action. Thank you.

1 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. And, Randy, I'm
2 going to ask you to weigh in just as quickly as we
3 can.

4 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yeah, just real
5 quickly. Thanks, Sonja, for bringing up those
6 issues, they are certainly things that we'll watch
7 out for and pay attention to.

8 I'll mention, related to a list of
9 species and the distinct population segments that
10 may be listed for some of those species. In the
11 biops that have been issued, you know, there is
12 some mention of that in the conservation
13 recommendations that we'll be taking a very
14 serious look at and looking at the applicability
15 and the appropriateness for that in the coming
16 months or so.

17 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Randy. Scott, over
18 to you.

19 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, I'll try be as quick
20 and concise as I can because the session about the
21 HMS reporting, but particularly for the
22 charter/headboats, is insignificant, Randy,

1 compared to the issue that you have gotten
2 yourself involved with the recreational sector.
3 I've over the years tried to stay pretty, you
4 know, politically neutral on this particular
5 issue, but given the fact that we're really
6 fighting for the survival of this industry that
7 provides for all the research, and all the numbers
8 that you guys really need effectively to, you
9 know, monitor this fishery, I really don't
10 understand why there has been such a lack of
11 effort in terms of trying to level the playing
12 field in terms of the regulatory specifics that
13 are associated with this fishery. You should be
14 aware of a fishery that's taking place east of
15 primarily Canaveral, referred to as fishing the
16 other side. And this is particularly relevant in
17 terms of the ICCAT rating that we got, John, about
18 what may potentially be coming up in terms of
19 quota. There are literally thousands of yellowfin
20 tunas being caught there by the recreational
21 sector that are going unreported over there, that
22 are fishing outside of the U.S. EEZ into the

1 Bahamian EEV that nobody either seems to have the
2 political appetite or the desire to address. And
3 I guess you're hearing a little bit of a
4 disgruntled tone in my voice, because if I drift
5 over a line that is no fault of myself, I get a
6 visit from HMS enforcement. But yet this is so
7 blatant that it is all over Facebook, it's not a
8 hard thing to see. My guys report that on some
9 days south of the line, east of the U.S. EEV,
10 there may be as many as 60 U.S. targets at any one
11 time on the radar. That is not a very hard thing
12 to see. So is this the agency is just turning a
13 blind eye to this fishing outside the EEZ for the
14 recreational sector in the Bahamas, or are you
15 just totally unaware that that's going on?

16 MR. BLANKINSHIP: So, thanks, Scott, for
17 highlighting that issue. I know that there
18 certainly has been decades work of, you know, of
19 this being an issue in various ways with vessels
20 going back and forth between the United States
21 mainland and the Bahamas. And there's multiple
22 enforcement agencies that play a role in tracking

1 that.

2 And certainly what we can do is
3 highlight this for enforcement as an ongoing
4 issue. I know it's also a subject of conversation
5 with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
6 for seeking amendments. And we might even have a
7 chance to touch off this afternoon being the
8 office of law enforcement update.

9 But thanks for highlighting it. And we
10 will get some attention to it.

11 MR. TAYLOR: You do understand, Randy,
12 that these are not close to the ones that the
13 office cleared, these are boats that now with the
14 invent of, you know, high horsepower outboards,
15 that are running over there for the morning,
16 engaging in the fishery, and then running back in,
17 and then not reporting. You do understand that,
18 right?

19 Somebody's not going over to the Bahamas
20 for a week and then fishing and then catching a
21 few fish. These are boats that are going up there
22 specifically to target yellowfins for the day.

1 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yes, I understand what
2 you're saying and when I referred to going back
3 and forth there's certainly fishing in the
4 Bahamian. Yes, I understand what you're talking
5 about.

6 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, it's not a single
7 violation. I'm going to drop off. Thank you for
8 the time.

9 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Scott. Just before
10 we break for lunch I just want to note that in the
11 chat Marco Hanke mentioned that he's at the FMC at
12 the council today, but he wanted to support the
13 comments that were offered by Raimundo Espinoza
14 earlier. Also we heard from Greg Scomal who also
15 wanted to weigh in supporting the research that's
16 conducted through the Cooperative Shark Tagging
17 Program. And then a note just came in from Joe
18 Brooks that, reading here, just wanted to comment
19 that we, Carleton University and American Shark
20 Conservancy, we have conducted a survey of Florida
21 shore base shark fishery permit holders, 1,500
22 responders, lots of interest in the tagging

1 effort.

2 So again, a number of comments there
3 around that. With that, I think we should go to a
4 break. Oh, let me just note, Katie Moore just
5 weighed in that U.S. Coast Guard just detected
6 violations yesterday in that area. And it wasn't
7 HMS, it was snapper. So Coast Guard is active.

8 So I know Katie will be back later, we
9 need to get you off to lunch. We will start at
10 1:00 sharp, handing things over to Brad to give us
11 some update on bluefin tuna.

12 So with that, unless Randy or Pete,
13 either one of you have anything you want to weigh
14 in with or add to that, I think we'll go to lunch
15 and come back at 1:00.

16 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Sounds good. Have a
17 good lunch.

18 MR. BROOKS: Thanks everybody. And it
19 may just be best to put yourselves on mute for now
20 so you don't have to worry about getting back in,
21 but as you wish. Okay, thanks everyone.

22 (Recess)

1 MR. BROOKS: It is a dot after 1:00, so
2 folks, grab water, coffee, tea, food, whatever you
3 need, we'll start up here in about 40 seconds.

4 Okay. It's a little bit after 1:00 and
5 we are set to start up at 1:00 so I think we
6 should jump in. That way we have more time for
7 questions, comments, after the presentation. Just
8 to remind folks, we'll spend about the next hour
9 on the bluefin tuna update, then we will hear from
10 Katie Moore and Wynn Carney about the law
11 enforcement update, and then an opportunity for
12 public comment, and we are anticipating to adjourn
13 at 2:45. So again, earlier the plan is the change
14 in the agenda that Randy mentioned earlier.

15 So, Brad, I think I'm going to hand it
16 off to you and Sarah and let you walk us through
17 your updates.

18 MR. MCHALE: Thanks everyone, good
19 afternoon. Unfortunately not able to kind of see
20 everybody in person, but we'll see how things
21 shake out for our fall potential meeting and where
22 travel is at that point.

1 Probably go over for the next 20 minutes
2 or so. My intent of this presentation is to just
3 give you all a select recap of where division
4 staff are at regarding bluefin tuna actions, those
5 primarily consisting of Amendment 13 that we've
6 all been discussing for some period of time now.
7 As well as a reflection on what transpired as we
8 were managing through the 2019 bluefin tuna
9 fishery. But also kind of looking and learning
10 from what we observed in 2019, and applying that
11 for what appears to be a very uncertain 2020.
12 Just trying to call things out for what they are,
13 try to mitigate any sort of surprises to the best
14 of our ability, knowing that we're getting a lot
15 of diverse input from various sectors of the
16 fishery, whether it be recreational, commercial,
17 for-hire, or wherever those may be up and down the
18 coast.

19 So to start off again to recap on
20 Amendment 13. I think most of you are pretty well
21 aware this is an action that the agency has been
22 working on. When we finalized Amendment 7, we had

1 committed to conducting a three-year review of
2 some of the management measures that were
3 contained in that FMP Amendment as well as kind of
4 looking at what changes have been taking place in
5 the fishery and what sort of adaptations to the
6 constituents are asking for or the agency is
7 seeing and feeling may be warranted.

8 So some of the drivers again for the
9 Amendment 13 on top of the objectives that are
10 contained within the Magnusson Act or ATCA or the
11 Consolidated FMP. In an attempt to kind of
12 evaluate and optimize how we're using our U.S.
13 bluefin tuna allocations while preserving the
14 flexibility that we've been able to leverage over
15 the last number of years to try to adapt to the
16 high level variability of the bluefin tuna fishery
17 but yet also kind of maintain and remain
18 consistent with some of our managing strategies
19 being applied across fisheries. I know that we
20 got a lot of discussion on different things that
21 have worked, or not, earlier in the session this
22 morning.

1 And then lastly, kind of looking at some
2 of the findings that had come out of that
3 three-year review and then acting upon those as
4 far as whether some of the objectives were met,
5 which ones could be improved upon, and which ones
6 may have been missed.

7 But as far as some of the milestones to
8 date, really it's just a reflection back on some of
9 the scoping dates. As far as our current status,
10 we are in the midst of finalizing our draft
11 Environmental Impact Statement as well as the
12 associated proposed rules and all, and we
13 anticipate that we'll have that draft published
14 action available for public inspection sometime
15 here in the not too distant future. It would have
16 been preferable to have the DEIS for you all
17 today, but unfortunately with some of the
18 challenges we weren't able to do that. We
19 recognize that when the agency, especially HMS,
20 puts forward an action, and it happens over the
21 last days of the summer, the burden that puts on
22 the constituency to be able to attend the meetings

1 or in this situation, attend webinars, conference
2 calls, to provide public input. But I think
3 that's just one of those challenges that
4 collectively we'll have to just manage together.
5 And acknowledging that, what we will also organize
6 this year is that during our fall Advisory Panel
7 meeting we'll ensure that Amendment 13 is in its
8 comment period so we can do a much more
9 comprehensive back and forth dialogue to get your
10 input on ultimately what the agency proposes. And
11 then we'll be looking to finalize that action
12 sometime early to mid-next year, depending on
13 timing of actions. We recognize that it's an
14 election year, sometimes that adds a little bit of
15 an additional layer of complexity, it falls in
16 kind of wait and see scenario.

17 So segueing into a more of a
18 retrospective look into the highlights or low
19 lights that transpired in 2019 is that we had
20 significant body of fish that was readily
21 available to our commercial handgear fisheries as
22 well as to some of our recreational fisheries.

1 But my focus here is more on the commercial where
2 we had fish from the, you know, throughout the
3 Gulf of Maine, throughout Cape Cod and Southern
4 New England, and that body of fish, you know, was
5 located very close to shore. And so we had an
6 accessibility challenge where it wasn't just kind
7 of vessels that might have a longer beach capacity
8 to get to where these resources were, but we had,
9 you know, vessels as small as 16 feet a mile or
10 two off the beach where some of these fish had
11 kind of set up a line on the bait that was there.

12 So what the results have been translated
13 to is that we had a considerable effort that was
14 being applied to these resources, which isn't
15 again, uncommon to bluefin tuna, especially when
16 you combine with that availability and when the
17 weather patterns allow for it, especially in this
18 day and age of social media, the word gets out
19 that a bite is on, then all of a sudden we see
20 these efforts spike through the roof. And what
21 that then produces for the agency, as well as the
22 fishery for a whole, but these challenges as to

1 catch weights when the agency may have various
2 tools to mitigate some of those efforts, whether
3 it be a retention limit, I'll talk in a few
4 additional slides here of potential restrictions
5 as it would relate to fishing days, but also there
6 were some new dynamics that we observed last year
7 that really were more market driven and
8 transcended actual agency actions. What we ended
9 up realizing was that because of the catch rates,
10 the readily available resource, and then openly
11 what was playing out as a relatively low quality
12 product, is that we observed that the dealers, as
13 well as the marketplace, had a hard time moving
14 those fish, as well as, you know, prices that were
15 being returned back to the vessel. And at least
16 in my 20-year career working for HMS, that was the
17 first time where I actually saw dealers that were
18 consistently no longer accepting products from
19 vessels because they ultimately did not have a
20 place to move that fish. And this entered into a
21 dynamic of okay, where does the agencies
22 regulations fall and what is their limitations,

1 what then say translates to what are, in my
2 verbiage, self-regulation.

3 So what are the actions that dealers can
4 take? What are those actions fishermen can take?
5 I know to demonstrate this last year in more
6 instances than I care to count we were seeing fish
7 either come to the dock and have to be gutted as
8 if they were trout, obviously a pretty uninformed
9 angler (inaudible) but also not a lot of fishermen
10 doing their homework in the sense of do they
11 actually have an outlet to sell their fish or
12 whether or not dealers were obligated to buy their
13 catch regardless of the condition. So there was a
14 fair number of Capitalism 101 conversations that
15 transpired back in 2019 which then caused the
16 agency to kind of reevaluate how we're
17 communicating with the regulated public, given the
18 diversity and knowledge that we can have open
19 access current holders to kind of mitigate to some
20 of items that we observed last year.

21 When it comes down to say the General
22 category landings, I know that we've talked about

1 this at length for a number of years now of how
2 the General category quota is allocated and then
3 what does that mean throughout the calendar year
4 as far as fishing opportunities. So the table
5 you'll see here now, we have various time periods
6 associated with retention limits. We also wanted
7 to include two different methods that were kind of
8 confusing. One, when we look at amount landed
9 it's primarily what the agency's focusing on.
10 It's remaining within our quotas that apply to a
11 particular time period although those quotas may
12 be amended by transfers from the Reserve.

13 But I think one of the struggles that
14 both the agency and those individuals in the
15 fisheries had is, what sort of metric are we using
16 to describe equity or fairness. And so we start
17 to include this days-open metric here as well so
18 we can kind of show that if you just look at
19 tonnage, the numbers of fish, that doesn't always
20 make a picture as far as opportunities. For
21 example, we have a fishery that opened on June 1st
22 of last year. We started off with a 3-fish

1 retention limit and kept it in place until July
2 10th, that we had 40 days of fishing and a three
3 fish per vessel limit that equated to 77 metric
4 tons of landings. But once we saw catch rates
5 start to increase in the rod and reel component of
6 the General category, we reduced that limit down
7 to one fish.

8 You can then see over about the next
9 month's timeframe of about 29 days, they only
10 landed 200 metric tons. And this really kind of
11 reinforces and demonstrates when you do have
12 availability effort and then in turn those catch
13 rates, that the volume of fish that can come to
14 the docks can go up rather considerably in a
15 compressed timeframe. It also then applies to
16 what we observed then in September and October,
17 which for years we share the frustration of, you
18 know, we didn't have opportunities in late
19 October. There weren't any fishing opportunities
20 in November, and this constant struggle of how do
21 you then try to provide and stretch out
22 opportunities when the effort, availability, and

1 catch rates are so high that, you know, a daily
2 retention limit is no longer able to kind of
3 stretch out those opportunities to future days of
4 fishing.

5 Another way to kind of look at that
6 change and information is a graph that we've been
7 using for the last number of years to kind of show
8 exactly from, say early January all the way
9 through December of kind of how those catch rates
10 increase over time. You'll see there that
11 starting on the left-hand side of the graph, where
12 the winter fishery kind of was pretty steady at a
13 one-fish limit. If you look there's kind of a
14 temporal bridge in the X-axis here, but then once
15 you kind of get into June you'll see that even
16 when we had a three-fish limit in place, again,
17 catch rates, you know, were increasing but pretty
18 gradual. You'll see once the line kind of turns
19 back to blue is where we altered the retention
20 limit back to one fish based on catch rates in
21 with rod and reel. But really when you start to
22 get into that August, September, October timeframe

1 you just see the slope of the line increase
2 dramatically, which has been one of these
3 challenges year in and year out, at least in
4 recent history, of how do we try to prolong those
5 fishing opportunities and stretch out that, not
6 just per se market conditions which the agency is
7 not necessarily focusing on, that is not a driver,
8 per se, for our regulatory actions. But it's more
9 equity for utilization. And again kind of looking
10 at other metrics of what fishing opportunities are
11 being defined as, either in the regulated
12 community or the agency. That's why I kind of
13 included that fishing day information.

14 So one other kind of effect the General
15 category that's been getting a fair amount of
16 attention for the last few years when we do have
17 quotas, things change rather quickly, is how
18 harpoon gear landings contribute to landings. So
19 I felt that the staff had pulled together this
20 slide here which kind of looks at those vessels
21 that had been using harpoon gear type as their
22 primary gear type and then compared to how many of

1 those vessels are active both in that General
2 category as well as in the Harpoon category. And
3 then what is their kind of catch looking like and
4 what are the implications on those respective
5 categories.

6 You'll see across that first line where
7 it's a General category, you know, it's been
8 steady with about just shy of 30 vessels using
9 harpoon gear there and, you know, at least for the
10 last two years, landing about 16 metric tons of
11 the General category quota with that gear type.

12 Now to put that into perspective, if you
13 were to say then look at the summer months'
14 allocations -- if you look at June, say, through
15 October -- there was about 682 metric tons
16 allocated to the General category. At least 16
17 metric tons equate to about 2 percent of that
18 overall General category. For those vessels that
19 are electing to use harpoon gear type in that
20 category are essentially very small contributors
21 to the overall catch in comparison to, say, the
22 amount of effort that's deployed with rod and

1 reel.

2 In the Harpoon category, you'll see here
3 that the numbers again are pretty relatively
4 steady regarding the number of vessels. But what
5 you'll see here in the right-hand side is after a
6 number and number of years of doing these
7 transfers to that Harpoon category, last year that
8 the fish actually remained available to that type
9 of gear, almost to a detriment where we were
10 seeing unprecedented, although that word's getting
11 way too much use these days, but we had vessels
12 coming in with, you know, 15 plus fish, and
13 probably could have caught more based upon the
14 behavior of those fish.

15 Which again, is something that the
16 agency as well the fishery itself is looking at.
17 I know there was a lot of self-regulation that
18 took place last year when folks had come to
19 realize that was that in the best interest of the
20 Harpoon category to bringing in volumes of fish
21 versus the high quality of fish. And that's one
22 thing I think we'll be discussing and debating for

1 some time to come.

2 So ultimately what we were also hearing
3 in the agency last year is because of the low
4 quality, because of the volume that was coming to
5 the dock in such a compressed timeframe, what
6 impact was that then having on the overall prices
7 here. And so you'll see here that I just, across
8 the last three years we just highlighted the high
9 average as well as the lower average for each
10 respective month. And you'll see predominately in
11 purple here that 2019 was definitely on the lower
12 end of the threshold across most of those months.

13 Again, some of the dynamics well beyond
14 the agency's control. A lot of it influenced by
15 market conditions. But then when you compile
16 volume, the quality of the fish, again have the
17 agency thinking what can we do to help mitigate
18 this, or is it just an acceptance. Or looking at
19 overall changes needed in management or might we
20 have tools that we have available but we just
21 haven't exercised for some period of time.

22 So a lot of reflection on 2019 to kind

1 of openly help inform how we proceed in 2020. And
2 a lot of this thought had been taken place prior
3 to any sort of COVID-19 impacts on us both at a
4 social level, at an economic level, but also at a
5 biological level. So that's something that we'll
6 be continuing to keep the dialogue open with
7 individuals on their respective thoughts as well
8 as kind of trying to figure out how best to
9 optimize the bluefin tuna quota for the 2020
10 calendar year.

11 And one dynamic of that will be seeing
12 what sort of travel restrictions take place, where
13 are the implications on commerce and just, again,
14 not a driver for immediate actions, but we also
15 don't want to be tone deaf and ignore information
16 that's out there because we understand that it
17 impacts the fishery as a whole even if management
18 actions aren't being, decisions aren't being made
19 solely on that market variable.

20 So what we've observed last year is this
21 kind of, and for some years now, this kind of
22 reduction of fish that are being exported out of

1 our U.S. fisheries and the large portion of our
2 U.S. Production remaining here.

3 So as we kind of head into the 2020
4 commercial handgear fishery, there's been a lot of
5 kind of back and forth as everyone's kind of
6 reacting, responding, to whatever their unique
7 personal perspectives are as well as the
8 challenges they're experiencing. So we've had to
9 kind of come back to some of the fundamentals to
10 kind of remind folks of what leeway does the
11 agency have or shall not have when it comes time
12 to managing the 2020 season.

13 So I know there was a lot of requests
14 put into the agency to push that start date to
15 kind of see how everything might transpire as a
16 result of COVID-19. So there's a lot of education
17 to remind our folks that, you know, the June 1st
18 start dates are codified in the HMS regulations.
19 So those are firm start dates coming June 1, as
20 well as all the other subsequent time periods
21 begin at the first of the month. So September
22 1st, October 1st, December 1st. Those are all

1 kind of renewed regulations so the agency doesn't
2 necessarily have inseason authority or flexibility
3 to move those dates around.

4 When it comes to say amending or
5 modifying or adjusting retention limits, we do
6 have some flexibility to the General category.
7 This is where in the General category we can amend
8 retention limits from a range of zero up to a
9 maximum of five per day, and there's a whole suite
10 of different determination criteria we need to
11 assess to help inform that decision making. As
12 well as when it comes to the Harpoon category, we
13 have some flexibility to amend the range of large
14 medium bluefin tuna. This will be fish that are
15 73 inches to less than 81 inches. However, the
16 flexibility does not currently apply to the daily
17 retention limits on fish that are 81 inches or
18 greater. Currently that's unlimited, and that
19 unlimited amount is then designed and intentional
20 to reflect the environmental conditions vessel
21 operators need to prosecute that gear type. But
22 that's also something that we'll be looking at and

1 entertaining as we have more information coming
2 out of the '19 season to help inform where this
3 fishery evolves to.

4 So for those of you that have been
5 paying attention, you'll notice as of last week we
6 announced what our initial daily retention limits
7 will be, starting on June 1st. We elected to
8 start off with the default retention limits, which
9 is a one fish a day limit in the General category.
10 And a lot of this really is kind of looking at the
11 additional layers of uncertainty that are being
12 introduced in 2020 that we haven't experienced in
13 the last number of years. A lot of that problem
14 is going to really focus on effort. We know, for
15 example, just this past weekend down off of New
16 York and New Jersey there was a significant bite
17 that took place on giant bluefin tuna that has
18 happened, you know, essentially months earlier
19 than historically would have and, you know, having
20 known a few captains that were in that fleet, you
21 know, estimating the fleet size to be 200 plus
22 vessels, which gives us pause of what we might see

1 here once the June 1st date is upon us. And then
2 what do the fisheries look like seeing that we do
3 have these additional layers applied this year
4 than the years past. So we need to be cognizant
5 of that.

6 So that's why we are taking more of a
7 conservative approach right out of the gate than
8 we have the last few years where might have been
9 able to provide additional landing opportunities,
10 liberalize retention limits, we elected to not go
11 that way this particular year. And then we'll
12 just adjust accordingly inseason based upon the
13 information that we'll be reviewing in real time.

14 Again, we do have that ability in the
15 General category to increase or decrease retention
16 limits based upon that assessment, that
17 determination criteria.

18 One other significant concern that we
19 had in '19 as well as coming up here to 2020 is a
20 potential prevalence of fish that are being landed
21 and then ultimately not sold from commercial
22 permit holders. This is a situation where

1 normally fish are sold to dealers, dealers are
2 applying the unique identifying fish tags to those
3 fish, and then reporting them to the agency. Well
4 all of a sudden for some reason if market
5 conditions don't warrant those fish to be
6 purchased, then we have a potential situation of
7 fish being landed and going unreported. So we've
8 been collaborating both with fish dealers as well
9 as with the Office of Law Enforcement to put
10 materials out into the public realm so that vessel
11 operators are aware of that they are obligated to
12 report each of these fish immediately upon
13 offloading. That has not changed. And then
14 ultimately what are the avenues that they can
15 legally report those fish? So even if that fish
16 is not being sold, if they are going to retain it
17 for personal use, then it gets documented so we
18 can maintain our quota, monitoring both here for
19 domestic purposes as well as ultimately when we
20 will report our numbers up to ICCAT at the end of
21 the year, that we don't run into situations of
22 having anything that could be perceived as

1 illegal, unregulated, or unreported.

2 So that is going to be a key element
3 that we'll be focusing on this year of making sure
4 that all those bluefin tuna coming to the dock get
5 recorded properly. And for those that don't, that
6 we pursue those vigorously.

7 So this kind of, again, kind of sliding
8 back to '19, one thing I wanted to raise here is
9 there's been a lot of discussion about the
10 agency's authority to implement restricted-fishing
11 days. Essentially what a restricted-fishing day
12 is, is when the agency reduces the daily retention
13 level to zero, which prohibits any sort of
14 commercial fishing for bluefin tuna by General
15 category or Charter/H headboat participants when
16 they are fishing commercially.

17 So this is essential an effort control
18 that we do currently have on the books. We have
19 not executed the authority to use that effort
20 control for a good number of years now. And so in
21 looking at the catch rates over the last number of
22 years, there's been a lot of dialogue, you know, a

1 lot of requests to the agency to explore,
2 considering that as a tool to extend fishing
3 opportunities.

4 And so what I wanted to do here is to
5 kind of highlight currently what's happening will
6 remain to the fishery to its daily retention
7 limit. You have these spikes, especially if
8 you're in the fall timeframe and whether or not
9 utilization of restricted-fishing days is
10 desirable to help potentially prolong the fishery
11 and have more opportunities kind of throughout
12 either the September timeframe or the
13 October/November timeframe, or just individuals to
14 get out on the water and go commercial fishing.
15 And then to also, you know, so that
16 restricted-fishing days aren't just being
17 discussed in one on one conversations with various
18 interested members of the fishery, but just to
19 kind of put this out there for more of a broader
20 consideration and discussion that we are thinking
21 about this, we're reflecting back on how they were
22 used historically as well they might be able to be

1 used in an effort to kind of mitigate these kind
2 of spikes that we've been seeing for the last
3 number of years in the late summer in the fall
4 fisheries.

5 So there's been discussion on whether or
6 not you put a number of restricted-fishing days
7 consecutively. Does that help the cause? And so
8 there's a lot of kind of back and forth and just
9 deliberation on how these might be able to be
10 used, the agency's kind of ability to use them,
11 you know, is it better to kind of put them in ad
12 hoc, very reactionary to counter any sort of
13 spikes in landings, or be more in tune with what
14 we've done historically is if the agency opts to
15 go in that direction what we've done in the years
16 past is produce a schedule of these days and these
17 weeks that would be restricted, well in advance,
18 so then businesses can then kind of plan
19 accordingly. And then in the event that catch
20 rates are really slow, the agency can remove those
21 restricted-fishing days within the agency's
22 authority.

1 So really just wanted to bring that
2 aspect to light because we have not spent a lot of
3 time on that in the last number of years as it
4 relates to the inseason managing of those bluefin
5 tuna handgear fisheries.

6 So again, kind of building on that.
7 Some of the questions regarding them is how are
8 they applied. They currently, just to get more
9 reminders to folks to help inform comments and
10 opinions, is that they apply to the General
11 category exclusively, they do not apply to harpoon
12 category vessels or that particular quota. And so
13 therefore General category permitted vessels as
14 well as those Charter/Headboat permitted vessels
15 with a commercial endorsement would be prohibited
16 from fishing giant bluefin tuna on those
17 restricted-fishing days. For the
18 Charter/Headboats, they could still go out and
19 fish recreationally under those respective
20 retention limits, but the commercial fishing is
21 prohibited. And so that's just something that
22 we've kind of been talking to folks to make sure

1 they have a solid understanding of what the agency
2 can and can't do with that tool to help inform any
3 requests or comments if we ultimately lean in that
4 direction.

5 One other kind of aspect and then I'll
6 stop here and kind of allow feedback from you all
7 is whenever we've had any of these closures and
8 we've seen kind of a continuation of effort,
9 there's been concerns regarding what the catch and
10 release fishing is having on the resource, and
11 what does that look like in relation to the
12 regulations as it applies to catch and release
13 versus tag and release versus safe handling
14 protocols versus prohibition on fishing for
15 Bluefin. I think we've kind of covered the
16 landscape there. And so what I wanted to do here
17 is just kind of do a reflection on the regulations
18 is that at one point in time the regulations did
19 mandate that any vessel fishing after a closure
20 must be part of a tag and release program.

21 And we discussed a little bit of that
22 earlier today as far as the funding of those

1 respective programs. But I wanted to just inform
2 you all that we took an action back in March of
3 '05 that essentially removed that mandate and
4 converted it solely to a catch and release program
5 where tag and release is encouraged. But then I
6 wanted to include the regulation there as it
7 speaks to catch and release. Is, you know, that
8 ultimately all bluefin caught under either of
9 those programs, you know, must be returned to the
10 sea immediately with minimal injury.

11 I mean that's, I think that's embracing,
12 now we've all heard at these AP meetings for some
13 time of, you know, that keeping a fish in the
14 water, you know, really doesn't do a fish a whole
15 lot of good if you're pulling it up through a tuna
16 door, having your crew around it for a photo op
17 and then putting that fish right back into the
18 sea. You know, for various species, you know,
19 although they may look fine going back in the
20 water, we knew through some of John Graves' work
21 with some of the marlins, we've seen that, you
22 know, post- release mortality should be and is a

1 real concern in those situations. And where we're
2 seeing a max amount of effort taking place during
3 those kind of closures and we collectively try to
4 speak to that and manage to it so we're not
5 necessarily having a significant portion of
6 mortality occur once a quota has been reached, or
7 if it's just unbeknownst to the angler or the
8 fisherman that their activities might be resulting
9 in some sort of mortality when that's not the
10 intent of their fishing activities.

11 So that in a nutshell, oh I guess there
12 is one more here. So some of the concerns I/we
13 are having as we're continue to head into 2020 is
14 kind of what the market conditions are going to
15 look like. Again, not necessarily to drive
16 management actions, but to be aware of what is
17 transpiring and the challenges that are being
18 faced by both fishermen as well as dealers. That
19 reporting the compliance aspect I touched on,
20 potential temptation for illegal sales, especially
21 if there isn't a marketplace for an individual to
22 legally sell their catch. Does that temptation

1 enter into the equation? And then especially in
2 our current environment where we've seen some
3 commercial fishermen be able to make a go at
4 creating new markets where they're selling off the
5 back of their boat or capitalizing more on say a
6 farmer's market type of situation.

7 We continue to remind individuals that
8 bluefin tuna isn't the same as a groundfish or
9 shellfish, per se, or even lobster. You know,
10 that there are real food-borne illness concerns
11 with some of the histamine aspects that can
12 accompany scombrids, especially if they're not
13 properly cared for. And so hence there's a little
14 bit of a different dynamic with tuna than some of
15 the other species that folks have been able to
16 kind of make a new marketplace for.

17 And then lastly, just as we've been
18 discussing for a number of years, is this ongoing
19 collaboration the agency's had with the United
20 States Coast Guard regarding safety gear on
21 vessels that are commercially permitted and, you
22 know, how the two different agencies can

1 collaborate, leverage their respective data that
2 we have, but also ultimately inform the regulated
3 community of what their obligations are when they
4 do attain a commercial permit and then ultimately
5 what that means for them to then run that business
6 operation.

7 So with that I'll stop. Bennett, you
8 can kind of open up at this point to any sort of
9 comments, feedback to kind of capitalize on the
10 rest of the time we have remaining here.

11 MR. BROOKS: Great. We've got about 20
12 minutes and, Brad, it sounds like just general
13 comments but also if there's any particular
14 feedback on the two issues of restricted-fishing
15 days and the catch and release that would be
16 helpful to you.

17 MR. McHALE: Yes, sir.

18 MR. BROOKS: Great. I see that George
19 Purmont would like to comment, so let's get him in
20 next and I'll just note that Marty has put a
21 fairly long comment in the chat. The essence of
22 it is just really calling for more parity across

1 all the commercial fisheries in terms of how
2 they're treated by the agency.

3 But, George, if your line is open,
4 you've got the floor.

5 MS. RILEY: George, your line should be
6 open.

7 MR. BROOKS: George, are you there?
8 George, maybe you're on mute on your phone or on
9 your computer. All right. Let me push forward
10 then and we'll get back to you as soon you are
11 able to connect in.

12 Scott Taylor, your hand is raised. Is
13 that left over from before, not sure whether you
14 want to jump back in the queue?

15 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah, I'd like to jump in
16 the queue.

17 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Go ahead, please.

18 MR. TAYLOR: Well, Brad, I just really
19 want to comment from our standpoint, and maybe
20 bring a little bit of light to some of the
21 dynamics that you probably already know about.

22 It is essentially the ability to market

1 high grade tunas, which is the market that
2 certainly the General category in these day boat
3 fisheries are going to produce then. That's been
4 virtually almost non-existent. We're seeing that
5 in our high end yellowfin and we're seeing that in
6 our high end bigeyes. The bluefins that we have
7 been catching down here, that we've actually had
8 to cut them down and market the fish that way
9 because the customer base that existed primarily
10 into the high end sushi bar markets, that was New
11 York, Las Vegas, Chicago, Atlanta, is virtually
12 non-existent right now. And with the exception of
13 exports, and I know of a boat that was marketing
14 some fish through the Carolinas here, a longline
15 boat, was exporting the fish, they were getting
16 very, very low value for the fish. They were just
17 about (inaudible) dollars of (inaudible) because
18 there was nothing else to do out there. I just
19 don't see this market for any time for the
20 foreseeable future supporting any kind of volume
21 whatsoever. As soon as there's any kind of
22 landings at all, we're seeing a really downward

1 dynamic and push as far as the price is concerned.

2 And, you know, while it doesn't directly
3 apply to bluefins, I can't help but take the
4 opportunity, you know, as long as we're talking
5 about tunas and import dynamic, because it does,
6 all this affects that (inaudible) fish market. I
7 think a product that will be moving through the
8 Caribbean to Trinidad, those areas, Venezuela
9 right now, has been somewhat limited although it
10 is rebounding. And any time that there's any kind
11 of amount of landing we see huge downward
12 pressure, you know in the marketplace. My
13 expectation is not that these importers are going
14 to go away to these high end fish, that the only
15 thing that has been holding them back is the
16 limited airline capacity air freight. And as that
17 begins to recover the situation is going to get
18 worse before it gets better.

19 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Scott. And we hear
20 some typing in the background. Would whoever is
21 typing, if you could mute that'd be great.

22 MS. RILEY: That was my fault, Bennett,

1 sorry about that.

2 MR. BROOKS: No problem. Can we try to
3 get back to George, or maybe that's what you were
4 trying to do.

5 MS. RILEY: Yeah, let me try one more
6 time. George, you should be unmuted now? I'll
7 try unmuting all the phone lines that are
8 associated with somebody. George, want to try one
9 more time?

10 MR. McHALE: I must just have him
11 speechless.

12 MR. BROOKS: No doubt. All right.
13 Let's give that another moment. Katie Moore, I
14 see your hand is raised, but I think maybe that's
15 left over from earlier, or are you wanting to jump
16 in?

17 All right. At the moment I don't have
18 anyone else -- Michael Pierdinock.

19 MR. PIERDINOCK: Thank you. I just want
20 to add to that, being up here in Massachusetts.
21 I'm the President of the Stellwagen Bank Charter
22 Boat Association, and this COVID-virus has

1 impacted us significantly up here. As of now,
2 whether it's haddock or lobsters or anything that
3 comes to the dock, you basically can't get rid of
4 it and there's no market for it. When you think
5 about it, last year with the way the economy was
6 and the lack of the market for bluefin, I wouldn't
7 be surprised if we're not going to have more of
8 the same.

9 I appreciate the flexibility that the
10 department has provided in order to get seafood
11 dealer permits and sell the fish right off the
12 back of the boat. That's what we're doing up here
13 with our state regulated fisheries. To try and do
14 that and get that to the public.

15 But I just want to indicate that what
16 was stated earlier, we're seeing it now, and
17 likely will see more of the same in the future.
18 So as much as it's great, Brad, with everything
19 you provided, but days at sea and all these other
20 measures, I'm not sure whether there's going to
21 even be the need for it because it will probably
22 not be a fruitful market for the bluefin or other

1 species.

2 So that's it, and thank you.

3 MR. McHALE: Thank you, Mike.

4 MR. BROOKS: At the moment I don't have
5 anyone else in the queue. Is there anyone else
6 who wants to jump into this conversation? And,
7 George, I'm going to give it another shot. George
8 Purmont, can you hear us?

9 MR. McHALE: It looks like David Schalit
10 just raised his hand.

11 MR. BROOKS: Okay, David. David
12 Schalit. Can you hear us, David?

13 MS. RILEY: Sorry, just a second, that's
14 my delay, I'm not finding it. There we go. Okay.

15 MR. SCHALIT: We're on?

16 MR. BROOKS: You've been asking, and we
17 hear you.

18 MR. McHALE: This is Tuna Line, how can
19 I help you?

20 MR. SCHALIT: I have a comment, it's
21 followed by a question. Last year was a very
22 unusual year. At a certain point in the summer we

1 had heavy landings of bigeye and large yellowfin.
2 Good quality, good quality yellowfin, and this
3 exacerbated the problem with bluefin. Because at
4 the same time the review was listed, since July,
5 the bluefin that were coming ashore were basically
6 red meat bluefins, very skinny fish, and the fact
7 that these fish were difficult to work with.

8 The first instance was kind of
9 compounded by the presence of all these beautiful
10 bigeye and yellowfin. So technically I suppose
11 you could say that a buyer would have a choice
12 between a yellowfin, number one quality yellowfin,
13 or beautiful bigeye, or this skinny victim, this
14 victim we call bluefin July. So that was kind of
15 a perfect storm that took place then. And I don't
16 know if it would happen again this year. But that
17 was a major contributing factor. Had there not
18 been all that bigeye and yellowfin landed, it
19 might have been a bit different situation.

20 But the question I have for you relates
21 back to, it's actually clarification, related to
22 the restricted-fishing days. So if I understand

1 you correctly, essentially when we have a
2 restricted-fishing day, on that given day the bag
3 limit is dropped to zero. And then if a fisherman
4 wishes to fish, they must do catch and release on
5 that given day. And I'm speaking now of the
6 General category, fishermen fishing under General
7 category rules. So that would be one
8 clarification.

9 The second has to do with Charter/Head
10 boat. We know what would happen potentially with
11 Charter/Headboat when fishing under General
12 category rules, but what happens when
13 Charter/Headboat is fishing under recreational
14 rules and catches a giant. And let us say in that
15 instance that the Trophy category is fully
16 utilized or whatever. What happens in those
17 circumstances? Thanks, Brad.

18 MR. McHALE: Sure. Right. So just to
19 add a little bit of additional clarity there,
20 David. So vessels that are permitted in the
21 General category are not allowed to fish for,
22 retain, possess, or land, bluefin tuna on a

1 restricted-fishing day. Those vessels are not
2 allowed to even be out there catching and
3 releasing or tagging/releasing bluefin tuna.

4 MR. SCHALIT: Okay.

5 MR. McHALE: When it comes to vessels
6 permitted in the Charter/Headboat category, those
7 vessels can operate underneath the recreational
8 retention limits, as they are for whatever the day
9 is in question. So they are legally allowed to go
10 out after school bluefin, large schools, small
11 mediums within those described daily retention
12 limits. When it comes to the trophy fish size
13 category, those are still recreational provided
14 that category is open and there's quota available
15 -- they would be able to retain that fish.

16 But on the assumption that the Trophy
17 fishery is closed, any sort of large medium/Giant
18 bluefin tuna that happen to be caught while
19 pursuing the smaller size classes, would need to
20 be released boat side, you know, with minimal
21 injury.

22 MR. SCHALIT: Okay. Thank you.

1 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Brad. Let's try
2 again for George Purmont.

3 MS. RILEY: I can try one more time.
4 He's also put his questions in the chat. Let's
5 try one more time.

6 MR. PURMONT: One, two, three, four,
7 five.

8 MR. BROOKS: Six, seven, eight, nine,
9 10. Go ahead, George.

10 MR. PURMONT: Hey, congratulations, we
11 can both count. Brad, excellent presentation, I
12 really appreciate it. I have a couple of
13 comments. One is, when will the seine gear
14 methodology be removed from the Atlantic Bluefin
15 Tuna Fishery?

16 MR. McHALE: So the purse seine category
17 of the bluefin tuna fishery, we could be offering
18 a number of different options in the scoping
19 papers I referenced. We seek public input
20 regarding the status of that fishery. So any sort
21 of consideration of either that category and that
22 gear type remaining in the fishery or being

1 removed from the fishery would be addressed in
2 fishery management plan amendment. So that would
3 be contained in that Amendment 13 draft
4 Environmental Impact Statement and the
5 accompanying proposed rule that the agency is
6 leading.

7 MR. PURMONT: Okay. Thank you. Another
8 couple of quick questions. Referencing the
9 fishery that takes place as a catch and release
10 fishery. After the subquota has been taken for
11 that particular time period, say from June 1st to
12 August the 9th, how many boats actually
13 participate in that? And if there are a lot of
14 boats, should there be some kind of guidance as
15 far as how to handle fish, how to fight fish and
16 not abuse fish, while they're exercising their
17 absolutely right to go out there and catch and
18 release.

19 MR. McHALE: So as far as the number of
20 vessels that are participating, unfortunately the
21 agency does not have any good numbers to reflect
22 on that. And that is a result that we do not

1 mandate vessel logbooks necessarily in those
2 handgear fisheries. And so for those trips that
3 result in zero catch, either when the fishery is
4 open or closed, currently we have limited
5 information to then quantify vessels that are
6 participating and then in turn effort, how many
7 lines are they putting in the water.

8 MR. PURMONT: What would be your
9 guesstimate?

10 MR. McHALE: You know, I'm not even sure
11 I'd want to throw a dart at that just yet. What
12 does it take for a commercial fishery that is
13 closed, it continues to boggle my mind of how many
14 commercially permitted vessels continue to go with
15 no economic gain to be had based upon the costs
16 that are incurred. But I think that then speaks
17 to the open access, nature of the bluefin tuna
18 fishery in some of the more recreational-centric
19 mindsets versus genuine commercial interest there.

20 MR. PURMONT: I'm on the latter.

21 MR. McHALE: On the second part of your
22 question, guidance. I know that the agency both

1 in our compliance guides, on our websites, and I
2 know through a number of different brochures, we
3 do supply guidance on safety and release protocols
4 to help ensure the survivability of fish that are
5 caught with the intention or the requirement for
6 them to be released.

7 MR. PURMONT: All right.

8 MR. McHALE: One thing that I've
9 continued to run into is even though the agency
10 has put forward that information, in my experience
11 as a fisherman, as well as a regulator, what I
12 tend to see is that the general public and the
13 fishing community at large tends to defer to those
14 that are more seasoned within the fishery itself
15 to kind of get that sort of guidance and input
16 from. So whether it's a fishing publication or a
17 high profile charter captain, or something like
18 Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association where
19 there's a massive experience in there, your
20 membership, that kind of get a little bit more
21 traction with the regulated community versus the
22 National Marine Fisheries Service having that

1 information out there. And I think that's
2 something we could discuss and continue to
3 discuss, you know, even outside of this webinar of
4 how might we be able to better educate the fishing
5 community to care and have respect for the
6 resource.

7 MR. PURMONT: I've got one last
8 question, and that is, is there an opportunity to
9 try acoustical tagging, sharing the technology
10 that's going on with the existing programs, say
11 with Codfish, et cetera, so that you would have a
12 fish which if you could land it and sell it, might
13 be worth something. Now you have the opportunity
14 with catch and release of giant bluefin for people
15 to go out there, perhaps invite the scientists
16 along to tag the fish. They would be a
17 cooperative effort and it would be a beneficial
18 effort. Any thought about that acoustical
19 tagging?

20 MR. McHALE: There are different avenues
21 for that to occur. There's a number of different
22 research funding grant protocols that applications

1 could be submitted through. I know that when it
2 comes to the issuance of either any exempted
3 fishing permit, we have modified some of the
4 requirements when it comes to tag and releasing on
5 some of the prerequisites that are needed to
6 conduct those sort of activities. The short
7 answer is yes, that those sort of options are
8 available. But I think we'd probably just have to
9 dive in a little bit to see what it would actually
10 take to bring those to fruition and make them as
11 visible as needed so folks are aware of kind of A,
12 that they're occurring, and B, what the results of
13 those sort of efforts look like, to help educate
14 the regulated folks.

15 MR. PURMONT: Thank you very much.

16 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Brad. Can I remind
17 folks, if you're not speaking to go on mute, we
18 are picking up a bit more background noise.

19 We need to turn to our law enforcement
20 update in about one or two minutes. I know
21 there's a couple of folks still in the queue, and to
22 the extent that we don't have extensive public

1 comment, we could jump back into that. But I want
2 to make sure we're mostly hitting the mark on
3 public comment.

4 Alan Weiss, you haven't been in the
5 conversation yet, so I want to give you a chance
6 to jump in with either a quick comment or a
7 question.

8 If any members of the public that are
9 going to be interested in talking, if you could
10 start raising your hand or putting something in
11 the chat saying you have public comment, that
12 would be very helpful for us to gauge how much
13 time we'll need for that.

14 Alan, what's your question or comment?

15 MR. WEISS: My comment is kind of an
16 overall one. During the earlier part of this
17 presentation from Brad on Amendment 13, but also
18 going back to other things that were spoken about
19 this morning in regard to regulatory reform in a
20 general sense or in an overall sense.

21 All these things are being talked about
22 during the normal course of business in the HMS

1 office, and the pelagic longline fishery can't
2 wait for the normal course of business. I've
3 mentioned this at other meetings and other forums
4 in the past, but most of the participants in the
5 fishery are in their 50s and 60s as far as their
6 personal ages. They're not a bunch of young
7 people coming into it. There has been an urgent
8 need for this regulatory reform for some years
9 now. Now, if you look at the alarming
10 presentation we got this morning from the
11 economists, this is just a disaster.

12 So, you know, if you have someone having
13 a heart attack, you don't dispatch someone on a
14 bicycle. The fishery is having a cardiac event if
15 you look at the combination of the demographics
16 and recent history and now this restaurant and
17 environment situation layered on top of that, the
18 fishery is having a cardiac event. You gotta fix
19 it, jump on it and really (audio skip) with
20 everything you can as fast as you can because if
21 you take too much time, and I know it's not easy,
22 but if you take too much time, the fishery will be

1 gone before you get to the end of your process.

2 MR. BROOKS: Thank you, Alan, appreciate
3 it. All right. I know we have (audio skip) in
4 the queue, we've got Shana in the queue. What I
5 want to do is jump to law enforcement and then
6 keep what we have for comment, and I'm going to
7 suspect that we'll be able to get back to Tim and
8 Shana and Brad. I assume you're not going
9 anywhere, right?

10 MR. McHALE: No, I'm not.

11 MR. BROOKS: Great. So Tim, Shana,
12 please if you will kind of just hold your
13 questions and I hope I'll be able to get back to
14 you in a little bit here.

15 So we want to give this briefly, we just
16 have 15 minutes slated for a pre-brief update from
17 OLE and U.S. Coast Guard staff. And I don't know,
18 Katie, if you're planning to speak about (audio
19 skip).

20 MS. MOORE: This is Katie, can you hear
21 me?

22 MR. BROOKS: Yes we can, thank you.

1 MS. MOORE: Awesome. I (audio skip)
2 service, and I have provided a presentation which
3 I think is (audio skip). Katie Moore, U.S. Coast
4 Guard (audio skip) Fisheries Program Manager
5 provide the updates (audio skip) highlight of this
6 presentation, but I will be available with contact
7 information if you have more detailed questions
8 after this meeting. (audio skip) typical topics.
9 For example include international, so go back to
10 (audio skip) what we're doing domestically and
11 internationally, and then on site (audio skip)
12 prior years, we're running about 8 percent less
13 hours on the waters than we have in the past.
14 That's not completely unanticipated with the
15 covid.

16 So slide four, we have been active and
17 we have issued citations, and the boarding
18 distribution is across all components of the
19 fishery. So taking into account the threats as
20 we've heard them and seen them, we make sure that
21 we try to board commercial, passenger, and
22 pleasure. So you can see here where we've been

1 doing the boardings.

2 And then the next slide, this is a
3 breakdown of the citations that we have issued to
4 potential non-compliance. Now comparable to prior
5 years the types of potential violations range from
6 undersize catch, improper carcass conditions, lack
7 of permits, lack of turtle release gear, illegal
8 filleting at sea, hitting catch, as well as
9 oversize catch.

10 So next slide, the distribution of these
11 violations have ranged across components of the
12 fishery.

13 Next slide. And across components of
14 the geographic area. So we are on the water and
15 we are issuing violations.

16 Next slide. The violations are not
17 limited to just domestic fisheries. As you are
18 aware, we do have issues and concerns on the high
19 seas and also incursions within the U.S. EEZ.
20 This data is reflected through March, and we were
21 already tracking at that time to have the highest
22 all time numbers for interdictions of, and these

1 were the Mexican fishing vessels, launchas.

2 Just to give you a little update, as of
3 yesterday the number of interdictions is actually
4 99. So during the COVID we saw a huge number of
5 incursions happening. So we've been incredibly
6 busy with this aspect of the mission set.

7 The next slide. The catch that's
8 associated by the Mexican launchas is typical of
9 prior years, and they have been using longlines as
10 a majority. And the fish that have been caught
11 typically include, the HMS catch, includes sharks.
12 So we try as much as possible to get the species
13 ID, but as you can see here, we don't always get
14 that. So before someone says we identified them
15 wrong or didn't identify them at all, I hear you.

16 So Slide 12. Coast Guard continues to
17 see the domestic fishery as a high precedence
18 fishery and we have and continue to hear the
19 concerns about having the appropriate safety gear
20 and decals on board. So we continue to press this
21 as a high target of interest when we consider all
22 boarding targets.

1 Next slide. We have also create a huge
2 expectation on Coast Guard that we're going to be
3 stepping up on the IUU front. We have a draft IUU
4 fishing strategic outlook that's in development.
5 We continue to work on the U.S. delegation for
6 ICCAT, and wanted to let you know that this past
7 year, as Dr. Graves has stated, we got the vessel
8 sightings recommendation revamped and we just
9 recently actually had two cases of potential IUU
10 that we have been working very closely with NOAA
11 law enforcement on, international partners,
12 Interpol, and notification to ICCAT, to make sure
13 that this potential IUU activity does not occur
14 into the future.

15 So we are active on the water, within
16 U.S. Waters, on the high seas, and on our
17 maritime boundary lines, to address these IUU
18 issues. So I can't give you many details because
19 we're still in the process of getting everything
20 documented and out to our partners, so I don't
21 want to compromise those cases or limit our
22 ability to engage with partner nations.

1 But wanted to let you know we are still
2 active in the Western Africa realm. Fiscal year
3 '20 was hampered a bit because of COVID, but our
4 intentions are to continue on that front.

5 And next slide. If you have any
6 questions, please call me. I know this was very
7 fast and I wanted to say thank you to NOAA Law
8 Enforcement International Affairs, our Intel
9 partners, to work on some of these high fees
10 cases.

11 So we do hear you that there are
12 targets, and the Coast Guard is very active. We
13 have to be mindful of the other 10 missions that
14 Coast Guard has, but we are on the water, and we'd
15 like to receive any information you have on
16 potential threats.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks, Katie.
19 Let's hear from Wynn Carney and then Cora Lee and
20 then we'll open it up to questions for the AP.
21 Wynn, it's all yours.

22 MR. CARNEY: Thank you. Can you hear

1 me?

2 MR. BROOKS: Yep, perfectly. Thanks.

3 MR. CARNEY: Okay. Good. Wynn Carney,
4 I work at OLE Headquarters in Silver Spring for
5 the short time. I will be moving here pretty soon
6 and will no longer be the ICCAT representative or
7 the HMS liaison, unfortunately, but I'm moving on
8 to bigger things.

9 So within the past sixish months, we've
10 had 116 incidents, HMS incidents, and these are
11 from boardings, transferring of something that we
12 found and we transferred it to another agency,
13 maybe it's not under our Federal jurisdiction,
14 maybe it's a perhaps a shark in state waters, some
15 type of violation and then, you know, so forth.
16 These also include any enforcement actions.

17 These were received from our
18 stakeholders, NGOs, state partners, the U.S. Coast
19 Guard. And so from these we try to substantiate
20 the violations. The enforcement action we were
21 given was compliance assistant, the rest is
22 compliance. Out of these 10 were issued

1 enforcement actions, and these were warnings,
2 summary settlements, or sent to general counsel.

3 And these violations span through the
4 entire HMS fishery from sharks to billfish to the
5 tunas, the BAYS and some bluefin, north and south,
6 from, you know, as far up as Massachusetts and
7 Maine, all the way down to Florida, the Caribbean,
8 into Texas. And some of these were undersized
9 catch, not reporting, they're bluefin or they're
10 swordfish or they're billfish, or landing improper
11 form as well.

12 We attended the ICCAT annual meeting in
13 Spain this year as we always do, and we give input
14 on the enforcement issues in cooperation with the
15 U.S. Coast Guard and general counsel enforcement
16 section. Right now we're maintaining patrol
17 presence out there, working closely with our state
18 partners, with the Coast Guard and other Federal
19 partners like customs and border protection at the
20 ports for imports and exports. So we're still out
21 there right now.

22 Some things that we're doing with

1 enforcement right now looking forward, are trying
2 to find different types of emergent technologies.
3 And this could be for, you know, types of emerging
4 technologies for looking at our sail drones which
5 go out on top of the water and glide across the
6 ocean. We're looking at potential, you know,
7 drones in general. But we're still working on
8 that and we haven't gotten that far with these
9 types of things. And primarily we're doing this
10 to help out our safety and to reduce the cost of,
11 you know, compliance monitoring and so forth.

12 And as Katie said, we're working with
13 the U.S. Coast Guard. All those instances that
14 she mention was the IUU in the ICCAT waters. One
15 of the problems we have with this is there's not
16 an international boarding scheme in ICCAT for the
17 western area to board these vessels. That's one
18 thing that we've been seeing when we get out
19 there. We don't get out there, but when we see
20 these vessels we don't necessarily have the ICCAT
21 authority to board them. So that's something we'd
22 like to see in the future.

1 And that's all we have, with two minutes
2 remaining.

3 MR. BROOKS: Thank you very much, Wynn.
4 Let's see if we have any quick comments or
5 questions from our AP members before we go to
6 public comments. And just a heads up to the HMS
7 staff, I'm not sure that my chat is updating. So
8 if you're seeing people saying they want to get
9 into the queue for public comment, you might need
10 to just send an EU on that because I may not be
11 seeing it.

12 But any AP members want to jump in with
13 a question for Katie or Wynn? Tim and Shana I see
14 your hands waived. I'm assuming that's from the
15 previous conversation. I am hoping to get you
16 back in on bluefin tuna. Yeah?

17 MS. RILEY: I'd just like to read a
18 question for Katie from Greg. He sent it to the
19 host privately. He's asking if a vessel with a
20 general category permit only is subject to EVTR
21 requirements.

22 MS. MOORE: Are you talking about

1 electronic reporting requirements?

2 MR. McHALE: Yeah. I might be able to
3 handle that one there, Katie.

4 MS. MOORE: Great.

5 MR. McHALE: So this is Brad chiming in.
6 So a vessel that only has the general category
7 Atlantic Tunas permit is not obligated to comply
8 with the vessel trip requirements, or should I say
9 the vessel trip recorder whether electronic or
10 not. Currently HMS does not have regulations that
11 mandate that logbook associated with the general
12 category permit. It's only in those situations
13 where a vessel also holds either a Northeast or a
14 mid-Atlantic permit that would trigger that
15 requirement. So currently the answer would be no.

16 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. And a question
17 from Evan Hipsley, for the U.S. Coast Guard, Nora
18 Lee, have you considered partnering with students
19 at Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey for
20 emerging technologies? I know there will always
21 be projects (inaudible) to be worked on.

22 MS. MOORE: I will say that Coast Guard

1 has a Research and Development Center and they do
2 reach out to academic institutions. I'm not sure
3 if they working with them, but I appreciate
4 knowing about them. And I'll refer to Wynn, he's
5 actually been technical anyway, so he might know
6 of some other partnering opportunities are or have
7 been.

8 MR. CARNEY: Thanks. One thing I
9 haven't heard of is that techs assistant, but I'll
10 take it. Sometimes I feel like I'm far from that.
11 At least I do know when to use the mute and when
12 not to use the mute, so that's pretty good for me.

13 So as far as working with them
14 specifically in Monterey, no, we have not. We've
15 been working with a lot of different organizations
16 and general partners, but they're one we have not,
17 and I appreciate that information, and I will look
18 into that. We've been doing a lot of different
19 things. And all I do really is I keep my finger
20 on what we're doing, what we're looking at across
21 all OLE because we do have different projects in
22 different areas, from ROVs looking at gear, fleet

1 gear, to like I talked about before, QAS and the
2 sail type UXX on top of the ocean.

3 And then also, you know, we're looking
4 at potentially with artificial intelligence with a
5 lot of the information we have, a lot of the data
6 we have. We have so much information looking at
7 potentially with maybe Google to look over
8 everything and try to put all those together and
9 try to do kind of like a predictive enforcement
10 code so we can kind of see, okay, maybe we need to
11 look here, maybe we need to look there. But I
12 will look into the Monterey Bay, the Naval, what
13 you mentioned.

14 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Wynn. I've got a
15 few people up in the queue, I've got Tim, Shana,
16 Marty, Scott, but I want to honor any members of
17 the public who are here for the public comment
18 period at this time. Again, I am not seeing in
19 the chat any hands, I mean any comments or anyone
20 expressing interest, and I'm not seeing anything
21 in the participants, but any other?

22 MS. RILEY: I have.

1 MR. BROOKS: You have some? Okay.

2 MS. RILEY: Yes. So Tim Malley is on
3 and would like to make a comment. Am I cleared to
4 unmute him at this time?

5 MR. BROOKS: Yeah. Can you just tell me
6 how many folks do you have identified?

7 MS. RILEY: He's actually the only one
8 that's reached out to me directly.

9 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Great. Then, yeah,
10 let's invite him in. And just for members of the
11 public, as to comment we do ask that you keep your
12 comments to, you know, a minute, two or three
13 minutes max, but we would love to hear from you.

14 Please open up that line if you would.
15 If the speaker could again start with a name and
16 any affiliation.

17 MR. MALLEY: Can you hear me?

18 MR. BROOKS: Yes we can, Tim.

19 MR. MALLEY: All right. Good. I want
20 to thank the panel for a very well-run webinar.
21 And, if this is part of the new normal, I think
22 I'm for it. It's kind of different from the open

1 public forums that I've been to.

2 Along with my role as (inaudible)
3 manager, PLL (phonetic) manager at Blue Harvest, I
4 belong to an organization, the American Sword and
5 Tuna Harvesters, which is made up of coastal and
6 distant-water vessels, and includes some wholesale
7 fish buyers and related shoreside businesses, like
8 shipyards.

9 Last week, President Trump released a
10 Executive order promoting American seafood
11 competitiveness and economic growth. Among the
12 encouraging goals he set forth are "Despite
13 American's beautiful -- bountiful aquatic
14 resources, by weight our Nation imports over 85
15 percent of the seafood consumed in the United
16 States." And, "Additional streamlining of fishery
17 regulations have the potential to revolutionize
18 American seafood production, enhance rural
19 prosperity, and improve the quality of American
20 lives by removing outdated and unnecessarily
21 burdensome regulations."

22 So, we're putting together a letter to

1 President Trump, encouraging that -- first of all,
2 focusing on unfair competition from overseas, but
3 also a couple of specific goals. And, I'm just
4 going to glance over them.

5 One, (inaudible) would have no input on
6 it, although they should have been very happy
7 about the original administrative action through
8 the national monuments. I don't think I need to
9 go into that. Everybody knows about it, knows
10 what the substantial impact on the PLL Fishery,
11 and we're hoping that we know he's (inaudible)
12 monument issues before and has reopened some of
13 the monuments.

14 And, we're hoping that, even though
15 we're not mining for oil, that he will take a look
16 at the bypassing of existing regulatory structures
17 and do something about this. And, we would hope
18 that (inaudible) would support this, because it
19 was really undercut their job as (inaudible) of
20 the industry.

21 And, the other thing is, the decision on
22 weak hooks, we're totally opposed to any

1 restrictions on hooks in the Gulf of Mexico,
2 because the original justification to avoid
3 bluefin tuna is -- has been overcome by
4 introduction of IBQs. So, we just see this as a
5 redundant regulation that we know cuts off -- cuts
6 down on the catch of swordfish by up to 23
7 percent. And, on top of the 29 percent loss of
8 swordfish overall due to the mandatory use of
9 circle hooks, makes this completely
10 noncompetitive.

11 And, like we say, it's redundant
12 regulation. And, while we know that it's a final
13 rule now, we are going to appeal to the president
14 to look at this and see that as what it is, which
15 is just another restriction on our ability to
16 harvest a quota. Thank you. That's all I want to
17 say.

18 MR. BROOKS: Thanks very much, Tim.
19 Anjanette, do you have anyone else from members of
20 the public?

21 MS. RILEY: No, not that have reached
22 out to me yet.

1 MR. BROOKS: Okay.

2 MS. RILEY: Or, (inaudible)

3 MR. BROOKS: Okay. I'm seeing a hand
4 raised. Jeff Kneebone with New England Aquarium.
5 Jeff, are you willing to make a public comment?

6 MS. RILEY: Just a second. I'm going
7 up.

8 MR. BROOKS: Okay.

9 MS. RILEY: Unmuted?

10 MR. BROOKS: Jeff, are you there?

11 MR. KNEEBONE: You got me?

12 MR. BROOKS: We've got you.

13 MR. KNEEBONE: Thank you very much. I
14 just wanted to briefly voice my support for the
15 NMFS Cooperative Shark Tagging Program. I have
16 volunteered in that program in graduate school and
17 have been loosely working with colleagues there
18 for many years. I can state from a scientific
19 perspective that other data had great merit for a
20 lot of different types of analyses (inaudible)
21 distribution and fishing effort.

22 I also think that the program is

1 (inaudible) engaging fishery stakeholders from
2 both the commercial and recreational industries,
3 and for that reason I strongly support the
4 continuation of that program, because it has great
5 merit and value. Thank you very much.

6 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Jeff. Anyone else
7 in members of the public who want to weigh in
8 here? Okay. If not, there were a few people who
9 are still in the queue for Brad's presentation.
10 And, since we've got a few minutes left, I'd like
11 to go back and get those folks in. So, Shana,
12 let's get you into the conversation here. Shana
13 Miller?

14 MS. MILLER: Thanks, Bennett. Can you
15 hear me?

16 MR. BROOKS: Perfectly. Thank you.

17 MS. MILLER: Okay. Great. My comment
18 was just in response to a number of comments that
19 have been made in Brad's presentation about
20 pricing of the ocean fishery. And, obviously
21 that's concerning, and I'm somewhat horrified to
22 hear about these unsold fish from last year that

1 just (inaudible) a chain (phonetic). But, when
2 (inaudible) and the rest of us are considering
3 what to do about this, I think we need to look at
4 it and (inaudible) the bigger context of the
5 global bluefin market. Quotas have gone up
6 significantly in the eastern Atlantic in
7 particular, but they've also gone up in the
8 western Atlantic, or Pacific bluefin or southern
9 bluefin.

10 And, before the drastic increase in the
11 eastern Atlantic, there were economic studies that
12 projected a significant decrease in pricing
13 because of the glut in the market that would
14 result. Japan has made it pretty clear that they
15 can handle 40,000 tons of bluefin in their market
16 from all of the species and that's it. And, I
17 think, especially what we're seeing now and
18 something with the pricing so low, it's just
19 something that we need to consider doing forward.
20 I just wanted to point that out in response.
21 Thanks.

22 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Shana. Next left

1 -- Tim Pickett. Get you back into the
2 conversation here.

3 MR. PICKETT: I actually have a comment
4 or a question for Brad and for Wynn on the
5 enforcement (inaudible) the enforcement thing
6 afterwards. This is a quick one, Brad. Just to
7 have the agency consider maybe (inaudible). I
8 have a couple of friends of mine in (inaudible)
9 that are 10 years (phonetic) -- you both want to
10 participate (inaudible).

11 MR. BROOKS: Tim, you're breaking up a
12 little bit. Can you get either closer to your
13 phone or something?

14 MR. PICKETT: Yeah, I'm speaking into my
15 phone. There's a couple of boats and a couple of
16 guys that have approached me, and it's an
17 increasing number that want to participate both in
18 the General category tuna fishery and in the
19 commercial fishery for swordfish, utilizing buoy
20 gear.

21 Now, some of these guys have handgear
22 permits, and some of these guys have directed

1 swordfish tuna and longline shark incidental
2 tri-pack permits that allow them to fish in the
3 buoy fishery. Their question is, they want to
4 have the flexibility to be able to switch between
5 the general category and this buoy fishery.

6 There's many different ways of doing it,
7 and I understand the gear conflicts and stuff, but
8 I also understand that the reasoning behind that
9 was because PLL boats participating in the general
10 category (inaudible). These are boats that I'm
11 talking about will never have a longline spool or
12 PLL equipment on the boat.

13 So, just to kind of put it on the back
14 burner that, you know, in this age of needing some
15 diversity for guys to make a little bit of money,
16 it might be something to consider in the future.
17 And, it's not so much participating in the general
18 category Bluefin Fishery, but being able to -- the
19 general category fish for, you know, yellowfins
20 and bigeyes and stuff like that in the canyons
21 more than anything. Plus, you know, some guys
22 want to build -- to bluefin fish, too, but. That

1 was my comment for Brad.

2 My comment on the law enforcement side
3 of things is, I still haven't seen much ground
4 troops in enforcement down here. Scott touched on
5 the Bahamas issue a little bit earlier. One thing
6 that wasn't mentioned was monitoring social media.
7 The endorphin rush people have of posting illegal
8 things -- I guess the endorphin rush of posting a
9 picture of you with a bunch of (inaudible)
10 swordfish, which is your (inaudible), a
11 recreational fisherman, you know, outweighs your
12 tendency to break the law.

13 Well, I had somebody say, you know, what
14 are they going to (inaudible), you know. So, I
15 would say monitoring social media down here, if
16 you want to write tickets, that's the best place
17 to start. It's fairly blatant on an almost daily
18 basis. And, I know, from a recreational
19 standpoint, because I sell some recreational
20 equipment, quite a bit of it to everyone down
21 here, kind of the old guard of the Southeast
22 Swordfish Club and stuff like that are really sick

1 of the image that their recreational fishery down
2 here is getting now.

3 I haven't really heard anyone chime in
4 on the recreational side of things, so I'll do it.
5 But, the people who like to play by the rules and
6 care about the fishery there -- down here, are
7 concerned with regard to things as breaking the
8 law with reckless abandon, and there's no
9 accountability. And, they're concerned about the
10 future of their recreational fishery, and the
11 local buoy fishing guys and stuff like that are
12 concerned about their fishery, that it's being
13 exploited here without penalty. And, so, that's
14 all I had to say there. But, thank you.

15 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Tim. I appreciate
16 it. Marty Scanlon, are you willing to jump in?
17 Marty, are you there? Maybe not.

18 MR. SCANLON: Are you trying to call me?
19 Marty?

20 MR. BROOKS: Yeah. Your hand was raised
21 as I (inaudible). Are you good?

22 MR. SCANLON: No, I kind of wanted to

1 ask a weird question, and I wanted to just clarify
2 something with Katie, if I could.

3 MR. BROOKS: Please, go ahead.

4 MR. SCANLON: Katie, you stated one
5 commercial incident there on a violation. I don't
6 see anything under (inaudible) at our industry.
7 Is that correct?

8 MS. MOORE: Well, you mean in terms of
9 the domestic violations that we're seeing?

10 MR. SCANLON: Right, the U.S.
11 violations.

12 MS. MOORE: I'd have to look further to
13 see if that turtle violation was on a (inaudible)
14 guy.

15 MR. SCANLON: Right.

16 MS. MOORE: But, in terms of, like, more
17 specifics, I'd have to look into the cases a
18 little bit more. So, I didn't look to see what
19 gear (inaudible) within the commercial
20 (inaudible).

21 MR. SCANLON: But, pretty much zero,
22 right?

1 MS. MOORE: I'd have to double-check to
2 go further. I just looked at Commercial level.
3 That's it. I didn't look at gear type in the
4 (inaudible).

5 MR. SCANLON: Yeah, I was more concerned
6 with the bluefin thing. See, there's one
7 Commercial incident right there with --
8 (inaudible) sure if it was a (inaudible) would be
9 noted.

10 MS. MOORE: I can look into that one a
11 little bit more and work it through Pete and CC
12 you, if you're interested.

13 MR. SCANLON: All right. It's not all
14 that (inaudible), Katie, to me. But, I do have
15 some questions for Wynn there, if I could there.
16 Yeah, you know, I know your force is limited
17 there. You didn't have any screens there. I'd
18 imagine you have districts that go into the Coast
19 Guard. Do they correspond with the Coast Guard
20 districts? And, how many officers actually are in
21 each one of those districts there to oversee all
22 of this?

1 MR. CARNEY: Hi, Marty. So, our
2 districts in the Coast Guards aren't exactly the
3 same. They do overlap. Like, for instance,
4 District 5 overlaps with North Carolina, and
5 Virginia -- and Virginia is in the northeast
6 division, and North Carolina is in our southeast
7 division. And, the same thing up around New
8 Jersey, too.

9 And, New York, because we have a New
10 England division, then we have the mid-Atlantic
11 division. But, to answer your question on how
12 many people we have, all together with OLE, sworn
13 staff, we have 130, 132 -- I can't remember the
14 exact number, a hundred and thirty-ish positions.
15 Probably, I'd say half of those are in the
16 southeast and the northeast divisions, and then
17 half of those are officers, and then half of those
18 are investigators, agents.

19 MR. SCANLON: I gotcha. So, these are
20 the agents and the officers (inaudible) both on
21 the water, pretty much, right? Or, the agents
22 simply work on the docks?

1 MR. CARNEY: Sometimes, the agents go
2 out on water. Most of the time it's the officers
3 who are on the dock and the agents are kind of
4 behind the scene. The agents are looking more at
5 the complex investigations, when they get a
6 chance, and the officers are more the -- in the
7 uniform with that patrol presence.

8 MR. SCANLON: Right. So, it's not a
9 very significant force, by any means.

10 MR. CARNEY: No, I mean, we could always
11 -- I'd love to have -- always have loved to have
12 more, but, we do as much as we can, cooperate, and
13 work (inaudible) state partners. Our JEA program
14 is Joint Enforcement Agreement. It is a big
15 program, and that's where the state officers are
16 basically deputized by us to enforce federal
17 regulations and federal laws. So, we do work
18 closely with them.

19 MR. SCANLON: Were you out here before
20 when Scott Taylor was talking about the problems
21 that are going on down there in Florida? I'll let
22 Scott elaborate on that with you there, if you'd

1 like. I'd like him to --

2 MR. CARNEY: Yeah, I was on earlier when
3 he was talking about the recreational boats who
4 were fishing in the Bahamian waters. And, there
5 was like 30 to 60 of them, I think, that some of
6 the radar has seen, yes. And, I've documented
7 that and I will forward that to our southeast
8 division.

9 MR. SCANLON: I gotcha there. Okay.
10 Thank you. I appreciate it. Thanks, Katie.

11 MR. CARNEY: Thanks, Marty.

12 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Marty. I think
13 I've got three more people who want to jump in.
14 We've got about 7 more minutes. So, we'll all do
15 the math. It's about 2-1/2 each. Mike
16 Pierdinock.

17 MR. PIERDINOCK: Thank you. I would
18 just like to expand upon the discussion earlier
19 about the catch-and-release methods for bluefin.
20 And, I have so noted the Stellwagen Bank Charter
21 Boat Association continues to have seminars and
22 training to which membership as well as outreach

1 to the public, whether it's bluefin or any other
2 pelagic, that we may encounter land- and-release.

3 And, I wanted to note that we had a
4 number of different seminars set up up and down
5 the coast, such as the Castafari Offshore Fishing
6 Seminar, where we were going to provide additional
7 public outreach for sound catch-and-release
8 methods, which include a lot of methods that the
9 PEI uses that we're using now to release bluefin.
10 But, unfortunately, with the COVID-19, the seminar
11 got cancelled.

12 But, yes, we continue to provide the
13 outcry while we continue to provide the details to
14 the public and promote that sound
15 catch-and-release. I just wanted to note that for
16 the record that we're doing that up and down the
17 coast and recognize the fact that we want to have
18 some catch-and-release methods. Thanks.

19 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks, Mike.
20 David Schalit.

21 MR. SCHALIT: Me?

22 MR. BROOKS: Yep. Your hand was raised,

1 or is that just (inaudible)?

2 MR. SCHALIT: No-no.

3 MR. BROOKS: Yep. You're up, Mike.

4 MR. SCHALIT: Okay. This is for Brad.

5 Brad, first of all, I forgot to thank you for this
6 very informative presentation. We tend to look
7 forward to it like we look forward to the Super
8 Bowl. My question has to do with a slide that you
9 had, which basically was a short-bulleted list of
10 items relating to 2020. And, one of the items in
11 that list mentioned HACCP. I think this was in
12 the context of fishermen, you know, selling, and
13 farmers markets are selling it at the dock or
14 whatever, selling their catches at the dock.

15 This HACCP -- if I'm not mistaken,
16 that's FDA regulation, right?

17 MR. MCHALE: Yeah, that's absolutely
18 correct, David. So, I included that bullet there.
19 The acronym is usually referred to as HACCP
20 [pronouncing acronym]. But, you're absolutely
21 right. It is an FDA requirement, and what it
22 speaks to was the additional complexities that

1 come along with marketing scombrids, bluefin tuna
2 in particular, to the general public for
3 consumption, given some of the (inaudible)
4 production capabilities of tunas and then what
5 that can mean as far as foodborne illnesses.

6 And, so, I know Mike had mentioned
7 earlier, collaborating with some of the states to
8 acquire dealer permits to be able to show other
9 fishery products directly to the consumers. When
10 it comes to tunas, it's a much more complex
11 process because of some of those FDA regulations
12 that apply to tunas. HACCP plans and monitoring
13 and reporting are all part of that.

14 MR. SCHALIT: Okay. Thank you.

15 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Brad. Thanks,
16 David. I've got Scott Taylor in the queue, I
17 think, unless that was a leftover. Scott?

18 MR. TAYLOR: No, it's not left over.

19 MR. BROOKS: Not left over. Okay.
20 Great.

21 MR. TAYLOR: Yes. I'm sorry. So, I
22 wanted to elaborate a little bit more about the

1 issue with the (inaudible) from an enforcement
2 standpoint down there. There's also really a kind
3 of impression from the agency to take care of
4 (inaudible) of Randy's response, that he's been
5 somewhat aware of the problem, that essentially
6 you have a huge amount -- and it is a huge amount
7 -- of yellowfin tuna production that's going
8 unrecorded from the recreational sector as well as
9 the fact that it is -- the (inaudible) are fishing
10 illegally in Bahamian waters, that this is not, to
11 anybody that knows down here, again, through
12 reinforced what Tim said -- this isn't everybody,
13 this is sort of the new guard, with the implement
14 of these high- powered outboards and fast boats
15 that have the ability to run 90, 120 miles
16 offshore in a given day and then return.

17 You've seen this fishery -- we've seen
18 this fishery continuing to expand. And, this is
19 not about anything else from me, other than a
20 point that Marty raised earlier, which is, there's
21 leveling the playing field of something that this
22 HMS pelagic longline fishery has not been terribly

1 successful in advocating for, either in reporting
2 or in getting his point across from the sampling
3 of enforcement.

4 I mean, this is not rocket science down
5 here, guys, that on any given day I can give you
6 exact lat and long positions where this fleet is.
7 I mean, this is not a difficult thing, that there
8 is a desire to do any enforcement and send a
9 message that these people are essentially beyond
10 legal reproach, that if you want to have reporting
11 from the largest-producing sector, it goes
12 unreported, which is the recreational sector, you
13 have to apply some pressure.

14 You know, there's nothing that we land
15 that doesn't get reported. I got three cameras
16 staring down on my crew. I've got OLE coming to
17 visit me if I've got an EM infraction. Okay.
18 These people are on social media bragging about
19 what it is that they're doing in a specific
20 location on an ongoing basis. I can tell you that
21 my fleet does not go a year without being boarded.
22 Almost every single one of my boats get boarded

1 several times within a year. But, yet we have not
2 had a single case made against any pelagic or
3 pelagic intervention of the recreational.

4 So, the question is, is there a lack of
5 desire on the -- on HMS's self to involve
6 themselves with OLE and with enforcement than to
7 try to bring a force about an effective result?
8 Is there any direction coming from the agency
9 specifically for these issues? You all have been
10 well aware that there have been enforcement issues
11 down in here, whether or not that it's been in the
12 illegal sale of swordfish into this (inaudible),
13 or is this kind of illegal activity? And, so,
14 don't think that it's a disingenuous question to
15 ask how actively involved the agency really is.

16 MR. BROOKS: So, Scott, I'm going to
17 jump in here and let the agency respond. Who
18 wants to respond (inaudible)? Maybe Randy. You
19 haven't been in. I think that Greg DiDomenico has
20 raised his hand and a member of the public. I
21 want to give him a chance to comment before we are
22 slated to adjourn in just a couple of minutes.

1 Randy, did you want to -- any feedback on Scott's
2 comment?

3 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Sure, I'll just jump
4 in there a little bit, and if Wynn wants to follow
5 up and Katie anymore, they can. I noticed they've
6 already spoken a bit to this, with Katie pointing
7 out, I think, in one of the comments that they're
8 referencing a case where at least investigation
9 that was made, and Wynn saying that he's forwarded
10 the concern to the southeast office of
11 (inaudible).

12 And, you know, I'll kind of build upon
13 my previous comments, that I appreciate when
14 issues like this are brought before us, either at
15 the AP meeting or when they are one-on-one or via
16 emails or any other ways that we can get
17 information that helps us to be able to forward
18 some of this to Office of Law Enforcement and/or
19 (inaudible) Coast Guard or others for followup
20 action.

21 The issues that have been mentioned by
22 Scott and others about South Florida are ongoing

1 comments that we have heard and that we continue
2 to certainly highlight with the Office of Law
3 Enforcement. And, I know that in discussions with
4 law enforcement that it is a priority for them,
5 something that we regularly talk about when we do
6 have the communications with them. And, a lot of
7 that in the past has surrounded sales of
8 swordfish, like you referenced, but it has not
9 been unique to just that.

10 Certainly, the highlighting of it now,
11 we will continue to raise the issue and talk to
12 them about it so that we can try to address it as
13 best we can. And, yeah, I'm aware that,
14 certainly, recreational boating and recreational
15 anglers, that there's quite a few of them, and I
16 read some of the same magazines and have seen some
17 of the same information about the growth of the
18 sport, high prevalence of larger boats could go
19 further, and all of that.

20 And, I think that is all part of the
21 picture of people getting to places that they
22 maybe didn't get to in quite the same numbers.

1 But, it is something that I'm glad that it's been
2 put on our radar screen, and we will work to
3 follow through our channels.

4 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Randy. Greg,
5 you're going to get the last word here this
6 afternoon. We are out of time, but I definitely
7 want to give you a chance to make a comment. Greg
8 DiDomenico, let's start with your (inaudible)
9 affiliation, of course.

10 MR. DIDOMENICO: Thank you. Can you
11 hear me.

12 MR. BROOKS: Yes, we can, Greg.

13 MR. DIDOMENICO: Great. So, just a
14 quick comment and then a request. Speaking on
15 behalf of the vessels at Viking Village in
16 Barnegat Light, New Jersey, we'd like HMS and the
17 agency to consider lifting the current regs that
18 does not allow pelagic longline vessels or a
19 gillnet vessel applicable for a Gen Cat HMS permit
20 or a handgear permit without taking off all of the
21 equipment or the longline spools and gillnet
22 spools.

1 We'd like you to consider to taking a
2 small adjustment, the (inaudible) process that
3 would allow them to hold those permits, unique
4 (inaudible) permits, regardless of what gear they
5 have on the boat. Thank you very much.

6 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Greg. Okay. And,
7 I'll just note that there's a comment in the chat
8 (inaudible) from Tim Malley, saying he just wants
9 to add that last year FDA inexplicably added
10 swordfish to (inaudible) their histamine-producing
11 fish. That is a big (inaudible) to consumers and
12 fishermen. It should be noted another case of
13 (inaudible) despite not being (inaudible) fish.
14 With that, we are adjourned. I want to thank you
15 folks for being so focused, and, again, what's not
16 an ideal format and not an ideal time, and I think
17 we've heard again and again how rough this is on
18 all of you. And, I'll just send along my own
19 personal reflections on how rough it is, and I
20 appreciate what you all do, and I'm sorry that
21 it's proven to be such a difficult for time for
22 you and for so many.

1 Randy, I guess I want to hand it off to
2 you. Oh, I wanted to note just two next steps
3 that I captured here (inaudible) was Mike
4 Pierdinock's request this morning to get some
5 advice on how they can go inconsistencies across
6 state and federal regulations right now. I think
7 that was COVID driven in sort of getting some
8 clarity on how to handle that.

9 And, then, there's some (inaudible).
10 We're going to take a look at the shark-tagging
11 issue. And, I just work with you, Randy, and
12 staff there to double-back on that feedback which
13 came through loud and clear in a number of
14 comments in chat.

15 With that, Randy, I'll leave it to you
16 for a final comment, and maybe give a sense of
17 what we're thinking about, the timing (inaudible),
18 since we may not know format come the fall.

19 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Sure. Thank you.
20 And, I'll add to what Bennett was saying. Thank
21 you to everybody, once again, for joining us for
22 this modified and virtual AP meeting. I think

1 it's actually worked pretty well in a lot of ways.
2 I know that with HMS staff and with Bennett we're
3 going to be getting together in the near future to
4 think about what went well and what maybe didn't
5 go as well and think about how we could improve if
6 and when we need to utilize this format again.

7 And, we don't know exactly how things
8 are going to play out through the rest of the
9 summer and into the fall. I know that at least
10 the prognosis right now for travel is not great.
11 We don't have any for sure direction on that yet.
12 We will be looking for that direction soon,
13 because we'll need to be making plans for it.

14 But, we most likely will be looking to
15 hold the fall AP meeting right around the same
16 time that we usually do, because that time period
17 usually avoids some conflicts which other councils
18 -- with the councils and with some other things,
19 although I know it's not good for everybody.

20 So, we have not set that date yet, but
21 we will be thinking about it and we'll be sending
22 you information about that as soon as we can and

1 certainly sending information not only to hold the
2 date but also, as soon as we can, information
3 about how the meeting is going to be held.

4 We have several things, as I've pointed
5 to in my overview presentation, several things
6 coming up on the horizon in the next few months
7 that you should be on the lookout for. And, we'll
8 be sending out HMS news notices on our LISTSERV
9 email addresses for your attention, and we'll be
10 covering a lot of those things and discussing them
11 at the fall AP meeting. So, be on the lookout for
12 that. And, we are looking forward to continuing
13 our conversation on a lot of these things at that
14 meeting.

15 Once again, I just thank you so much for
16 your time and your patience today as we work
17 through some of the technical difficulties and as
18 well all learn the new system and the new venue
19 for having this. Thanks to Bennett for doing a
20 great job of moderating, like he usually does, and
21 thanks, again, to all the speakers that we had for
22 doing a good job as well. That's it for me. I'll

1 turn it back over to you, Bennett.

2 MR. BROOKS: Randy, a quick question
3 from David Schalit in the chat. Any idea when the
4 recap of this meeting will get posted online? How
5 long does that normally take?

6 MR. BLANKINSHIP: When we put together a
7 summary, it usually is -- by the time we get it
8 back out it's like a week or two afterwards. And,
9 we can think about putting that together in the
10 next couple of weeks.

11 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thank you. All
12 right. I think that's it then. Again, thank you,
13 everybody. I wish everyone well and safety and
14 health for you and your families and friends as we
15 sort of continue to navigate. It's a hot moment
16 in time. But, thank you all for participating and
17 (inaudible). Since you're all muted you can't say
18 anything back. It's very awkward. But, thank you
19 all. I think we're going to just end the call
20 now. Thanks.

21 SPEAKER: Thank you. Bye, everybody.

22 (Whereupon, at 2:51 p.m., the

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PROCEEDINGS were adjourned.)

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