

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
 NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
 (NOAA)

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NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS)  
 ATLANTIC HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY PANEL

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VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING

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THURSDAY  
 MAY 27, 2021

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The Panel met via webinar at 9:00 a.m.  
 EDT, Bennett Brooks, facilitating.

MEMBERS PRESENT

JASON ADRIANCE, Louisiana Department of  
 Wildlife and Fisheries

PATRICK AUGUSTINE

ANNA BECKWITH, South Atlantic Fishery  
 Management Council

RICK BELLAVANCE, New England Fishery  
 Management Council

ANDREW COX, Shimano North America

MARCUS DRYMON, Mississippi-Alabama Sea  
 Grant; State Representative for Alabama

MEAGAN DUNPHY-DALY, Duke University Nicholas  
 School of the Environment

RAIMUNDO ESPINOZA, Conservaci3n ConCiencia  
 Inc.

STEVE GETTO, American Bluefin Tuna  
 Association

WALTER GOLET, University of Maine School of  
 Marine Sciences and Gulf of Maine Research  
 Institute

JOHN GRAVES, Virginia Institute of Marine  
 Science

YAMITZA RODRIGUEZ FERRER, Puerto Rico DNER,  
Recreational and Sport Fisheries Division  
SONJA FORDHAM, Shark Advocates International  
KRISTIN FOSS, Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission  
MARCOS HANKE, Caribbean Fishery Management  
Council  
LUKE HARRIS, Pure Harvest Seafood  
DEWEY HEMILRIGHT, Mid-Atlantic Fishery  
Management Council  
GREG HINKS, New Jersey Department of  
Environmental Protection  
EVAN HIPSLEY  
RUSSELL HUDSON, Directed Sustainable  
Fisheries, Inc.  
ROBERT HUETER, Center for Shark Research,  
Mote Marine Laboratory  
BOB HUMPHREY, Sport-Ventures Charters and  
Casco Bay Bluefin Bonanza  
STEPHEN IWICKI  
WALLACE JENKINS, South Carolina Department  
of Resources  
DAVID KERSTETTER, Nova Southeastern  
University Oceanographic Center  
SHANA MILLER, The Ocean Foundation  
ROBERT NAVARRO, Fly Zone Fishing  
JEFF ODEN, F/V Sea Bound  
TIM PICKETT, Lindgren-Pitman, Inc.  
MICHAEL PIERDINOCK, CPF Charters  
"Perseverance"; Recreational Fishing  
Alliance  
STEVE POLAND, North Carolina Division of  
Marine Fisheries  
GEORGE PURMONT  
KIRBY ROOTES-MURDY, Atlantic States Marine  
Fisheries Commission  
MARK SAMPSON, Ocean City Charterboat  
Captains Association  
MARTIN SCANLON, F/V Provider II  
DAVID SCHALIT, American Bluefin Tuna Association  
GREGORY SKOMAL, Massachusetts Division of Marine  
Fisheries  
PERRY TRIAL, Texas Parks and Wildlife  
Department  
CHRISTINA VAETH, present on behalf of Dave  
Campo

RICK WEBER, South Jersey Marina  
ALAN WEISS, Blue Water Fishing Tackle  
Company  
KATIE WESTFALL, Environmental Defense Fund  
ANGEL WILLEY, Maryland Department of  
Natural Resources

HMS STAFF PRESENT

RANDY BLANKINSHIP, Division Chief,  
Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management  
Division  
KARYL BREWSTER-GEISZ, Headquarters Fish Branch  
Chief, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species  
Management Division  
PETE COOPER, Branch Chief, Atlantic Highly  
Migratory Species Management Division  
CLIFF HUTT, Office of Sustainable Fisheries  
BRAD MCHALE, Northeast Branch Chief,  
Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management  
Division  
DELISSE ORTIZ, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species  
Management Division  
GEORGE SILVA, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species  
Management Division

SPEAKERS

PAUL DOREMUS, Assistant Administrator  
for Fisheries (Acting)  
SAM RAUCH, Deputy Assistant Administrator  
for Regulatory Programs  
TIM DONALDSON, NOAA Office of Law  
Enforcement  
KATIE MOORE, U.S. Coast Guard  
JAMES REINHARDT, NOAA Fisheries Office of  
Habitat Conservation

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

9:03 a.m.

1  
2  
3  
4 MR. BROOKS: All right. Good morning,  
5 everybody. Let's get going here. Let me just  
6 spend a few minutes kind of re-introducing us,  
7 since we may have a few people who have not been  
8 in the mix yet. I'll try to hit this all pretty  
9 quickly.

10 So first of all, just good morning.  
11 Thanks, everyone, for coming back for day 3. I  
12 know it's really hard to stay focused on a Zoom  
13 for -- Heck, it's hard to stay focused on a Zoom  
14 for two hours, let alone three days.

15 So, we really appreciate everyone  
16 hanging in with us as we move through all these  
17 different topics over multiple, multiple days.  
18 So, appreciate it.

19 This morning we will start in a few  
20 moments here handing off to George Silva and  
21 Cliff Hutt, who will give us the 2020 Fisheries  
22 Economic Situation Report.

23 I know this has been really helpful  
24 and well received in the past. And so, I think  
25 this will be the third time that this information  
26 has been updated and presented.

27 After a break we will move to a  
28 leadership update. And we will hear both from  
29 Paul Doremus, the Acting Assistant Administrator  
30 for Fisheries, and Sam Rauch, who as you all know  
31 is Deputy AA for Regulatory Programs.

32 They will be with us for a half hour.  
33 I think we should all expect that it will be, you  
34 know, a pretty succinct half hour, and not be  
35 able to go longer than that. But I know they  
36 will share information with all of you. And I'm  
37 sure there will be at least some time for some  
38 questions or comments.

39 After the leadership update we will  
40 hear from Jamie Reinhardt on the Deepwater  
41 Horizon Oceanic Fish Restoration Project. That  
42 will take us to lunch.

43 Lunch again will be from 11:30 a.m. to  
44 1:00 p.m. today. We'll do our darnedest to get  
45 us out to lunch on time. If we need to go a  
46 little bit long, you know, we will potentially,  
47 you know, let you out at about 20 of or so.

48 But again, for your planning purposes,

1 if you need to do some work, you need to make  
2 phone calls, that 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. time or  
3 11:35 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. is really your safest  
4 time. And you can count on being able to use  
5 that time.

6 We'll come back from lunch at 1  
7 o'clock. And we'll hear a law enforcement  
8 update, both from the Office of Law Enforcement,  
9 OLE, as well as U.S. Coast Guard.

10 That will take us to 2 o'clock, when  
11 we will have another opportunity for public  
12 comment. And then, we will finish up today at  
13 2:30 p.m. So, it will be an earlier stop today  
14 than it has been on other days.

15 Just ground rules again quickly.  
16 Please, AP members, for anyone who's not an AP  
17 member the conversation for most of the day is  
18 around the virtual table, with the Advisory Panel  
19 members. Again, public comment at the end.

20 For AP members we ask the usual ground  
21 rules from you. Contribute, share time, integrate  
22 of course what you're hearing, be really  
23 respectful in the way that you comment and  
24 respond to each other, ask questions of each  
25 other.

26 Again, this is not consensus speaking.  
27 But it is super helpful for the Agency to hear  
28 what people are thinking, what are concerns,  
29 where is the support, where does there seem to be  
30 broad support. All of that is really helpful to  
31 the HMS staff, as they go about looking forward  
32 with rule drafting, et cetera.

33 Just a couple other virtual pieces to  
34 remind everyone of. You are on mute unless  
35 you're invited in. The only people who are on  
36 camera are the speakers over on the, you know,  
37 HMS app who are managing things, and myself.

38 People have asked the Board, can you  
39 see the attendee list? Unfortunately at this  
40 point we don't have the ability to make it  
41 available.

42 So, unfortunately you don't right now.  
43 We have 35 attendees, not counting all the HMS  
44 staff. So, that's primarily AP members and some  
45 members of the public as well.

46 Whenever you want to get in the queue  
47 just raise your hand, your virtual hand. If for  
48 some reason you can't do that, just throw a

1 comment in the chat.

2 Speaking of chat, my advice is, the  
3 chat can be really helpful in sort of saying a  
4 ditto or, you know, agree with something that  
5 someone just said. It's a really helpful way to  
6 get more voices in, while sort of creating space  
7 for people to weigh in.

8 Don't overuse the chat. I think it's  
9 actually been used really well over the last  
10 couple of days. So, thanks for the way you've  
11 been doing that. It's been very helpful.

12 I will run the meeting as I normally  
13 do, which is sort of in general brining in people  
14 as hands are raised. But I absolutely will use  
15 some latitude to bring people in to make sure, in  
16 a different order, either to allow for back and  
17 forth, or a comment back, or to make sure we can  
18 easily balance across the types of people and  
19 perspectives that are on the AP here.

20 So, if there are any technical issues  
21 please just reach out to Nick or Pete. I think  
22 that is it, unless Pete or Randy, you have  
23 anything to add, or AP members, you have any  
24 questions as we jump into today.

25 MR. COOPER: Bennett, I was just  
26 looking for more AP members. I thought they'd be  
27 here. But -- at the hotel bar, not so much.

28 MR. BROOKS: Okay. All right. Well,  
29 hopefully we'll have more. I expect we'll have  
30 many more joining in as we go. So, actually,  
31 there's a bunch more who have joined. I see we  
32 have another eight or ten that I'm seeing.  
33 Randy, anything from you?

34 MR. BLANKINSHIP: No. I'm good to go.  
35 Looking forward to the discussion, and Pete to  
36 come back from the bar. Just back there he was  
37 joking, just for everybody's perspective if  
38 you're not seeing Pete. He has the hotel bar as  
39 the background, where he's just checking to see  
40 if anybody --

41 MR. BROOKS: That's true. That's a  
42 good thing to clarify, Randy.

43 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yes, where the real  
44 meeting starts.

45 MR. COOPER: I'm ready. Let's go.

46 MR. BROOKS: I'm not sure if it's  
47 besmirched or enhanced his reputation. But all  
48 right. Let's get going. Hand it off to George

1 Silva to get us into the 2020 Fisheries Economic  
2 update here. George, it's all yours. And we are  
3 seeing your screen. Good. Are you on mute,  
4 George, if you're talking? There you go.

5 MR. SILVA: Just getting myself  
6 situated. Here we go.

7 MR. BROOKS: No worries.

8 MR. SILVA: Thanks for having me back,  
9 everyone. Hope everyone's had their coffee, and  
10 is charged up and ready to go for another day.  
11 I'm glad to see that there's a lot of  
12 participants, even though it's Day 3. Though  
13 thankfully I'm in the morning this time, and not  
14 after lunch. So, everyone's fresh and alert.

15 Just wanted to start out by noting  
16 that I just realized that Brood X and the cicadas  
17 are out this week here in northern Virginia.  
18 That has been, the last time this happened was  
19 when I first started HMS 17 years ago.

20 And with that, I just wanted to also  
21 point out that the economic situation we're in is  
22 unprecedented. I haven't seen anything like this  
23 in my career.

24 But, you know, even though it's been  
25 some serious hard times I have at least a few  
26 green shoots, some positive impacts to discuss,  
27 and some developments in today's presentation.

28 So, don't get depressed. We're going  
29 to have some things that are positive to talk  
30 about, in addition to all the changes that have  
31 occurred.

32 I'm going to walk you through what I'm  
33 going to talk about today. First starting with  
34 some macroeconomic indicators. These have been  
35 of particular interest. I've been focusing on  
36 high frequency numbers to get us the latest  
37 situation in the market.

38 This was especially important last  
39 year when I first did a presentation, because it  
40 was, you know, only a few months into the  
41 pandemic, and it was very hard to see and get a  
42 real picture of what was going on in the market.

43 In addition to that, I've added some  
44 monthly numbers that are now available, they make  
45 more sense now that we're well into, you know,  
46 the 14th or 15th month of the situation.

47 From that I'm going to jump into more  
48 HMS centric numbers, walking you through the HMS



1 landings revenue for 2020 and the beginning of,  
2 or mainly 2021.

3 And then looking at the price trends  
4 for our different species; Then jumping into our  
5 own high frequency indicator for commercial  
6 vessel activity, using our VMS system.

7 And then after that I'm going to hand  
8 it over to Cliff to walk us through some of our  
9 more recreational oriented numbers. He's going  
10 to step through the for-hire sector and our  
11 tournaments.

12 So with that, let's jump into kind of  
13 the main item of today's discussion. And I think  
14 this is how I started the presentation the first  
15 time around, with restaurant sales.

16 I start with restaurant sales because  
17 68 percent of all consumer expenditures for  
18 fisheries products were made at seafood service  
19 establishments, based on 2017 estimates.

20 And so, restaurant sales are a really  
21 good lead indicator for demand for fisheries  
22 products, and in our case HMS products.

23 So, as you can see here, you know,  
24 shortly after the beginning of March in 2020  
25 there was a, you know, dramatic, devastating  
26 impact to the restaurant sector, where almost 100  
27 percent of table service at restaurants, as  
28 measured by the OpenTable network, were reduced  
29 from the prior 2019 numbers.

30 And that persisted until almost,  
31 basically until May of 2020. And then a slight  
32 recovery started occurring in May. I think that  
33 this probably started occurring as some of the  
34 seated diners became outdoor seated diners as  
35 restaurants started to adapt.

36 And those numbers, as we've covered in  
37 previous meetings, trended throughout the summer,  
38 a bit upward until we got to Labor Day Weekend.  
39 That is a big improvement on Labor Day Weekend.

40 But unfortunately COVID numbers  
41 started increasing at that point as well. And  
42 so, some of that decreased, and there were more  
43 restrictions put into place after Labor Day  
44 Weekend. So, that kind of backed off a bit.

45 And then we entered the winter months,  
46 which we were, you know, down just before the  
47 holidays. It was almost an 80 percent reduction  
48 year-over-year in restaurant seated patrons, as

1 measured in the OpenTable network.

2 But the good news is, since that low  
3 point, we've recovered pretty nicely from late  
4 December through the beginning of May. And I  
5 have some really cutting edge updates.

6 Last weekend retail, or restaurant  
7 seated patrons were only three percent lower than  
8 they were in the equivalent weekend in 2019. So,  
9 that's, you know, almost unmeasurable from a  
10 normal weekend in the previous 2019 year.

11 And then on May 25th, just a couple of  
12 days ago, there was actually a positive four  
13 percent increase in patrons in 2021, for the May  
14 25th versus the equivalent day of the week, and  
15 week of the month in 2019. So, some really  
16 positive, you know, turnaround on restaurant  
17 sales.

18 So, diving a little deeper into  
19 restaurant sales, I pulled out information from  
20 the Census Bureau on advance retail sales for  
21 U.S. restaurants and bars. I guess Pete's  
22 picture was also appropriate for this discussion,  
23 looking at, including the bar scene there.

24 But as you can see here these numbers  
25 are all changes from 2019 in terms of millions of  
26 dollars across the whole U.S. I started with  
27 February 2020. That's just really before the  
28 pandemic went mainstream in the United States.

29 As you can see the sales were actually  
30 six percent above 2019. So, the economy was  
31 doing really well. Consumer confidence was  
32 pretty high.

33 But things changed dramatically in  
34 March, with a 27 percent reduction in U.S.  
35 restaurant and bar sales. And then it dropped to  
36 the lowest point in April of 2020, which really  
37 matches up with that OpenTable Network data that  
38 we saw in the previous slide.

39 One thing to note, these numbers, they  
40 would include not just patrons in those  
41 establishments, but also carry out and take out.  
42 So, some of the impacts are, you know, these  
43 numbers are adjusted for changes that restaurants  
44 took to adjust to the basically new reality of  
45 the COVID-19 pandemic.

46 Those numbers trended, improved  
47 throughout the months of 2020, into the summer,  
48 especially with take-out and outdoor sales. So,

1 by August and September they were only 15 percent  
2 off of the normal.

3           However, by the time we got to  
4 December they were trending downward again, minus  
5 22 percent. And that's primarily due to the  
6 weather, and also kind of a post-Thanksgiving,  
7 you know, resurgence from people's gatherings,  
8 and from other, basically just seasonal effects  
9 of the COVID-19 disease.

10           By the time we got to January the  
11 improvement once again took hold, and February  
12 and March we were only one percent down from  
13 2019. So, really by March these numbers actually  
14 are amazing, you know in the food service and  
15 drinking places sectors. It's pretty amazing.  
16 Down one percent. And then I have the latest  
17 April numbers that I just pulled yesterday, and  
18 these showed an increase of basically \$1.2  
19 billion dollars of sales, including drink  
20 establishments, versus 2019 April. And that's  
21 actually up two percent. So, we're in positive  
22 territory now versus 2019.

23           So, that takes us through the  
24 restaurant side of things. And I also thought it  
25 would be of interest to folks to think of travel.  
26 I mean, we're all still, you know, doing things  
27 virtually.

28           And that was one of the big impacts of  
29 this pandemic, was this, you know, folks staying  
30 close to home. A great resource for looking at  
31 travel is TSA checkpoint travel numbers.

32           So, these are people going through  
33 airport security. The Transportation Security  
34 Administration staff tracks how many visitors  
35 they check in every day. And they publish those  
36 numbers.

37           And so, the orange line on this chart  
38 shows you what the typical 2019 travel numbers  
39 look like. And, you know, they did an impressive  
40 amount of check-ins every day, you know, around  
41 two million or more daily.

42           Then the green line is 2020 travelers.  
43 And you can see here, really that dramatic change  
44 in March of 2020. I mean, that was a massive  
45 decline.

46           And even the wavering up and down,  
47 that shows you kind of the weekly cycle, from  
48 weekend to weekday, back to weekend. And you can

1 notice that even flattened out basically during  
2 2020. Really through May, June, July there's  
3 really almost no weekday variation, just very,  
4 very small deviations between weekend and  
5 weekdays.

6 And then you start seeing some  
7 recovery on that green line from July through  
8 like basically November. And then there's a bit  
9 of an increase for Thanksgiving at the end of  
10 November.

11 And then a quick little increase at  
12 the end of December for the winter holidays and  
13 peaking shortly after January 1st for everyone  
14 returning from their holidays.

15 And then there was another big  
16 decline. But thankfully those numbers are now  
17 starting to improve. They're not fully  
18 recovered; they're still quite a ways off of that  
19 2021 travel numbers.

20 But you can see it's staying pretty  
21 steady at about ten percent lower, or so, than  
22 what it was in 2019. Maybe a bit less than that,  
23 but still, thinking back to 2020 versus 2021,  
24 we're at about six times the travel numbers  
25 through airports now than we were at an  
26 equivalent point in 2020. So, still a very  
27 dramatic increase.

28 And there's reduced capacity too now.  
29 So, even if the demand really took off, I think  
30 it would take quite a while for us to actually  
31 return to 2021 numbers, just because of airline  
32 capacity at this point.

33 Continuing on our kind of tour through  
34 tourism, I brought in hotel occupancy. I noticed  
35 that this is provided on a kind of weekly basis  
36 by STR, one of the industry associations that  
37 tracks U.S. hotel occupancy.

38 This graph takes us through the,  
39 basically through the beginning of February of  
40 2020, kind of just before the pandemic became an  
41 issue in the U.S., to the low point, and  
42 basically the week ending April 11th of 2020,  
43 which was only a 22 percent occupancy rate at  
44 hotels.

45 And that doesn't even tell us the full  
46 picture. I know some AP members mentioned the  
47 last time, some of the hotels were being used for  
48 sheltering people who needed a place to stay or

1 were quarantining during the pandemic. So, they  
2 weren't necessarily representative of tourism.

3 But there was, you know, a pretty  
4 decent recovery throughout the summer. It also  
5 went down again in November through January time  
6 period.

7 Or, you know, had a pretty dramatic  
8 recovery in the February through March period.  
9 Seems to coincide with the kind of, the bigger  
10 push for vaccines that were starting to be  
11 administered to a larger and wider pool of  
12 population.

13 By the end of May 1st we were at a  
14 57.1 percent occupancy rate. I went and pulled  
15 the numbers fresh on the website. And they  
16 provided numbers through the end of May 15th.  
17 Occupancy has increased to 59.1 percent. And  
18 that is just 16.4 percent lower than the  
19 comparable week in 2019. So, we're still a bit  
20 off. But, you know, pretty dramatic improvement.

21 So, one thing I had early on, I was  
22 concerned about, and I have included, was fuel  
23 numbers. In the first time I presented the  
24 economic situation report way back in the early  
25 summer of 2020.

26 I had pulled it off because it didn't  
27 seem like the fuel markets were going to be  
28 really impacted by the pandemic, and if anything  
29 there seemed to be plenty of extra fuel since no  
30 one was going to work.

31 But things have changed dramatically  
32 in 2021 as folks who were watching the news have  
33 seen. There's been some serious disruptions in  
34 the fuel markets.

35 Let me walk you through this chart.  
36 This green line is the kind of baseline of 2019.  
37 Pretty steady diesel retail prices hovering  
38 around the \$3 per gallon line.

39 Then we get to 2020 and we were  
40 actually a little bit on the high side at the  
41 beginning of 2020. But that dramatically  
42 decreased, brought us all the way down to about  
43 \$2.40 a gallon in the summer months.

44 That was probably some relief, at  
45 least for the folks that could go out fishing to  
46 have a bit cheaper fuel at least given all the  
47 other things that were going on.

48 But that started increasing again in

1 the winter months, probably with fuel, some  
2 switching that was occurring for, you know, the  
3 refineries could start switching over to making  
4 heating products.

5 And by the beginning of 2021, there's  
6 a kind of combination between the changes in  
7 demand and, kind of that refinery switching. We  
8 had some inflation indicators starting to rise  
9 up.

10 And then we've had a couple, you know,  
11 kind of big disruptions, not really so much fuel  
12 but, you know, the Suez Canal situation.

13 And then the east coast pipeline  
14 incident that occurred a few weeks past really  
15 shot prices up a bit. Not as much as gasoline.  
16 But diesel fuel jumped up to about \$3.20 a gallon  
17 in April.

18 And, so thankfully it kind of leveled  
19 off to 2019 numbers. So, we're kind of getting  
20 back to normal in terms of fuel prices.

21 Now let me jump over to unemployment  
22 numbers. So this is one of the big, you know,  
23 most dramatic consequences of this pandemic.

24 Insured unemployment claims, the  
25 number of people receiving unemployment peaked at  
26 23.1 million in May 9, 2020. At that point we  
27 were at 14.8 percent unemployment. You know,  
28 noting that, I don't think any of us in our  
29 lifetime has seen those type of numbers.

30 So, and that was a very dramatic,  
31 mainly in the service sector and had consequences  
32 throughout the economy. That number's slowly  
33 improved. It's now at 6.1 percent for April.  
34 And in claims, unemployment claims kind of also  
35 tracked that as well.

36 Let me jump us to the main event here,  
37 Atlantic HMS commercial landings. So, this chart  
38 compares 2019 to 2020 monthly HMS commercial  
39 landings, ex-vessel value, Atlantic HMS species,  
40 for commercial fleets.

41 As you can see, January and February  
42 were pretty strong in 2020. It was up six  
43 percent and 20 percent in February. March was  
44 still okay, but you can already see signs in that  
45 second half of March of the impact of the  
46 pandemic.

47 But April is where it really hit the  
48 fleet hard. I mean, there was serious

1 readjustments. A lot of ships were tied up due  
2 to COVID restrictions at the state and local  
3 level.

4 We had a 66 percent reduction in  
5 landings in April. And there was a 36 percent  
6 reduction in, or decrease in landings by value in  
7 May and then kind of double digits decrease  
8 continued through July.

9 August, however, there was a decent,  
10 fair amount of recovery. It was fairly  
11 equivalent to 2019, only down one percent. But  
12 September and October things were down a bit.

13 I think that was kind of a combination  
14 of the resurgence in COVID after the Labor Day  
15 Weekend, but also I think there were a few  
16 weather events that contributed to that as well.  
17 Some recovery again in November.

18 And I wanted to also break this down  
19 by species composition. I received questions in  
20 the past of what species are kind of leading the,  
21 you know, kind of driving these changes.

22 So, I took the composition for 2019  
23 and compared it to 2020 for total revenue. And  
24 then put some lines in there to kind of track the  
25 change.

26 So, bluefin tuna there was a 16  
27 percent reduction in landings value from 2019 to  
28 2020. Yellowfin really led the pack in  
29 reductions by 22 percent and bigeye at 20  
30 percent. But swordfish held pretty strong in  
31 this time period, it was only a three percent  
32 reduction. And sharks about the same as well.

33 Moving on to the Atlantic HMS ex-  
34 vessel value for 2021, this is the most timely  
35 information that I have for you on landings  
36 value.

37 January was down 30 percent. And  
38 that's probably a combination between, you know,  
39 to availability due to COVID resurgence after the  
40 holidays, weather impacts, and market conditions  
41 were kind of rough then. And I believe the same  
42 holds true for February, but I'm sure in  
43 discussion we'll add more to that.

44 The real nice thing to report here is  
45 that March was a dramatic recovery, 41 percent  
46 increase in landings value, as compared to 2019.  
47 And in April that trend continued with a positive  
48 28 percent increase in landings value.

1                   So, that's a little bit of the  
2 positive news I have to share, one of the green  
3 shoots, per se, to kind of point out that things  
4 have improved.

5                   So now that we've talked about  
6 revenue, let's take a, kind of a little bit look  
7 under the hood, and look at prices.

8                   So bluefin tuna pricing was a bit  
9 below average in 2020. As you can see, the blue  
10 line, the light blue line on this chart tracked  
11 2019 baseline pricing. 2020, the red line, was  
12 for the most part below the 2019 ex-vessel price  
13 averages for bluefin tuna.

14                   But if you took a look at January, you  
15 can see the orange line, the new 2020 numbers,  
16 being fairly comparable in January to the 2019  
17 numbers. And then, they stayed steadily above  
18 the 2019 numbers in February and March. But then  
19 by April they were slightly below 2019 numbers.  
20 But still substantially above the pricing levels  
21 of 2020 bluefin tuna.

22                   Bigeye tuna is a little bit different  
23 story. Bigeye tuna looked like it wasn't as  
24 impacted in 2020 versus 2019. And you can see  
25 that blue line again is the 2019 ex-vessel price  
26 line on the chart.

27                   The red line tracks pretty closely to  
28 that for 2020. And then while we started out  
29 kind of on the weak side for pricing of bigeye  
30 tuna in January, it's improved. And by March it  
31 was above 2019 levels. And it's kind of climbed  
32 for April.

33                   One thing to note is these April  
34 numbers are probably preliminary at this point,  
35 and could be, you know, subject to change as the  
36 numbers are finalized.

37                   Yellowfin tuna pricing had taken quite  
38 a hit in 2020 as compared to 2019. But by the  
39 second half of 2020 had kind of recovered to 2019  
40 levels. Looking at like August and September,  
41 pretty close. And then, by the time you got to  
42 November it was also pretty close.

43                   January numbers were a bit off of the  
44 average for 2021, that orange line, \$3.20 a  
45 pound. But it had climbed up to \$4.55 in March,  
46 which was above the 2019 trend. And it continues  
47 pretty close to that 2019 price level in April.

48                   Swordfish is a bit of a different



1 story. Swordfish actually had pretty strong  
2 pricing in 2020. Maybe folks decided to do some  
3 grilling. There was a lot less international  
4 trade I think for swordfish in 2020. That might  
5 have also contributed to that and kept the prices  
6 up pretty decently.

7 And swordfish is, you started seeing,  
8 at least I saw it locally, in the grocery store.  
9 It's a bit more available in the summer months,  
10 and through the fall even. Some locations that  
11 hadn't typically carried it started having it.  
12 And then, it was really strong in 2021.

13 It's actually, you know, the average  
14 price is above \$5 dollars, almost to \$6 dollars a  
15 pound in March at \$5.91, which is I think a  
16 pretty excellent price the past few months, and  
17 given the pricing over the past few years.

18 Blacktip sharks, they kind of tracked  
19 their own path. They were actually a bit higher  
20 than average throughout this period and that  
21 trend kind of continued. The pricing was about  
22 average in the January, February, March time  
23 period, but is once again starting to take off in  
24 April.

25 So, that kind of takes you through the  
26 main kind of dealer numbers, in terms of ex-  
27 vessel value. I wanted to jump into our higher  
28 frequency numbers that comes from our vessel  
29 monitoring system.

30 And one great aspect of this is we can  
31 get this pretty timely. We don't have to wait  
32 for the return of logbooks, or for dealer  
33 reports. We get this right off of the units on  
34 vessels.

35 And you can see that these numbers  
36 track our landings numbers, in terms of there was  
37 a 54 percent decline in number of trips taken by  
38 the fleet in April and the summer months.

39 Summer months, the number of trips  
40 recovered. The landings were, you know, as we  
41 said before, were a bit off. I can take you to  
42 more current numbers. This would be of more  
43 interest.

44 In 2019 we still saw a big decrease in  
45 trips in January and February, which I think, you  
46 know is due to weather conditions and  
47 availability of crew, and the COVID situation.

48 But in March those trip numbers

1 started trending back upward. There was an eight  
2 percent higher number of HMS trips hailed out on  
3 VMS units than in 2019 in March, as showed by  
4 that green bar versus the kind of bluish colored  
5 bar for 2019 above March.

6 And in April that tracked off a little  
7 bit. But it was still way better than even those  
8 down 15 percent. It was still much higher than  
9 the 2020 numbers, the 2021 had a decent recovery  
10 there.

11 Specifically, drilling into the  
12 pelagic longline fleet. For so, in the pelagic  
13 longline fleet we get set reports also from the  
14 VMS units.

15 And this chart shows the number of VMS  
16 set reports by month for 2019 versus 2020. And  
17 you see a very similar pattern for the pelagic  
18 longline fleet for effort, effort being way down.  
19 And that April from 2019 to 2020 minus 63  
20 percent. That's 63 percent decrease.

21 In May there was also a 33 percent  
22 increase. But June, July, basically in June  
23 there was a bit of a decent recovery. And July  
24 was just a little bit off. August it was right on  
25 par. September was a bit of an increase.

26 But by the time you got to winter  
27 again it was a drop off in December, minus 13  
28 percent down there. In January that decline  
29 increased to minus 29 percent.

30 So, there were only 224 sets reported  
31 in the VMS unit for January versus, in 2020  
32 versus that 317 in 2019. And that trend  
33 continued in February with a 36 percent reduction  
34 in fleet effort.

35 But thankfully in March the fleet was  
36 doing about the same effort again for -- in terms  
37 of sets. And then there was a ten percent  
38 increase in April. And that's a big dramatic  
39 improvement versus April of 2020.

40 So, at this point we're kind of walked  
41 you through all the commercial fleet numbers that  
42 we have available to us for 2020 and 2021. I'm  
43 going to take this opportunity here to introduce  
44 Cliff Hutt, and have him walk us through our  
45 recreational sector. So, I'll mute, and he can  
46 take it from here.

47 MR. HUTT: Thanks, George. Last year  
48 you'll remember we did an assessment of the

1 recreational for-hire sector in the Southeast,  
2 where we made phone calls to for-hire captains  
3 throughout the region to ask how the COVID 19  
4 pandemic had affected their business.

5 And for the latter end of March and  
6 through much of April, and then into May we had  
7 guys basically reporting a full kind of cessation  
8 of HMS trips. Lots of cancellations.

9 George, next slide. George actually.  
10 Thank you. Now looking at the MRIP data from the  
11 South Atlantic we each took these now directed  
12 HMS trips in the region.

13 Overall for-hire vessel effort, we saw  
14 overall for-hire vessel effort increase of 20  
15 percent for 2020. We saw roughly a two-thirds  
16 decrease in March and April, with most of that  
17 March, April effort happening in early March  
18 before the closures went in.

19 But as soon as the state restrictions  
20 started to lift in the month of May we started  
21 seeing an immediate rebound in for-hire effort in  
22 the South Atlantic, with an increase of nearly 50  
23 percent for the May June MRIP waves, and HMS  
24 directed trips.

25 That increase continued through July  
26 and August, and September and October. Although  
27 we started to see a one-third decrease in  
28 November December when the COVID cases started  
29 rising again. And some states started  
30 reinstating some restrictions.

31 Next slide, George. Private boat  
32 effort effects in the region were a little bit  
33 more variable. We saw about a 60 percent  
34 decrease in March and April, with some decrease  
35 continuing in May and June. But overall still a  
36 big kind of bounce back compared to the previous  
37 wave.

38 In July and August we saw slightly  
39 more than a 40 percent increase in private boat  
40 trips in the region. A bit of a dip in September  
41 and October. But that tends to be a fairly quiet  
42 wave for HMS private boat effort in the South  
43 Atlantic.

44 And then a big increase in November  
45 and December. November and December are a big  
46 time for sailfish in Florida. And apparently  
47 there's a lot of private boat effort targeting  
48 those in 2020.

1 Next slide, George. We saw some  
2 really interesting patterns in the effects on  
3 for-hire effort in the Gulf of Mexico, directed  
4 towards HMS trips.

5 Just for clarification, this is only  
6 MRIP data. So, this is really data for the  
7 eastern Gulf of Mexico, as the timeframe here  
8 roughly coincides with Louisiana left the MRIP  
9 survey and LA Creel.

10 So, this is really just Florida,  
11 Alabama, and Mississippi. And we were over 80  
12 percent of the HMS directed effort in those three  
13 states is coming out of western Florida, with a  
14 lot of that coming out of the Florida Keys.

15 Then roughly about ten percent  
16 Alabama, and around six percent out of  
17 Mississippi.

18 We had already, before the pandemic we  
19 saw a big spike, more than doubling of for-hire  
20 directed HMS effort in the region in January and  
21 February.

22 And just almost a complete cessation  
23 of effort in March, April, May and June, which  
24 kind of matched up with what we heard in our  
25 phone call surveys, or our rapid survey of for-  
26 hire captains in the region. Then we saw a huge  
27 bounce in July and August.

28 Now if you'll notice the bars for the  
29 2015 to '19 average, for-hire effort in this  
30 region tends to be concentrated in the cooler  
31 months of the year, November through April. And  
32 a lot of that is directed at sailfish that we've  
33 had around the Florida Keys.

34 But what we saw in 2020, this big  
35 spike in July and August, a lot of it was  
36 directed towards coastal sharks.

37 We have a lot of captains, vessels in  
38 the region that have our permit, that aren't what  
39 you traditionally consider when you think of an  
40 HMS for-hire vessel.

41 A lot of them are guide boats that  
42 primarily target redfish and speckled trout.  
43 They keep the HMS permit onboard because they see  
44 sharks as a good backup species to take their  
45 clients out for if their traditional target  
46 species aren't really cooperating that day.

47 And it seems like we had a lot of  
48 those vessels taking advantage of that in the

1 months of July and August when the demand for  
2 "for-hire" effort was really spiking in the  
3 region.

4 That kind of continued in September  
5 and October to a much lesser extent. And again,  
6 started seeing declines in November and December,  
7 when COVID restrictions were coming back in full  
8 during the holidays.

9 Next slide, George. For private boat  
10 effort in that region we generally saw a decline  
11 that lasted throughout the year following the  
12 start of the pandemic.

13 Not as drastic as the decline we saw  
14 in those early months in the for-hire sector.  
15 But a consistent decline nonetheless. Big  
16 decline in September October.

17 Looking at the data I think a lot of  
18 this happened to do with reductions in effort  
19 coming out of the Florida Keys, which had fairly  
20 consistent restrictions throughout the year that  
21 extended through the summer, and really kind of  
22 affected tourism in the region, which tends to be  
23 the big driver for private boat effort down  
24 there.

25 As you can see, kind of opposites of  
26 the traditional for-hire effort, the private boat  
27 effort really spikes in summer in that region.

28 Next slide. Now a change in the LPS  
29 data. We use this to look at what was happening  
30 in the Northeast. The LPS each year starts in  
31 the month of June, and runs through October. So,  
32 it's really looking at what was happening after  
33 the initial start of the pandemic.

34 We found, when it came to LPS charter  
35 trips a consistent increase in effort throughout  
36 the year. Overall we saw a 50 percent increase  
37 in HMS for-hire effort in the LPS survey,  
38 compared to the previous five year average, with  
39 a big bounce in June, where effort nearly  
40 doubled.

41 Next slide. However, that increase in  
42 effort varied by state, probably due to  
43 differences in state restrictions due to COVID.  
44 We saw big increases in private, our charter  
45 effort out of Massachusetts, where it increased  
46 over 70 percent for the year.

47 And more than a doubling of for-hire  
48 effort in Maryland Delaware. Lots of people

1 flocked out to the beaches in Maryland and  
2 Delaware, you know, from the Mid-Atlantic region,  
3 as soon as restrictions started lifting around  
4 Memorial Day Weekend. And I think that  
5 translated into a big bump in for-hire effort in  
6 those states.

7 Saw milder increases in New Hampshire,  
8 and Maine, and New Jersey. The other states, the  
9 change in effort was kind of within the range of  
10 variation we had seen over the previous five  
11 years. So, I would say that effort in those  
12 states pretty much stayed steady despite the  
13 pandemic.

14 Next slide, George. For private  
15 vessel trip effort by month, again we saw overall  
16 40 percent increase compared to the previous five  
17 year average, with at least a slight increase  
18 happening each month.

19 July was kind of a push, you know,  
20 within the range of variation, what we would  
21 expect to see. But we saw big increases in June,  
22 August, and October.

23 A lot of this has been driven by big  
24 increases in tuna fishing, as we've seen some  
25 pretty good tuna catches in recent years. This  
26 kind of continued in 2020.

27 Next slide, George. Again, this  
28 varied a bit from state to state. Compared to  
29 the for-hire effort Massachusetts didn't see  
30 quite as big of an increase in private effort.  
31 Although it still, you know, has a, it's still  
32 kind of the top state for, traditionally it's the  
33 top state for effort.

34 In 2020 that was no longer the case.  
35 New York saw its private boat effort double, and  
36 kind of took over Massachusetts as being the top  
37 state for private boat effort in the LPS, as did  
38 New Jersey. We saw an increase of effort of  
39 nearly 40 percent in 2020.

40 We also saw big increases in private  
41 boat effort in Maryland and Delaware, and  
42 Connecticut and Rhode Island, which, not a huge  
43 in terms of absolute numbers, as it tends to be a  
44 smaller, those two states tend to be a smaller  
45 player in the LPS effort.

46 The other states tended to stay within  
47 the range of variation of what we would see from  
48 year to year.

1                   Next slide. And finally, we're  
2 looking at impacts on HMS tournaments. This is  
3 based on tournament registrations. So, we didn't  
4 see as big of a decrease in tournaments in kind  
5 of April and May, which I think is largely due to  
6 the fact that tournaments are required to  
7 register at least a month in advance.

8                   So, you had a lot of tournaments that  
9 were registered, you know, before the pandemic  
10 really hit. And we suspect some of the smaller  
11 ones that may have cancelled may not have  
12 notified us.

13                   But we did see a hit in tournament,  
14 you know, number of registered tournaments for  
15 April and May. Still about a third of a decrease  
16 in June.

17                   The decrease in registered tournaments  
18 started to get moderated in about midsummer,  
19 around July and August. Although, there was  
20 still a bit of a consistent decline compared to  
21 the previous five years. It just wasn't as great  
22 as the previous months.

23                   And then had a bit of a recovery, you  
24 know, by the fall. Although we did see a big  
25 decline in registered tournaments in the month of  
26 November that was pretty much driven by closures  
27 and restrictions in the Caribbean.

28                   Most of our November tournaments  
29 tended to come out of that region, particularly  
30 Puerto Rico, which really kind of shut down, and  
31 placed some pretty strict restrictions in place  
32 going into the holidays as COVID cases were  
33 starting to spike.

34                   And next slide, George. And with  
35 that, you know, we're just providing some  
36 resources to various links that we've provided in  
37 previous presentations, the NMFS' COVID-19  
38 information page, some of our regional snapshots  
39 that were recently published, looking at the  
40 impacts of COVID-19 on the region.

41                   This link goes to snapshots that were  
42 released earlier in the year that looked at  
43 impacts in the first half of the year. But we  
44 currently have some draft snapshots in review  
45 that look at 2020 as a whole, that should be  
46 coming out soon.

47                   And that will be for each division,  
48 including HMS, as well as the other regions, as

1 well as some Government resource pages on U.S.  
2 Government and state fishery agency's responses  
3 to COVID-19.

4 And with that we'll be able to take  
5 any comments or questions.

6 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks, George  
7 and Cliff, very much. Great presentation as  
8 always. Got a couple of people in the queue, and  
9 a question in the chat from Jeff Oden.

10 Just wondering if there are any  
11 slides, or whether you have any information that  
12 could talk to imports, comparative for this year  
13 versus the last couple of years. Any insight  
14 into that?

15 MR. SILVA: The import data takes a  
16 little bit of time for us to get through our  
17 system although we should start being able to  
18 look at the 2020 numbers.

19 Our SAFE report probably, well, I was  
20 going to say it probably actually just has 2019  
21 numbers at this point. But it will probably be  
22 in the next SAFE report that we'll have our  
23 import numbers.

24 That will be useful to kind of match  
25 up. I'll, I think that's probably the best spot  
26 to go, to take a look at those import/export  
27 numbers at this point.

28 MR. BROOKS: So, maybe at the next AP  
29 meeting it's something we can get a look at.  
30 Let's go to Rusty, and then Tim Pickett. Rusty.

31 MR. HUDSON: Can you hear me?

32 MR. BROOKS: We can.

33 MR. HUDSON: Great. George, thank you  
34 for that presentation. And on Slide 16 the  
35 Blacktip Shark average, through 2020, again in  
36 the summer compared to 2019.

37 Let's have the reflection of higher  
38 meat prices versus the fact that we didn't really  
39 have the fin sales as strong as before because of  
40 the problems. Same would be true of 2021. And  
41 is this just a straight meat price? Or is this a  
42 combination of both fin and meat? Thank you.

43 MR. BROOKS: The question is, did you  
44 have the straight meat prices, or meat and fin?

45 MR. SILVA: So, for this one, this  
46 would be straight meat prices at this point, and  
47 not fin prices.

48 MR. HUDSON: Fantastic.



1 MR. SILVA: Fins --

2 MR. HUDSON: That's fantastic.

3 MR. SILVA: Yes. Because fin prices  
4 sometimes aren't to the species level. So, we  
5 don't get those included necessarily for,  
6 together. We probably have some species specific  
7 fin prices. But there are a equal number  
8 probably that aren't species specific.

9 MR. HUDSON: Okay. Thank you, George.

10 MR. BROOKS: Tim Pickett, why don't  
11 you jump in. And then we'll go to Mike  
12 Pierdinock.

13 MR. PICKETT: Okay. I'd like to see,  
14 on slide -- this is just to see if we can draw  
15 some numbers out. I know you probably can't do  
16 it offhand. But in the future or, you know,  
17 whenever you can, I'd like to see the numbers.

18 You know, we're looking at the bluefin  
19 tuna ex-vessel prices. I'd like to see that,  
20 because it can be so highly valuable. I'd like  
21 to see, you know, I mean, it's at, whatever it  
22 is, \$5 bucks, or something.

23 Seeing as it can be very highly  
24 variable I wouldn't mind seeing that broken out  
25 by month and by numbers of fish that are sold  
26 between different price levels, you know.

27 Say, 50 were sold between \$10 and \$12  
28 bucks. And then 60 were sold between a dollar,  
29 you know, zero and \$2 dollars, or something like  
30 that. I'd like to see that breakdown. You know,  
31 there's a lot of talk about, you know (audio  
32 interference) days, and all that stuff. You  
33 know, I'd kind of like to see that breakdown to  
34 see, you know, I mean, fish that are, you know,  
35 sub \$3 bucks are, you know, seem like a waste to  
36 me. And I think there was a awful lot of them.  
37 I might be wrong. But I think there was quite a  
38 few of them.

39 And whether we could utilize those  
40 fish in another fishery, or at a later date, or  
41 at a different date, I think that's, those are  
42 very valuable numbers that we could pull out of  
43 this, just because of how variable the pricing  
44 can be in that fishery.

45 So, that was my comment. And that's  
46 something I'd like to see, you know, whether it's  
47 not immediately, but in the future. I think it  
48 would be a valuable tool to look at.

1 MR. BROOKS: All right. Thanks, Tim.  
2 George or Cliff, if you have any insights to that  
3 now, great. If not, I think I will just push  
4 ahead, and we can let you capture that as  
5 something to track or incorporate in a future  
6 presentation.

7 MR. SILVA: Yes. I mean, those  
8 numbers are definitely possible. One thing to  
9 note, at the monthly level it gets a little  
10 tricky in terms of data confidentiality. It's  
11 only a few dealers bringing in bluefin that  
12 particular month. It might be easier to do  
13 something like that at the quarterly basis. But  
14 we can definitely look into that.

15 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks. Let's go  
16 to Mike Pierdinock. And then Rick Weber.

17 MR. PIERDINOCK: Good morning,  
18 Bennett. Thank you. Thank you, George. Thank  
19 you, Cliff, for your presentation. I first have  
20 a question, and then just a comment.

21 I think I understand this properly.  
22 But this is just based on HMS species, HMS data,  
23 no other species?

24 MR. HUTT: For the most part, yes,  
25 correct. My analysis of the recreational  
26 fisheries were first targeting HMS species. In  
27 the LPS I didn't break it out by species. There  
28 are a few non-HMS that they will intercept, like  
29 Little Tunny, but by and large it's HMS target of  
30 choice.

31 MR. PIERDINOCK: Thank you, Cliff.  
32 And that makes sense from, because up here in New  
33 England, with the way COVID progressed, and we  
34 had complete shutdowns, which was a little  
35 different than the southern states, and the  
36 southern states having more lack, more  
37 liberalized measures, and opening up sooner.

38 For instance, up here we were  
39 completely closed down until May. And then we  
40 had some measures that came forward that the for-  
41 hire fleet could go fishing if they took  
42 different safety measures.

43 So, that significantly impact us, but  
44 killed us early. And as the season went on  
45 things picked up. And then when I look at just,  
46 because I've had to deal with CARES relief here  
47 in Massachusetts.

48 I look at the commercial, the rec, and

1 the for-hire, the magnitude of what you're seeing  
2 was worse up here, with it kicking in  
3 significantly towards the end of the year.

4 That's the only point I would like to  
5 make. Because it, I see that jump there that you  
6 (audio interference) which makes sense. But a  
7 lot of that had to do with May, I think it was,  
8 what was it? June 1st hotels opened on Cape Cod.  
9 And then the people started coming in.

10 But we continued to have limitations  
11 that they could not come in from out of state.  
12 And had a significant impact on the business as a  
13 result of that, on the for-hire fleet. And the  
14 commercial fleet, the restaurants weren't open.

15 And like oyster farmers, they were the  
16 most significantly impacted, but wasn't here.  
17 So, your numbers are showing, I think it was 65,  
18 62 percent as a result of the restaurants. And  
19 that's representative of what we were observing  
20 up here.

21 So, thank you for that clarification.  
22 And we've finally seen the end of that COVID  
23 tunnel, and opening back up, which I don't know.  
24 Because you're down south. It's different.  
25 We're finally opening up completely, no  
26 restrictions, I think it's the 29th. So, thank  
27 you.

28 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Mike. I've got  
29 four folks in the queue here. We'll go Rick  
30 Weber, then Alan Weiss, and Marty Scanlon, then  
31 Dewey. And we've got about 15 minutes left for  
32 conversation here. Rick Weber.

33 MR. WEBER: Good morning.

34 MR. BROOKS: Good morning.

35 MR. WEBER: That was my sound check.  
36 Great. Just following up on Tim. I understand  
37 the confidentiality question. But perhaps,  
38 George and Cliff, some type of candlestick graph,  
39 or something, could cover.

40 Because it is interesting to see what  
41 the highest highs and the lowest lows were, and  
42 where the broad swath was. So, perhaps there's  
43 something there.

44 My actual comments are that I think  
45 this is a really good match to what we saw in the  
46 Northeast. And in truth, so you know that it's  
47 coming, what we continue to see in the Northeast.

48 Within recreational boating right now,

1 if it floats, it sells. It is not --

2 MR. BROOKS: We lost you, Rick. Rick,  
3 you just cut out on us.

4 MR. WEBER: It's just, it --

5 MR. BROOKS: I'm sorry, Rick. We lost  
6 you. We lost you.

7 (Simultaneous speaking.)

8 MR. WEBER: I can sit here for three  
9 hours, I get on the call, and my phone rings. Am  
10 I back now, Bennett?

11 MR. BROOKS: You are.

12 MR. SILVA: Yes, you're back.

13 MR. WEBER: Great. What I was saying  
14 was, if it floats, it sells, sort of like the  
15 real estate market. Dealers are, dealers were  
16 sold out last year for the year by June.

17 And so, there has been an explosion of  
18 effort. Now, because these are expansion models  
19 I want to caution you, so that we're not paying  
20 the price. We're going to also have an explosion  
21 of inexperienced anglers.

22 I don't know how, what the intersects  
23 were like last year. But I assume it's pretty  
24 low. But if we assume that all of the 2020  
25 anglers and the 2021 anglers are exactly the same  
26 as 2019's anglers, and expand the catch profile  
27 against all of them, I'm not sure it's accurate.

28 I don't know what you can do to double  
29 check that. But I would caution against that  
30 assumption. Because this is not just the old  
31 experienced anglers going more. There is also an  
32 explosion of inexperienced anglers out there. Go  
33 ahead.

34 MR. HUTT: I was going to say, Rick,  
35 to some degree the survey should capture that.  
36 Because while we are seeing a big explosion of  
37 effort, you know, when I look at the catch  
38 numbers from last year it varies from species to  
39 species.

40 Some species we saw a good bump. And  
41 some of those are species that we've been seeing  
42 the catch rates kind of pick up in recent years  
43 anyways. But other species tend to stay flat, or  
44 even saw a little bit of decline.

45 So, I think the intercept survey  
46 should capture some of what you're concerned  
47 there by, you know, seeing lower overall catch  
48 rates.

1 MR. WEBER: Well, that's great.  
2 That's great, Cliff. But I know that there  
3 isn't, there weren't as many intercepts. Because  
4 interceptors were some of the people who wisely  
5 stayed home.

6 So, I'm glad to know that there's  
7 going to be, that there were enough intercepts  
8 that we can get some handle on catch composition  
9 in 2020. That's good to know. Thank you.

10 MR. HUTT: Yes.

11 MR. BROOKS: Go.

12 MR. HUTT: I will say that at no time  
13 was the LPS survey, did they have to shut the LPS  
14 survey down due to the COVID restrictions.

15 MR. WEBER: That's excellent.

16 MR. HUTT: For the entire period.

17 MR. WEBER: Looking at the graphs I  
18 don't necessarily understand the decrease in Gulf  
19 of Mexico trips, unless, and I think, and I've  
20 always thought this is a shortfall of the LPS.

21 Because it's not coast wide, unless  
22 there's the Florida people that stayed home, and  
23 didn't travel into the Gulf. But looking at the  
24 data. You would have to coordinate that to  
25 figure it out.

26 MR. HUTT: Yes. A lot of our Gulf of  
27 Mexico effort, particularly private boats, is  
28 coming out of the Florida Keys. And they did  
29 have some pretty strict restrictions that kind of  
30 continued through the summer down there.

31 So, there was definitely an impact on  
32 tourism to that area. A lot of people have  
33 second homes, that go down there and fish in the  
34 summer. So --

35 MR. WEBER: Well, I understand the  
36 tourism. But it also could be Florida locals who  
37 chose not to travel into other places, you know,  
38 if they didn't make their redfish trip up to  
39 Louisiana, or some such thing. Just ideas. Just  
40 ideas. I'm not here to debate the data with you.  
41 That's for certain.

42 MR. BROOKS: Okay. And Rick, Rick, if  
43 I could encourage you to just wrap up shortly  
44 here, just because --

45 (Simultaneous speaking.)

46 MR. WEBER: I am wrapping up after one  
47 comment, which is that, Cliff, you do have the  
48 tournament final effort data. The full picture

1 of tournaments is not told simply in number of  
2 registrations, but in how many boats participated  
3 in them. And perhaps that's a metric we should  
4 add to this report.

5 I love this report. I hope to see  
6 this report again, and again, and again. But  
7 some type of effort capture within the  
8 tournaments.

9 I understand the year-long derbies are  
10 a challenge. But other than the year-long  
11 derbies, getting some idea of number of entrants  
12 that are covered within those events might be  
13 helpful as well. And that was the end of it.  
14 Bennett, I'm done. Thank you.

15 MR. BROOKS: Perfect. Thanks, Rick,  
16 very much. Let's go to Alan Weiss, and then  
17 Marty Scanlon. Again, we've got only ten minutes  
18 left. So, if folks can be focused in their  
19 comments, that would be great. Go ahead, Alan.

20 MR. WEISS: Thank you. I just had two  
21 suggestions for, I don't suppose you have this  
22 data in your back pocket to tell us today. But  
23 for future presentations.

24 One is that the macro data that you  
25 showed in the early part of your presentation,  
26 George, particularly the numbers on tourism and  
27 restaurant sales.

28 I think it would be helpful, what  
29 you're showing, what you showed us today I  
30 believe is national numbers. I think it would be  
31 helpful if you can get some kind of a regional  
32 breakout, where you can show us what's going on  
33 along the east coast at least. Not necessarily  
34 right on the coast, but in the eastern states.

35 Because the local markets and the  
36 nearby large cities are more representative of  
37 the market conditions the fishermen are  
38 experiencing in trying to move their fish, than  
39 what the restaurant sales are in San Francisco,  
40 or Billings, Montana.

41 So, the other suggestion I would have  
42 with the earlier suggestions that were made in  
43 regard to some further detail on bluefin tuna  
44 prices.

45 With, particularly with bluefins, with  
46 a species where there can be such large  
47 disparities of price that the fisherman received  
48 from just one fish to another, I think it might

1 be helpful to show us the median price, rather  
2 than the mean price.

3 Because that will be more  
4 representative of what most fishermen are  
5 experiencing. And it won't be quite so impacted  
6 by the outliers.

7 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Alan. Marty  
8 Scanlon.

9 MR. SCANLON: Yes. When you talk  
10 about the swordfish prices there, you know, over  
11 the last year being up, I mean, and that  
12 particularly, the reason for that particular  
13 reason is because, due to pandemic.

14 Every one of our vessels has been  
15 required to catch only the highest rate of tuna,  
16 swordfish, I mean. And with that, anything that  
17 wasn't a marker or a very, very nice pup wasn't  
18 sellable.

19 So, I mean, the fish had, the  
20 fishermen here had to alter their, you know,  
21 their target, and how they operated throughout  
22 this pandemic. It's been very, very difficult on  
23 us.

24 And one other thing there. You know,  
25 you talk about the decline this year in fish, you  
26 know (audio interference) that extremely bad. In  
27 the month of March alone there were 17 straight  
28 days right here where we fished there that we had  
29 near to gale force winds consecutive. So, the  
30 boats were tied to the dock at extremely, you  
31 know, more than usual rate.

32 April and March indicates, you know,  
33 the fishermen just trying to play catch up here,  
34 fishing as hard as they can, with every  
35 opportunity they can.

36 But one thing here that through the  
37 pandemic that really should be emphasized here is  
38 our need and our protection from these imports.  
39 Because through the pandemic we were actually  
40 denied all of the smaller fish, all the small  
41 yellowfins.

42 We were told not to even catch any  
43 yellowfins because we had lost the fleet access  
44 to the yellowfin market that the imports control  
45 to an embassy certification. I mean, my buyer  
46 told me, if you catch any yellowfin you ain't  
47 going to be able to sell them.

48 So, we had completely had to alter

1 what we were even targeting throughout this  
2 entire year. I mean, it's been very, very  
3 difficult. Our overall catches are completely  
4 down. And, you know, our value has gone up.

5 And, you know, the other thing is that  
6 we had to alter our trips, make much shorter term  
7 trips to keep the fish that much fresher. And  
8 they had to be in on a particular market day in  
9 order to get them off the boat into market.

10 We had to be in and landing on a  
11 Wednesday or Thursday of every -- no later than  
12 Thursday of each week in order to even sell the  
13 fish. So, I mean, this has been a, you know, a  
14 tremendously burdensome year for us.

15 New York City finally has reopened two  
16 weeks ago. So, that should be very helpful here.  
17 And hopefully we'll start to get going here.

18 But, you know, the pandemic should  
19 point out the need for you to step up here and  
20 find some way to protect us, and protect our  
21 domestic fleet from this flood of input, imports,  
22 you know, that we're up against constantly.

23 I mean, we cannot compete with that  
24 market control the supermarket markets, you know.  
25 And they control all the, you know, all the  
26 peripheral fish that we catch, the imports  
27 control. We have no control over here. So, the  
28 main --

29 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Marty.

30 MR. SCANLON: -- more and more being,  
31 you know, limited to just catching very high end  
32 fish.

33 MR. BROOKS: Thank you, Marty. It's  
34 helpful to hear all that perspective. Let's  
35 bring in Dewey. See if I can get in a couple of  
36 last people here.

37 MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. To Tim  
38 Pickett's comments about the bluefin tuna. How  
39 about, could we get a breakdown of, and I  
40 understand the confidentiality. But by month,  
41 dealers, the amount of fish that each dealer  
42 caught.

43 So, you would have say for instance in  
44 January and February you might would have five  
45 dealers, and how many each one of them bought.  
46 Because that might would get some insight on the  
47 glut of market, and maybe the shortage of  
48 dealers, or too many.



1                   And another question I have, or I  
2 guess that was a comment. Another question I  
3 have is, when giving these presentations is there  
4 any way possible to give a, or a trade, or a  
5 import status of a five-year of gas-treated tuna  
6 that's imported into this country that we have to  
7 compete with?

8                   I'm not a very good internet person on  
9 how to find something. I'm sure there's folks  
10 here on the call that know exactly where that  
11 information is, or how to obtain it.

12                   But it would be interesting. Because  
13 we have to compete with the importation of gas  
14 treated tuna that's getting sold a lot of times  
15 as, you know, local fish, or something like that.

16                   So, it would be interesting, that  
17 number for gas imported, or chemically treated  
18 tuna that we have to compete with. Thank you.

19                   MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Thanks, Dewey.  
20 Rick Bellavance. Why don't you jump in here.  
21 Rick, are you there?

22                   MR. BELLAVANCE: Hi, out there.

23                   MR. BROOKS: There you go.

24                   MR. BELLAVANCE: Just waiting to get  
25 unmuted.

26                   MR. BROOKS: Yes. Okay.

27                   MR. BELLAVANCE. Yes. I was going to  
28 hold off on my comments, just because of time.  
29 But I just wanted to say, I guess we can go  
30 through with this data that Cliff put forward  
31 regarding the for-hire trips in the Southern New  
32 England range.

33                   In Rhode Island in particular we were  
34 shut down a little bit in the beginning of the  
35 season. It got busier in July. Again, Rhode  
36 Island got put on the deadbeat list back again in  
37 August and September.

38                   And that corresponds with the majority  
39 of our HMS season. So, it makes sense that we  
40 were down a little bit there. And probably the  
41 same for New York and Connecticut. So, it kind  
42 of makes sense for our trips.

43                   MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Rick.

44                   MR. BELLAVANCE: After this year it  
45 will be better.

46                   MR. BROOKS: Great. Thank you. And  
47 I'd like to remind folks, after you've spoken to  
48 lower your hands again. That would be great.

1 Jason Adriance, let's get you into the  
2 conversation here. Your line's open, Jason.

3 MR. ADRIANCE: Sorry. Can you hear me  
4 now?

5 MR. BROOKS: Yes.

6 MR. ADRIANCE: Okay. Thanks for the  
7 presentation. I was just going to offer a little  
8 bit of insight to my part of the Gulf as far as,  
9 our trends were a little different than what was  
10 presented here.

11 While we certainly had an explosion of  
12 inshore effort, offshore wasn't quite the same.  
13 Our, early on when lockdowns first started it,  
14 there were drops in that March April timeframe.

15 But then things picked up relatively  
16 close to normal as far as offshore for both  
17 private and charter. However, it gets difficult  
18 down here to tease out some of those impacts,  
19 because we did have seven named storms that  
20 impacted our coast last year.

21 So, it will be interesting to see as  
22 time goes on how these trends fall out. But just  
23 wanted to add a little perspective. Thanks.

24 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Jason. All  
25 right. Scott Taylor, you have not had a chance  
26 to jump in here. So, let's get you in before we  
27 go to break.

28 MR. TAYLOR: Yes. I just wanted to,  
29 you know, basically, you know, summarize what I  
30 saw as the information pertaining to the longline  
31 fleet.

32 You know, whether or not it's an eight  
33 or ten percent, or whatever the number is, it's  
34 down. At the levels that we're at is already a  
35 catastrophic level for us.

36 And even though we've seen, you know,  
37 increase to a certain extent in some of the  
38 pricing, it's really being offset by all the  
39 other expenses that don't really come into the  
40 economic, you know, picture that was presented,  
41 especially in terms of bait costs, and just in  
42 general, operational costs have gone up.

43 Because that's just the way it seems  
44 like everything has gone, due to the labor  
45 shortages, and everything else that are impacting  
46 not just our business but, you know, everybody  
47 else's.

48 And the one thing that has kind of

1 been the salvation for us has, that there was  
2 pointed out in the economic data, was the, was  
3 air travel.

4 And so, the only thing that's really  
5 kept imports down is lack of capacity. So, as  
6 the capacity comes back on line for the airlines,  
7 you're going to see an increase in available, you  
8 know, air freight space.

9 And we just saw that, we had a blip  
10 here less than two weeks ago. We went from, you  
11 know, a seven and a half dollar swordfish market,  
12 to where Miami was selling fish for three and a  
13 half, because they were able to move a big shot  
14 of fish out of Ecuador.

15 And so, the freeze, it's important not  
16 to lose sight of just how dramatic the impact is  
17 on us on imports, and how much benefit we have  
18 gotten by the lack of capacity for these airlines  
19 to move freight, as well as, you know, the  
20 vendors themselves, not only from capacity, but  
21 reliability. Because what ends up happening --

22 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Scott.

23 MR. TAYLOR: -- is that they're going  
24 to -- Yes. All right. I made my point.  
25 Appreciate it.

26 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Thanks, Scott.  
27 Appreciate it. I want to get folks to break. I  
28 think everyone's had a chance to at least weigh  
29 in once.

30 If there are folks who wanted a second  
31 bite at it, I'd encourage you to throw your  
32 thoughts in the chat. There's a note there from  
33 Dave Kerstetter, adding a bit more perspective to  
34 the Keys' lockdown, and the effect that might  
35 have had.

36 Yes, in general, Cliff, George, once  
37 again this, you know, presentation seems to  
38 really resonate with everyone. The data, the  
39 pictures you put out there also seems to, you  
40 know, jive.

41 Obviously a lot of interest in getting  
42 a deeper look at the variants on bluefin tuna  
43 pricing, whether that's by month, or by dealer,  
44 median, whatever you can do to tease that out  
45 would be helpful.

46 Adding a regional look for restaurant  
47 and hotel data seems valuable. Adding import  
48 data. Whether you can take a look at Dewey's

1 questions around five-year gas-treated tuna.

2 For tournaments, taking a look at not  
3 just both but, not just registrants but actual  
4 entrants, and the actual boats there. And to  
5 Scott's point here at the end, folding in  
6 something around operational costs might also  
7 help to put some of those numbers in perspective.

8 So, thanks all very much. We will be  
9 back at 10:30 a.m. sharp for, to hear from  
10 leadership. So, I just ask everyone to be back  
11 right on time. And it's 13 minutes from now.  
12 Thanks, everybody.

13 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
14 went off the record at 10:19 a.m. and resumed at  
15 10:33 a.m.)

16 MR. BROOKS: Randy, I'll hand it off  
17 to you to introduce leadership.

18 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Sure. thank you.  
19 Thanks, Paul and Sam, for joining us. Sorry  
20 about the hiccup there with the links. Thanks  
21 for persevering.

22 For our HMS Advisory Panel members and  
23 other attendees that are listening in, I just  
24 wanted to introduce here for our leadership  
25 update agenda item and our speakers.

26 This is Paul Doremus and Sam Rauch.  
27 Paul Doremus is the Acting Assistant  
28 Administrator for Fisheries and he has certainly  
29 been with the agency for quite some time.

30 In his normal job he is involved with  
31 leading the agency strategy and operations  
32 efforts, as well as NOAA lead for seafood  
33 production and aquaculture. Also in that normal  
34 capacity, the Office of International Affairs and  
35 Seafood Inspection is under his purview.

36 For those of you who are involved in  
37 the ICCAT world, that's our international affairs  
38 folks that work with ICCAT. This may be the first  
39 time that Paul has appeared or spoken before the  
40 HMS Advisory Panel so welcome, Paul. We  
41 appreciate you being here greatly.

42 And then also, Sam Rauch is the Deputy  
43 Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs.  
44 He certainly has been before the AP multiple  
45 times. Thank you very much, Sam, for being here.

46 I think that Paul is going to be  
47 presenting comments. I'll turn it over to Paul.

48 DR. DOREMUS: Thank you, Randy.

1 Appreciate the introduction. It's great to be  
2 able to connect with everybody. Coincidentally,  
3 we are -- the last two days, and concluding again  
4 today, meeting with our Marine Fisheries Advisory  
5 Committee.

6 While this is the first time I've had  
7 a chance to connect with this Advisory Panel, I  
8 do want to reinforce right at the outset the  
9 importance and value to us of the work that you  
10 do and the advice that you provide on Atlantic  
11 highly migratory species.

12 Like MAFAC, these panels -- our  
13 Advisory Panel is put together in ways that give  
14 us a very broad and diverse array of viewpoints  
15 and perspectives of the sector, industry, our  
16 organization, in the case of MAFAC. And it's  
17 through that type of input and the net effect of  
18 your advice that helps us develop the best  
19 methods and approaches to sustainable fisheries  
20 management.

21 So I wanted to thank all of you for  
22 taking your time. It's not an easy function and  
23 it is one that we pay an enormous amount of  
24 attention to and it's highly important. I really  
25 wanted to emphasize that more than anything else  
26 in opening up here today.

27 It's an interesting time as well. We  
28 have been through quite a year plus with  
29 experience in the pandemic and its impact  
30 throughout the fisheries and seafood sector as a  
31 whole. We've been tracking that closely and we  
32 will be updating and refreshing again in early  
33 this summer -- we hope early to mid-June -- with  
34 another snapshot report using survey-based  
35 techniques to understand how the impacts of COVID  
36 played out in different segments of the  
37 fisheries and seafood sector as a whole;  
38 commercial and reactional supporting businesses,  
39 supply chain effects. It's been an extraordinary  
40 year and it's encouraging at this point in time  
41 to at least see some stabilization and some  
42 prospects for growth.

43 We're seeing trends in commercial  
44 charter and private vessel reactional fishing  
45 efforts that have improved quite a bit,  
46 particularly since the real low point last spring  
47 when so many activities of all types; commercial,  
48 recreational were shut down.

1                   We're also seeing people come out.  
2                   There's a great deal of optimism with increasing  
3                   extent of vaccine coverage in the United States  
4                   and what that's showing up in in terms of  
5                   presence of COVID and consequently what people  
6                   feel comfortable doing. People are getting back  
7                   into restaurants. Sales are starting to look  
8                   somewhat like they were pre-pandemic.

9                   It's a fascinating period and I don't  
10                  think anybody expects to bounce back to the same  
11                  reality that we had pre-pandemic and how that  
12                  factors in to this particular sector and those  
13                  that rely on it.

14                  We'll be tracking that closely and  
15                  look forward to your thoughts and advice on how  
16                  things are likely to evolve. Where we expect to  
17                  see consistency, where we expect to see change.

18                  Of course, the other big thing is the  
19                  administration turnover. This is the first time  
20                  that we've had a chance to convene the panel and  
21                  talk to all of you post-transition. We certainly  
22                  have seen a very strong and clear signaling from  
23                  the administration about their priorities  
24                  centering on the pandemic on COVID.

25                  On the economy prospects for economic  
26                  growth, sustained growth over time and racial  
27                  equity. Big focus on climate change. That is  
28                  all coming forward in a pretty significant way,  
29                  partly in executive orders, a number of other  
30                  bills and initiatives.

31                  We will see this week the President's  
32                  budget draft for FY22. There's already been some  
33                  preliminary coverage of that in the media and the  
34                  focus on supporting these priorities through  
35                  executive branch activities. That will be the  
36                  subject of a lot of discussion going forward as  
37                  we work to align and respond to these major  
38                  national challenges.

39                  One of those executive orders that is  
40                  particularly focused on our work is the Executive  
41                  Order 14008 on Tackling the Climate Crisis at  
42                  Home and Abroad. There are two provisions in  
43                  there that I want to briefly mention.

44                  One directly related to us is  
45                  Provision 216(c) which is centered on our  
46                  organization and our stakeholders to collect  
47                  input from fishermen, regional ocean councils,  
48                  fishery management councils, scientist, other

1 stakeholders -- comprehensive input on how to  
2 make fisheries and protected resources more  
3 resilient to climate change including changes in  
4 management conservation measures and improvements  
5 in science monitoring and cooperative research.

6 This is something that we have done  
7 and will continue to do and are continuing to  
8 gather input and encourage input both as a body,  
9 as well as from you all individually on this very  
10 big question, this question of resilience. We  
11 have had a lot of engagement through our Councils  
12 or Commissions.

13 We've had public sessions, sessions  
14 with state and federal interest. We're seeing a  
15 little bit of the country and what people are  
16 seeing and the impacts on fisheries and protected  
17 resources and habitat are very real and  
18 observable. We're hearing an awful lot about  
19 what people have been seeing and what their  
20 concerns are in terms of trend and our ability to  
21 model and track these kinds of impacts.

22 We certainly encourage you to share  
23 your thoughts with us on this broad question of  
24 making fisheries and protected resources more  
25 resilient to climate change keeping in mind our  
26 particular statutory dimensions of this executive  
27 order with Magnuson-Stevens, with the Endangered  
28 Species Act, with the Marine Mammal Protection  
29 Act, Coastal Zone Management Act.

30  
31 There's particular areas where our  
32 authorities and functions and requirements as an  
33 agency are directly affected by these long-term  
34 environmental trends and our activities under  
35 those authorities are what we're particularly  
36 interested in hearing your thoughts about.

37 We rely on that not only to answer the  
38 questions that the administration has put to us,  
39 but also to think about where we're going with  
40 policy, with rulemaking. We've got regional  
41 action plans coming up under our NOAA Fisheries  
42 Climate Science Strategy so we will be using this  
43 internally as we think about our own work, revise  
44 our strategic plan which we are currently doing.  
45 We look forward to the formal transition to a new  
46 appointee for the Assistant Administrator for  
47 NOAA Fisheries in the coming weeks.

48 Before getting to that, I wanted to

1 mention the other piece of 14008 216(a) which has  
2 also gained a lot of attention. This is the  
3 piece that's known as 30x30. The administration  
4 did release the initial report Conserving and  
5 Restoring America the Beautiful with  
6 recommendations for achieving the conservation  
7 goal of 30 percent of land and waters by 2030.

8 The Department of Interior is front  
9 and center on that piece. We are working closely  
10 with them, of course, and many of these efforts  
11 under Executive Order 14008 are large and touch  
12 on multiple agencies. In this case for 30x30 we,  
13 among other agencies, will be contributing to  
14 DOI's leadership of that effort.

15 We'll certainly keep you informed as  
16 that goes along, but I hope you have been able to  
17 see that initial report and in it the strong  
18 commitment that's expressed through that report  
19 by the administration to getting the advice and  
20 recommendations and input from, broadly speaking,  
21 our community in Fisheries and Protected  
22 Resources including all of you. That is a  
23 significant commitment and one that we fully need  
24 to not just be aware of but respond to.

25 Back on the transition front with  
26 people, we are still waiting key appointments in  
27 NOAA Fisheries and the organization as a whole.  
28 I expect that we'll be seeing appointments move  
29 shortly after our administration's nominee for  
30 NOAA administrator, Dr. Rick Spinrad, gets into  
31 place. He has gone through already his  
32 confirmation hearing and we are anticipating a  
33 confirmation vote, we hope, in early to mid-June.

34 The time frame for these things is  
35 always fluid. We expect some of the additional  
36 appointments for NOAA as a whole; the two  
37 assistant secretaries, the NOAA AA, NOAA  
38 Fisheries AA to be coming in the wake of Rick's  
39 appointment.

40 Of course, you are all certainly aware  
41 of former governor Gina Raimundo taking her  
42 appointed position as Secretary of Commerce.  
43 Just a few weeks ago Don Graves was able to join  
44 the executive team at the department as the  
45 deputy secretary after his confirmation vote just  
46 a few weeks ago.

47 Things are getting into place. Very  
48 strong signals about where the administration



1 intends to go. People are getting placed to act  
2 on that. You will hear much more from us as we  
3 go.

4           Meanwhile, we're continuing, as we  
5 always do. Focus on core mission, pandemic and  
6 administrative transitions. We've got our core  
7 work to do. Just a couple of recent notes. I  
8 hope you've seen a couple of our annual documents  
9 that have come out, the Status of Stocks and  
10 Fisheries of the United States.

11           Status of Stocks, we and many of our  
12 stakeholders pay an awful lot of attention to our  
13 continued -- in Exhibit A they point to the value  
14 of sustained investment in the science and the  
15 management functions that support our core work.

16           This report gives you the basic data  
17 on that value of continued rebuilding and  
18 recovery of U.S. Fisheries. We are tracking on  
19 the order of 460 stocks, or stock complexes, to  
20 determine their status. We conducted a few  
21 first-time stock assessments last year.

22           There's continued concern with  
23 broadening out our science and data collection  
24 efforts. The report shows positive results with  
25 more than 90 percent of stocks not subject to  
26 overfishing and 80 percent not overfished and  
27 reporting very solid numbers there.

28           Similarly, the 2019 Fisheries of the  
29 United States -- there's a lag time in our  
30 economics reports due to the survey collection of  
31 data lags that happen in the sector because it is  
32 so diverse and we rely on multiple data streams.

33           In 2019, the value of U.S. commercial  
34 fisheries landings, including agriculture  
35 production, remained pretty strong, a \$5.5  
36 billion figure and a range of consequent positive  
37 benefits on the U.S. economy. A lot of focus  
38 goes on the dollar value. The pound is --  
39 landings, dollar value of these revenue streams.

40           Fundamentally, we need to -- this  
41 report also focuses on the importance of healthy  
42 and sustainable fisheries and the variety of  
43 socioeconomic and ecological benefits that go  
44 along with that and the value of our approach to  
45 managing with an underlying construct of  
46 resilience in mind and a commitment to ensuring  
47 the future health of our resources.

48           In the highly migratory species world

1 we've got some management changes. This is all a  
2 center of your current discussion, proposed rule  
3 for Amendment 13, Swordfish and Shark Retention  
4 Final Rule, work that we're doing to support  
5 spatial highly migratory species fisheries  
6 management.

7 Continued concerns around the  
8 challenges associated with shark management. I  
9 understand we're making progress with a review of  
10 the shark fishery to help us prioritize future  
11 actions and address concerns there.

12 We've got the whole issue of shark  
13 depredation to manage. That continues to be a  
14 concern across all of our fisheries, and  
15 continuing to look at ways of addressing this  
16 concern. I look forward to hearing your ideas on  
17 this topic. A very closely related discussion  
18 also played out a little bit in MAFAC just  
19 yesterday.

20 With your help these challenges --  
21 they are difficult but it's the combination of  
22 perspectives, talent, experience, observations  
23 that all of you have that help us figure out how  
24 best to address and move forward.

25 Thank you, again, for the time that  
26 you take to advise us and help us work through  
27 some of these sector challenges specific to the  
28 sector. I'm optimistic that it's been kind of a  
29 long, dark year and we've got a lot of pressures  
30 on new organizations on the resources that we  
31 manage.

32 I think it's really through this type  
33 of engagement and our ability to respond and  
34 bring the best available science into the  
35 equation that we can get -- continue to make --  
36 kind of as our Status of Stocks Report suggest,  
37 continue to make incremental, progressive,  
38 cumulative gains against these very large  
39 challenges that we have managing our trust  
40 resources.

41 Thank you again. Sam and I are both  
42 happy to be here and have a chance to engage with  
43 you. I'm happy to take questions if you have any  
44 at this point in time.

45 Randy, I'll pass it back to you.

46 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Thanks. I'll pass  
47 it over to Bennett who I think will moderate the  
48 incoming.

1 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Will do, Randy.  
2 Thanks Paul, thanks Sam for being here. I think  
3 we've got about 10 minutes for questions. I  
4 believe we have a hard stop at 11:00 here for  
5 both of you.

6 Rick Weber, why don't you jump on in  
7 here.

8 If folks could just introduce  
9 themselves, name and affiliation, so just Sam and  
10 Paul know who they are hearing from.

11 MR. WEBER: Good morning, Paul. Thank  
12 you for joining us. I'm Rick Weber. I'm a  
13 marine owner, tournament operator. I've been  
14 involved with this panel for quite some time, but  
15 I'm also an IAC member.

16 My thoughts are on 30x30. It's an  
17 idea I've had bouncing around in my head. We  
18 deal so much with high migratory species. I  
19 wonder as it relates to the oceans whether we  
20 should prepare our inventory and wait and see  
21 what 30 percent the relevant RFMOs present.

22 On a highly migratory fish, only  
23 working within our EEZs is going to be barely  
24 beneficial and we're not going to get the real  
25 effects. I think you clearly have a great grasp  
26 of the topics so I'm not going to take the time  
27 to explain the nuances to you, but we always try  
28 not to get ahead of ICCAT because it  
29 disadvantages our own fishermen.

30 I would like to see what 30 percent  
31 ICCAT is going to propose in their 30. I'd like  
32 to see what 30 percent of the Atlantic ICCAT is  
33 going to propose. Thank you.

34 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Rick.

35 MR. RAUCH: I was just going to say,  
36 clearly in the rollout of the 30x30 domestically  
37 the United States is adopting its own standard  
38 with its own atlas which might be influenced by  
39 but is not trying to meet any international  
40 definition of 30 percent.

41 I think once the U.S. determines what  
42 is appropriate in terms of conservation for its  
43 own waters, we will try to determine whether or  
44 not to engage in the international efforts.  
45 We've heard these international efforts 30x30  
46 which means different things depending on what  
47 forum you're talking to.

48 Clearly this is focused domestically

1 at the moment. It is not yet a global  
2 initiative. We may or may not be trying to meet  
3 some global international standard. Right now  
4 we're focusing domestically and trying to look at  
5 a definition and approach that works for the  
6 United States.

7 MR. BROOKS: Great. I'm going to try  
8 to move this across the different perspectives we  
9 have around the table here. Let's hear from Alan  
10 Weiss and then from Rusty. Again, if you could  
11 just start with name and affiliation first.

12 MR. WEISS: Thank you. I'm Alan  
13 Weiss. I'm Blue Water Fishing Tackle Company.  
14 which is in the longline gear supply business. I  
15 also serve on the IAC. Earlier in my life I  
16 served three terms on the Mid-Atlantic Council so  
17 I'm very familiar with the fisheries management  
18 system.

19 The issue that I wanted to bring up,  
20 or call to your attention in the context of the  
21 30x30 initiative, and also a generalized response  
22 to fisheries to climate change is that in the  
23 longline fisheries we have quite a number of  
24 fixed static area closures that have been in  
25 place for quite a while and cover quite  
26 substantial areas.

27 What we have seen from the perspective  
28 of the fishery is not fixed area closures in  
29 relation to species that are highly migratory  
30 really don't make much sense because the fish are  
31 constantly moving around. Then when you layer  
32 climate change on top of that where the already-  
33 variable migrations of these fish have climate  
34 change superimposed upon them. Now those  
35 variations are being shifted northward and  
36 eastward generally by the warming of the ocean.  
37 I'd like to hear how this is being incorporated  
38 into the decision-making process and how this  
39 will work out for us.

40 MR. BROOKS: Thank you, Alan.

41 MR. RAUCH: So if I could respond, the  
42 first step in the decision-making process will be  
43 looking at the various conservation areas that we  
44 have now which would include fishery closures and  
45 other kinds of conservation areas, and creating a  
46 U.S. atlas of where we are and determining what  
47 of those areas currently may or may not qualify  
48 for the objective both in the ocean and on land.

1                   That will tell us how far away,  
2 whether we're under, over, or where our target  
3 is. Then only if we are under, or as we continue  
4 to develop our thinking on these, will we look to  
5 potentially create new areas in the ocean or on  
6 land depending on where we're under.

7                   In creating new areas we would have to  
8 think about those kind of issues that you talk  
9 about in terms of areas that actually serve in  
10 good conservation purposes; are they designed  
11 well.

12                   The issues you raise are issues common  
13 to any area-based management system that we  
14 create to design it properly to reflect both the  
15 needs today and the needs of the future in a  
16 system that is changing. It's not an impossible  
17 task but it is a complicated task.

18                   Those are the things that we're  
19 looking at now, but the first task is to look at  
20 the issues that we've got, the closures we  
21 currently have in determining whether or not they  
22 meet the presidential mandated directive and we  
23 are undergoing that process first before we look  
24 at whether or not there will be any new areas.

25                   MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Sam.

26                   We have just a couple of minutes left.  
27 I would love to get in at least two more. Rusty  
28 Hudson, let's go to you and if you can be as  
29 focused in your comment or question as possible,  
30 that would be helpful.

31                   MR. HUDSON: Can you hear me?

32                   MR. BROOKS: Yes. Thank you.

33                   MR. HUDSON: Okay, great.

34                   Hi Paul for the first time. Rusty  
35 Hudson here. Sam, good to see you again. I am  
36 the main consultant for the Directed Sustainable  
37 Fisheries. Formerly Directed Shark Fisheries. I  
38 have basically been raised on sharks since the  
39 '60s. I answered a call in the early '80s for  
40 the commercial fishing and became a specialist  
41 for sharks.

42                   With that said, we have a lot of  
43 species of sharks that have unknown status. We  
44 just had a presentation earlier this morning that  
45 showed our blacktip which is in two stock forums;  
46 Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic which just got  
47 finished. After a 14-years status of unknown, we  
48 now have non-overfish and overfishing not

1 occurring from Texas all the way to New York for  
2 most stocks in combination.

3 Of course, we're looking to see an  
4 increase in allocation. We love seeing an  
5 increase in the meat prices. Those prices do not  
6 have shark fin because we have problems with this  
7 worldwide shark fin market now about three years  
8 running.

9 That being said, better science. We  
10 have too many sharks that have unknown status  
11 that are both legal to catch and the recently  
12 prohibited with no science back in 1997 and 1999  
13 that need to be done.

14 After that, the 30x30. I understand  
15 the 20, 30 part. The 30 percent is the part that  
16 I start thinking about like the closed area or  
17 the estuary or sandbar and dusky sharks off of  
18 the Carolinas.

19 Other things that have been done to be  
20 able to close areas and fishing and whatever, all  
21 that in combination with things like sanctuaries  
22 and closed areas and marine parks, whatever you  
23 want to call these different ways of doing  
24 things. Is that part of the 30 percent? Both  
25 the limitations on the fish and the area. That's  
26 the end of my question. Thank you.

27 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Rusty.

28 MR. RAUCH: In the interest of time,  
29 I appreciate your comments about scientific  
30 advancements as we continue to look at that.  
31 Nothing is part of the 30 percent area now.

32 This is something that we're going to  
33 be investigating and working on trying to  
34 determine what criteria and what areas currently  
35 qualify. There are no preconceived notions as to  
36 what is or is not included at this point.

37 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. I'd like to  
38 squeeze in Sonja Fordham and Scott Taylor before  
39 we finish up here.

40 Sonja, just a quick comment from you,  
41 or question, and then to Scott.

42 MS. FORDHAM: Yes, Sonja Fordham,  
43 Shark Advocates International, Project of the  
44 Ocean Foundation. I'm also a member of the IAC  
45 for ICCAT. I'll note that we talked a lot about  
46 makos but we just sent you a letter about makos  
47 with 21 NGOs on it so I'll leave that.

48 I just wanted to address the SHARE

1 report about the shark review that you mentioned  
2 and just say that the conservation community got  
3 a look at this and was quite struck by the focus.  
4 At least from the presentations it seems that the  
5 conservation community concerns have been  
6 neglected. I would say the same is true for  
7 other non-user stakeholders.

8 We are particularly troubled by the  
9 labeling of international treaty obligations as  
10 "outside" or "other" sources when, in fact, the  
11 U.S. is quite a leader and a player in these  
12 international fora and they offer pathways to  
13 improvement.

14 I just wanted to flag that this week  
15 and through the comment period we will be  
16 basically calling for integration of all of the  
17 obligations rather than division. The same goes  
18 for integration of the stakeholders that are  
19 following this. Thank you very much.

20 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Sonja. I know  
21 Sam had to leave at 11:00 sharp. Paul, I don't  
22 want to keep you on if you have to jump at 11:00.

23 DR. DOREMUS: With apologies I do  
24 unfortunately. This is the world we're in these  
25 days and I do apologize. We did not schedule  
26 sufficient time for this.

27 I see a lot of hands up and I'm sorry  
28 we're not able to connect with everybody but  
29 certainly encourage people to weigh in with us by  
30 email if they care to. Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
31 Really appreciate the time and apologies for  
32 having to jump to the next zoom meeting.

33 MR. BROOKS: Understood. Thank you,  
34 Paul. We're all in that same space. We  
35 appreciate it very much.

36 DR. DOREMUS: All right. Thank you so  
37 much. And thanks again to everybody for their  
38 contributions. Bye bye.

39 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Thanks everybody.  
40 I know there were a lot of hands up there and I  
41 imagine with a half hour on the agenda we would  
42 never get through all of them. At least we got a  
43 few of the comments and questions in so thank you  
44 all.

45 Let's shift to our next topic, the  
46 last one for the morning, which is an update on  
47 the Deepwater Horizon Oceanic Fish Restoration  
48 Project and we've got Jamie Reinhardt here with

1 NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation.

2 I can see the content is being shared.  
3 We've got a half hour for this in total, for both  
4 presentation and questions. Then we'll aim to  
5 adjourn around 11:30 so we can get everyone to  
6 lunch.

7 Jamie, it's all yours.

8 MR. REINHARDT: Thanks, Bennett. I'm  
9 going to look at you and --

10 MR. BROOKS: Now we can hear you.

11 MR. REINHARDT: Okay. Can you hear  
12 me?

13 MR. BROOKS: We can hear you and we  
14 can see your screen so you're all good.

15 MR. REINHARDT: Super. If I break up  
16 at any time, you know, give me like a frowny face  
17 or one of these. A real-life emoji will help me  
18 out a ton.

19 Thank you for allowing me and creating  
20 the time for me to just talk about the  
21 restoration project that we have been working on  
22 since -- well, a long time really. In 2015 we  
23 got funded and really started implementing this  
24 project in 2017 with the help of many folks on  
25 the call.

26 I'm going to talk about some of the  
27 successes and challenges that we've had in  
28 implementing this project. In particular, I  
29 really want to highlight and share my deep  
30 gratitude to our project participants.

31 Those are the longliners in the Gulf  
32 and South Florida that have put their time and  
33 energy into the project. I'm really grateful for  
34 the partnership that we as the project team have  
35 been able to develop with those fishermen, those  
36 longliners.

37 So, like I said, my presentation will  
38 be relatively brief. I hope to just give you a  
39 little bit of background about the Deepwater  
40 Horizon oil spill, the context for the work that  
41 we're doing.

42 Provide a general project overview,  
43 and then talk to you about some of the results of  
44 our monitoring program that is put in place to  
45 help us evaluate our restoration success.

46 I'll talk about some of the  
47 innovations that we've had throughout the course  
48 of the program over the course of the years and,



1 again, stress importance of the partnerships that  
2 we have created as part of this project.

3 Those are partnerships from our --  
4 from NOAA, the NOAA Restoration Center, the HMS  
5 community, as well as our implementation partner  
6 who is NFWF, the National Fish and Wildlife  
7 Foundation.

8 So a bit about the Deepwater Horizon  
9 oil spill over 10 years ago. I will refresh  
10 everybody's mind what that event was like over  
11 the summer of 2010. As a result of that spill,  
12 there was a substantial massive injury to fish  
13 and water column invertebrates in the Gulf of  
14 Mexico.

15 The exposure to oil happened to fish  
16 and fish larvae in all parts of the Gulf from the  
17 near shore and the estuarine environments out to  
18 the deepest parts of the Gulf of Mexico and  
19 inclusive of the pelagic habitat where many of  
20 the HMS species call home.

21 In response to that oil spill, NOAA as  
22 one of the National Resources trustees received  
23 early funding to implement restoration projects  
24 in part to help restore for the injury to fish  
25 and water column invertebrates inclusive of HMS  
26 species.

27 This project was developed prior to  
28 the full settlement with BP and was part of an  
29 initial agreement with BP called early  
30 restoration. This project, this oceanic fish  
31 restoration project, was one of the first  
32 Deepwater Horizon projects developed as working  
33 directly to restore fish species. I'll explain a  
34 little bit more about the project. If I recall,  
35 I probably haven't given a presentation to the  
36 HMS panel in three years or more.

37 Being on the call makes me remember  
38 that I miss you all. I miss the opportunities to  
39 talk about the project. Just as a quick  
40 overview, I just want to explain what this  
41 project is and what it's not and provide a little  
42 bit more detail in the following slides.

43 We consider this project as an  
44 opportunity to reduce fishing pressure in most  
45 regard to bycatch within the longline fisheries  
46 and have our project participants involved in a  
47 way that allows them to explore alternative gear  
48 types to help improve the efficiency of those

1 gear types and learn different dimensions of  
2 fishing for HMS in the Gulf.

3 This project is not in any way meant  
4 to replace pelagic longline fishing. We  
5 understand that longline fishing is an important  
6 gear to access HMS species. I wanted to make  
7 that clear as we've had some of our initial  
8 outreach with stakeholders the way we had  
9 presented this project made it appear that this  
10 project would lead to a replacement of pelagic  
11 longline gear in the fisheries.

12 So, again, for those that don't  
13 remember, this project has two general parts.  
14 The first part of the project is where we ask  
15 fishermen to participate in a voluntary and  
16 temporary repose or break from using longline  
17 gear for the first six months of the calendar  
18 year.

19 And the second part of the project is  
20 the use during that period of alternative gear  
21 types, so not longline gear, which have been  
22 shown to have substantially less bycatch, in  
23 particular of non-target species, but also of  
24 undersized yellowfin or other primary targets.

25 Well, the whole overarching goal here  
26 is for us to create win-win-win situations for  
27 the restoration of the gulf, but also for HMS  
28 management as well as the fishermen. So in doing  
29 that we hope that we've created those  
30 opportunities.

31 One, create opportunities for  
32 longliners to use additional gear which hopefully  
33 has provided additional training and access to  
34 other resources that might need to learn about  
35 those gears.

36 We hope that we've provided  
37 opportunities for the HMS management community in  
38 providing additional sources of information about  
39 new gear types to fish with, and providing other  
40 information such as other options for fishing  
41 utilizing additional observing capacity as part  
42 of our restoration projects accessing the means  
43 to implement additional tagging studies to help  
44 inform HMS management overall.

45 As part of that we've put substantial  
46 effort into additional coordination and  
47 engagement with the HMS and longline community in  
48 the Gulf of Mexico by hiring fisheries liaisons

1 to help serve as an interface between the project  
2 HMS management and the fishing community in the  
3 Gulf of Mexico, and allowing a constant  
4 engagement in feedback and response to interests  
5 and questions that the fishermen have.

6 Again, I do want to express my thanks  
7 to the fishermen that have stepped up to be part  
8 of the Deepwater Horizon Restoration efforts.  
9 It's because of them and their interests and  
10 their energy that have enabled this project to  
11 run for over the last five years.

12 I'll talk a little bit about some of  
13 the restoration success that we've had as part of  
14 the project. Over the last five years we've  
15 exceeded our goal in production of bycatch and we  
16 have allowed over one million pounds of pelagic  
17 fish to remain in the water.

18 That includes both target fish, but  
19 including undersized yellowfin and sword. Also  
20 those fish that aren't target and we have -- and  
21 happy about the fact that we've been able to  
22 reduce bycatch in the Gulf of Mexico over that  
23 time.

24 So, of course, the yellowfin and  
25 swordfish are sort of the largest beneficiaries  
26 of this project in terms of total individuals not  
27 caught, but that also includes these other  
28 bycatch species including sharks and lancetfish,  
29 for example, that are important ecosystem  
30 components that haven't been caught. So, again,  
31 over that period of time we estimate that over  
32 one million pounds of pelagic fish have remained  
33 in the Gulf.

34 So a little bit more about the  
35 alternative gears that through the fishermen's  
36 initiative and participation we have been  
37 evaluating an understanding of how these gears  
38 will work and how these gears could potentially  
39 provide addition opportunities for fishing HMS.

40 So just some of the results. This  
41 project provided opportunities from 2017 and we  
42 update up to 2020 on the number of sea days that  
43 fishermen have accessed using these different  
44 alternative gears. These different gear types  
45 include greenstick gear, buoy gear, and deep drop  
46 rod and reel gear. As you see, we've had  
47 increased participation rates over the last four  
48 years.

1           One thing I want to point out is that  
2 it was through the engagement and communication  
3 with the fishermen that sort of instigated this  
4 manifestation of additional gear types being used  
5 as part of the project.

6           We start out with one gear type and  
7 over time and through suggestions from our  
8 participants we have added different gears and  
9 additionally different gear type configurations.  
10 We worked with HMS management to allow the  
11 participants to use the power haul back while  
12 using buoy gear as part of an exempted fishing  
13 permit that we had put in place.

14           So, in a nutshell, we know that these  
15 alternative gear types do not have the same types  
16 of landings and, as a result, less sales and net  
17 revenues as part of the project. However, the  
18 upside there is that these gear types are  
19 extremely efficient as far as the bycatch profile  
20 and that when fish are caught using these  
21 alternative gear types, they are most often  
22 released alive.

23           So just one of the things I wanted to  
24 highlight is sort of ongoing adaptive management  
25 that the project had.

26           Again, this was in large part  
27 facilitated by the community liaison so folks  
28 that were put in place in order to facilitate  
29 coordination and communication between the  
30 fishing communities, and also the NOAA  
31 Restoration Center and NOAA HMS. In 2016 we sort  
32 of initiated getting feedback from vessel owners  
33 on how they thought this project could be  
34 implemented.

35           In 2017 we began the initial pilot  
36 stage. From that initial pilot study we were  
37 able to add additional gear choices that added  
38 opportunities that the exempted fishing permits  
39 provided, and we were able to create  
40 opportunities in the project to fine tune the  
41 selection of participants by region breaking it  
42 out between the Western and Eastern Gulf which  
43 allowed greater flexibility in implementation of  
44 the project.

45           More recently we brought on additional  
46 capacity to help work with the HMS dealers in the  
47 Gulf of Mexico and Southern Florida to provide  
48 ongoing coordination with those community

1 members. And also provided additional  
2 information that alternative gears could be used  
3 more effectively.

4           Everybody knows about the challenges  
5 that COVID-19 put in place for implementation of  
6 projects and programs across our country,  
7 including within NOAA and the Restoration Center.  
8 As part of our adaptive management in the most  
9 recent years, we've allowed -- we've eased the  
10 process for renewals for project participants.

11           One of the things I do want to  
12 highlight that I think is a feather in our cap is  
13 that when projects -- when people join the  
14 program, they want to stay in the program. I  
15 think that is a sort of measure of success that  
16 we've been able to retain our project  
17 participants on an ongoing basis.

18           So what's next in store? Well, we  
19 have one more year for the project. This project  
20 will be implemented during the 2022 season. But  
21 I do want to highlight that this is really the  
22 first of multiple projects that are being  
23 implemented as part of the Deepwater Horizon  
24 restoration.

25           We have a number of other projects  
26 that are focused on fisheries in the Gulf of  
27 Mexico. But I do want to say that the Deepwater  
28 Horizon Program is still young despite being 10  
29 years after the spill there's lot of restoration  
30 that still needs to happen for those injured fish  
31 and water column invertebrates.

32           And another, I guess, success I'll  
33 highlight about this project, it has really given  
34 us an opportunity to see how the Restoration  
35 Center and the Deepwater Horizon Program is able  
36 to work with the fishing community including the  
37 HMS management to help implement restoration  
38 projects.

39           It's my hope that with the help of you  
40 folks and other stakeholders that we'll be able  
41 to take ideas and implement -- continue to  
42 implement restoration projects in a successful  
43 way that marries the needs for the restoration  
44 program, and also the needs of the HMS management  
45 and HMS fishing community.

46           So, with that, I'll turn it back over  
47 to you, Bennett. Again, thank you for the  
48 opportunity to present.

1 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks for taking  
2 the time to catch everyone up on this.

3 We have about 10 minutes. If folks  
4 have some questions or comments, as always, just  
5 raise your hand. I see -- let's see. Let's get  
6 Dewey and then Sonja. Marty, your hand has been  
7 left up there. I'm not sure if that's fresh or  
8 not.

9 Let's start with Dewey and then Sonja.

10 MR. HEMILRIGHT: Can you hear me?

11 MR. BROOKS: I can, Dewey.

12 MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yeah, thank you for  
13 the very, very broad presentation here. I was  
14 hoping it would dig down into more of the nuts  
15 and the bolts of the project. It seems like  
16 there's some success and continuation of that. I  
17 was curious given that this could be a  
18 methodology for use in other places, or maybe  
19 something like that I was hoping.

20 You talked about your success rate of  
21 keeping your fishermen throughout the project. I  
22 was curious how does each vessel get paid to do  
23 this? That might have something to do with why  
24 you're able to keep them.

25 I was curious as to the dollar  
26 amounts, pounds landed, and just a little more  
27 nuts and bolts instead of a very broad oversight  
28 of a project. I understand most times folks  
29 don't like to do that. I was curious how much  
30 does a vessel get paid to participate in this  
31 project?

32 MR. REINHARDT: Thanks, Dewey, for the  
33 question. One thing I will mention is that we  
34 will have a report published June 1st so just  
35 days away, Dewey. That will provide greater  
36 detail on some of our estimates including  
37 landings, bycatch, and revenues.

38 We can't give specific information as  
39 to compensation for individuals. That's not  
40 something we are able to do. But if you -- I can  
41 -- you could go to the NFWF webpage right here.  
42 It's on the screen right now. That would show  
43 you the process that's used to select  
44 participants. It is a bid process that's done  
45 and, you know, it's done in a confidential manner  
46 so I can't reveal that information.

47 I will say undoubtedly that  
48 compensation is part of the reason why people

1 want to participate. I don't think there's any  
2 secrets about that. Some of the other things  
3 that are really exciting about the project, and  
4 you know this better than me, it's exciting to  
5 try new things and have the resources to try new  
6 things, to do things in a different way, to  
7 explore opportunities to catch fish.

8 That's one of the other sort of  
9 incentives we've seen and the excitement around  
10 trying new things, trying new ways to catch fish,  
11 having opportunities to do things in a new way.  
12 I hope that is also part of the incentive.

13 As well as, at least in talking to  
14 some of the fishermen, they are excited to help  
15 out on some of the studies that are taking place  
16 now including some of the tagging work and  
17 satellite tagging work that's happening on some  
18 of the alternative gears.

19 It's helping us collect more  
20 information on post-release mortality rates that  
21 these gears will have as well. That cooperative  
22 research component also, I think, is something  
23 that fishermen like to participate in.

24 MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thanks, Jim.

25 MR. REINHARDT: I don't want any  
26 confidential information. Just the average, you  
27 know, something like that. We'll look that up.  
28 I've looked over the website just trying to find  
29 as much -- my point was getting to that if the  
30 fisherman wasn't subsidized in the size boat  
31 you're using, they probably wouldn't be able to  
32 fish. That was the heavy reason that I'm lacking  
33 in seeing the general information but appreciate  
34 it.

35 One last thing. How long does this  
36 continue for?

37 MR. HEMILRIGHT: It's going for one  
38 more year so 2022 would be the last season.

39 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. I'm going to  
40 jump in. I want to get a couple more people in  
41 here.

42 Sonja, and then over to David Schalit,  
43 and then to Marty if you want to jump in on this.

44 MS. FORDHAM: I'll lower my hand.

45 MR. BROOKS: Oh, that was leftover?

46 Okay.

47 MR. BROOKS: David.

48 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Hey, Bennett, just

1 for a second here. I would like to kind of  
2 circle back to one of Dewey's final comments  
3 because I mentioned something about if fishermen  
4 aren't subsidized with the size of those vessels,  
5 they wouldn't be able to fish.

6 I wanted to just kind of flush that  
7 out a little bit more to point out that the  
8 vessels that are participating in that project  
9 are actually vessels that are actively fishing  
10 pelagic longline under normal circumstances.  
11 They've agreed to participate in the program.

12 So it's the same size vessels that are  
13 also participating alternative to your program.  
14 There is a slight version of that where there can  
15 be an alternative vessel that can be designated  
16 if necessary in order to fish alternative gears  
17 but, for the most part, it's the actual pelagic  
18 longline vessels that are fishing with  
19 alternative gears. So I just wanted to kind of  
20 clarify that one particular point related to  
21 these being active pelagic longline vessels.  
22 Thanks.

23 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Randy.  
24 David Schalit.

25 MR. SCHALIT: Yes, thanks. Can you  
26 hear me?

27 MR. BROOKS: Yes.

28 MR. SCHALIT: Thanks, Jamie, for that  
29 presentation. I just wanted a little bit more  
30 detail on something you mentioned very briefly.  
31 So my understanding is that your project involves  
32 the efficacy -- determining the efficacy of other  
33 gear types in conjunction with longline. One of  
34 those you mentioned had to do with buoy gear.

35 You mentioned that -- you mentioned  
36 the term power haulback in use with buoy gear  
37 very briefly and I'm just wondering are you  
38 referencing standard or some other hydraulic or  
39 electric device that would be allowed in the Gulf  
40 for the purpose of bringing catch onboard?

41 MR. REINHARDT: Yes.

42 MR. SCHALIT: Sorry, go ahead.

43 MR. REINHARDT: Yes, that is what I'm  
44 referencing and that's allowable because the  
45 project had gotten an exempted fishing permit to  
46 allow the use of power haulback with buoy gear.

47 MR. SCHALIT: I gotcha. Then the  
48 other question I had, also related to buoy gear,



1 is buoy gear targeting in this EFP -- it's  
2 targeting swordfish or targeting other fish that  
3 might be considered to be bycatch in Florida,  
4 let's say, in the east coast?

5 MR. REINHARDT: So traditionally,  
6 obviously, the standard target for buoy gear is  
7 swordfish. Actually as part of the EFP these  
8 project participants are also allowed to target  
9 yellowfin as part of our project.

10 MR. SCHALIT: Oh, okay.

11 MR. REINHARDT: I'll comment that in  
12 large part swordfish has still been the target  
13 but the EFP does allow the targeting of the  
14 elephant.

15 MR. SCHALIT: Okay. Okay.  
16 Understood. That makes sense. Thanks very much.

17 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yeah, and once again  
18 I want to jump in just to tag on a little bit of  
19 information. The EFP, exempted fishing permits,  
20 that have been issued for specifically, let's  
21 say, for example buoy gear in this case, as Jamie  
22 was describing, has provided an excellent  
23 opportunity for data collection about the ways  
24 these gears could be fished.

25 Power haulback, for instance, is  
26 allowing for a little bit more frequent use of  
27 the gear at deeper depths and then being used  
28 even during the daytime. Then by allowing the  
29 harvest of yellowfin, it also it allowing for  
30 some data collection on what that gear would look  
31 like and what the bycatch might look like if that  
32 is the target instead of just swordfish. A good  
33 opportunity in that sense.

34 MR. COOPER: Bennett, can't hear you.

35 MR. BROOKS: Sorry. Thank you.

36 Marty, did you want to jump in on this  
37 conversation?

38 MR. SCANLON: Yes, I do. Thank you,  
39 Bennett.

40 Number one, I have a few things to say  
41 and then I have a couple of questions that I'd  
42 like to have answered. Number one, I don't know  
43 how you could say that it is not replacing  
44 pelagic longline gear when it is actually  
45 replacing longline gear for that time frame.

46 Number two, this program here hinders  
47 to the point of denying Atlantic boats access to  
48 the Gulf of Mexico because it's my understanding

1 that once these vessels enter this program, they  
2 can lease their quota to the Atlantic fleet.

3 The other thing is you keep talking  
4 about bycatch and how you're calculating that  
5 bycatch. The other thing is out of the million  
6 pounds that remain in the Gulf of Mexico each  
7 year, your compensation to these boats is equal  
8 to the amount of fish in dollar value to what  
9 you're denying the American seafood consumer  
10 access to by leaving that product in the water.

11 MR. REINHARDT: Yes. So a couple  
12 comments which I can appreciate, and then a  
13 question on how is bycatch being calculated, and  
14 also how is that bycatch equivalent to the ex-  
15 vessel dollar value of those same fish if they  
16 had been landed.

17 Marty, I can't -- I'm not going to get  
18 into the details of the bycatch calculations.  
19 It's generally, you know, we use some method to  
20 estimate what would have been caught on average  
21 by an average fisherman in the Gulf of Mexico.

22 But I can provide -- we can provide  
23 the more precise details of those bycatch  
24 estimates through the report that's being  
25 published in just three days. You know, we can  
26 coordinate with HMS staff in order to make sure  
27 we have your email address, and Dewey's as well,  
28 so that we can send you the direct link for that  
29 information.

30 We do some estimates of ex-vessel  
31 prices and revenues for both the participants and  
32 kind of comparing that to the average longline  
33 revenues as part of that report. I don't think  
34 we go so far as to estimate the value of the  
35 catch that wasn't landed. We also don't do -- we  
36 wouldn't do that for the bycatch.

37 MR. BROOKS: Marty, was there  
38 something else you wanted to weigh in on?

39 MR. SCANLON: I just want to remind  
40 you, you know, like you throw that term bycatch  
41 out very freely there. To us it's a very  
42 concerning topic, you know. We work very  
43 diligently in the pelagic longline industry to  
44 reduce our bycatch so when you start throwing out  
45 that type of -- you start generalizing bycatch,  
46 you know.

47 I mean, that's concerning to us. We  
48 would appreciate it if you would be much more

1 precise and much more careful on just throwing  
2 that term out there in the wind. All right?

3 MR. REINHARDT: Marty, I really  
4 appreciate that comment. I would certainly  
5 appreciate your suggestions about how we can  
6 communicate on that issue, if there's a word  
7 that's better for us to use. More helpful.

8 I mean, Marty, frankly I think, you  
9 know, like I was trying to express earlier, I  
10 want to create opportunities for working with  
11 you, the longline fishery, and other components  
12 of the HMS fishery. As part of that, the last  
13 thing I want to do is use terms that you guys --  
14 that you find alienating so I appreciate that  
15 comment.

16 MR. SCANLON: Like just for example,  
17 I mean, you talked about bycatch and then the  
18 next thing you're talking about is leaving  
19 millions of pounds of fish in the water. I mean,  
20 you know, what does that sound like? I mean, it  
21 almost -- you know, people will hear that. Not  
22 necessarily you or me but you get people -- you  
23 understand what I'm saying. You get people --

24 MR. REINHARDT: Yeah, I do.

25 MR. SCANLON: -- listen to those two  
26 statements and, you know, some of them will  
27 automatically start putting percentages of how  
28 much that million pounds would be that was left  
29 that could be bycatch and could be landed. Do  
30 you understand?

31 MR. REINHARDT: Yeah, I do.

32 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Marty.

33 MR. BLANKINSHIP: I'd also like to  
34 kind of talk about a couple of things just in  
35 response to things that Marty had mentioned  
36 there. One was about the statement by Jamie  
37 about the alternative gears not replacing pelagic  
38 longline.

39 As Jamie pointed out, the project is  
40 temporary in nature. It was designed that way.  
41 The statement there relates to not replacing  
42 pelagic longline over the long term. I just  
43 wanted to make that distinction.

44 Then the other thing, Marty, you had  
45 mentioned that the project denies vessels access  
46 to the Gulf of Mexico by tying up IBQ by these  
47 participating vessels. This is a similar type of  
48 -- I have a similar response to what the question

1 was yesterday related to IBQ use or being tied up  
2 by these vessels.

3 I think it's worth pointing out that  
4 if those vessels are active vessels, so they are  
5 fishing in the second half of the year, that IBQ  
6 that's issued to them is necessary in order for  
7 them to fish in that second half of the year.  
8 It's actually -- that process doesn't actually  
9 tie up IBQ that would prevent access to the Gulf  
10 of Mexico by pelagic longline vessels.

11 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Randy.

12 All right. We'll take one last  
13 question or comment here and then get you all to  
14 lunch a couple of minutes late here.

15 Alan Weiss.

16 MR. WEISS: Thank you.

17 You had mentioned that these  
18 alternative gears that have been experimented  
19 with are more efficient. Being in the fishing  
20 gear supply business we're certainly interested  
21 in pursuing technological advancements that  
22 represent an improvement.

23 I wonder if you could give us, or will  
24 it be in your report that is soon to be published  
25 what the relative cost of production is to  
26 produce a pound of fish with the alternative  
27 gears versus producing a pound of fish, of target  
28 catch, with pelagic longline.

29 Also, from what I've heard from people  
30 I know who are in the fish marketing business,  
31 they've had concerns about the quality of the  
32 fish being produced by some of these alternative  
33 methods. Maybe really more at the heart of the  
34 matter is the dollar cost per dollar of revenue  
35 generated in the catch. That's revenue generated  
36 just from the catch not included the subsidy.

37 Also, in addition to that, I would say  
38 you seem to provide information on catch foregone  
39 as though that's a positive thing but we do still  
40 have National Standard 1 in the Magnuson Act that  
41 requires us to achieve optimum yield on a  
42 continuing basis. To the extent that we fall  
43 short of that, we're not fulfilling the  
44 requirements of the law. Thank you.

45 MR. REINHARDT: I appreciate that  
46 comment. I'll try and get to it quick so we can  
47 all eat. I think, Alan, your question is  
48 complicated because I think you're right. I

1 mean, how much money are you going to get for a  
2 pound of fish, if that's what you want.

3 A lot of the participants of our  
4 project are used to supplying or selling their  
5 fish in the same way that they would fish -- sell  
6 a fish that was caught on a longline. Probably  
7 isn't the most appropriate way to sell and market  
8 your fish if you're using one of these  
9 alternative gears.

10 The quality issue, we've certainly  
11 seen that in respect to tuna so that is one  
12 thing, again, you're probably not going to try to  
13 sell one of these alternative gear caught fish,  
14 or greenstick gear caught fish, in the same way  
15 that you're going to sell a longline caught fish.

16 Then, obviously, you get into what  
17 markets are you working in, what are some of the  
18 downstream interactions that are occurring that  
19 are going to provide value to the fish that you  
20 caught. So I think a lot of complicated factors  
21 there.

22 You know, I would hope that if any of  
23 these -- Dewey, you might be able to speak to  
24 this more than me but, you know, sort of the  
25 marketplace for the fish is going to be a driving  
26 factor for how much you get.

27 So I'm going to stop there, Alan, but  
28 I'll add you to my list of people to send the  
29 report to and you'll be able to get a little bit  
30 better grasp of some of the economic details that  
31 we've been able to collect as part of the  
32 monitoring.

33 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks, Jamie.

34 There was a question from Dewey in the  
35 chat a couple minutes ago about what is the total  
36 cost of dollars allocated to the project. Is  
37 that something you can answer quickly?

38 MR. REINHARDT: I can answer that  
39 quickly. We have access up to \$20 million to  
40 implement this project. I will say that we're  
41 probably not going to use the total amount.

42 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks for being  
43 here, Jamie, and for the presentation.

44 Let's get folks to lunch break. It is  
45 20 to 12:00. We will reconvene at 1:00 sharp  
46 with our law enforcement update.

47 Again, thanks, Jamie. Thanks to  
48 everyone for the good conversation. We will see

1 you in an hour and a quarter or so.

2 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
3 went off the record at 11:41 a.m. and resumed at  
4 1:01 p.m.)

5 MR. BROOKS: All right. It is 1:00,  
6 so we should probably jump back in here.

7 Randy or Pete, anything from either of  
8 you before we move into the Law Enforcement  
9 discussion?

10 MR. BLANKINSHIP: No, not from me.

11 MR. BROOKS: Okay, Pete, anything from  
12 your end?

13 MR. COOPER: Nothing from my end  
14 either.

15 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Great. Then let's  
16 jump in. And thanks, everyone, for coming back.

17 We are in the home stretch of the AP  
18 meeting and what we'll do this afternoon is in a  
19 minute we'll hear from Law Enforcement, from OLE,  
20 also U.S. Coast Guard, and then we will take  
21 public comments at 2:00, so for anyone who's been  
22 listening in that's not a member of the advisory  
23 panel, at 2:00, we'll have a half-hour  
24 opportunity for any comments that you all would  
25 like to make.

26 So with that, next up, we're going to  
27 hear from two folks. We're going to hear from  
28 Katie Moore with U.S. Coast Guard first. And  
29 then we'll hear from Tim Donaldson with the  
30 Office of Law Enforcement, and we have about an  
31 hour for this presentation and discussion here.

32 So Katie, I think I will just hand it  
33 off to you. And do you want to take questions  
34 after your presentation and before we go to Tim?  
35 What's your pleasure?

36 MS. MOORE: Sure, that's great.

37 MR. BROOKS: Okay, great. All right,  
38 it's all yours.

39 MS. MOORE: Thank you. Well, thank  
40 you for the time on the agenda. I know you have  
41 a lot to always talk about. I give a standing  
42 presentation on U.S. Coast Guard fisheries  
43 enforcement. So comparable to previous  
44 presentations, I've tried to include the same  
45 type of content.

46 My name is Katie Moore. I work for  
47 the Coast Guard Atlantic Area, so that's  
48 everything east of the Rockies to include the

1 entire Atlantic through to Africa. We also deal  
2 with South America and eastward.

3 So I work in Portsmouth, Virginia.  
4 That's where our office is and the office I work  
5 in is in Operations, Maritime Security, and Law  
6 Enforcement.

7 What I plan to cover today is domestic  
8 fisheries enforcement efforts, our enforcement  
9 efforts as well as the results from those. Then  
10 I will go into talking about our foreign fishing  
11 vessel challenges, both within the U.S. EEZ and  
12 on the high seas. And then I'll talk about what  
13 Coast Guard strategic and operational strategy is  
14 into the future.

15 The U.S. Coast Guard has 11 statutory  
16 missions. We have a diversity of assets that we  
17 use to accomplish those mission sets. So it  
18 ranges anywhere from our small boats, to our  
19 aircraft, to our patrol boats, and then  
20 ultimately to our major cutters.

21 We do multi missions concurrently.  
22 However, we do have directed operations. So you  
23 might start off with one mission being fisheries,  
24 and then have to divert to a search and rescue  
25 effort.

26 I always report on how much time we  
27 have expended directly towards fisheries, and in  
28 comparison to where we were in Fiscal Year '20,  
29 we have about a 40 percent less drop. So some  
30 complicating factors, having COVID, having some  
31 breaks in our assets, as well as sometimes we're  
32 a little slow in accounting and its delayed.

33 So because we are a multi-mission  
34 agency, if you have a mission set that is in a  
35 different geographic area and that asset breaks,  
36 sometimes that will pull from the fisheries  
37 mission that go and source it. So we have had a  
38 decrease in all of our asset categories so far  
39 this year.

40 However, we still have been very  
41 active in detecting -- or in doing boardings and  
42 for HMS, the boardings that we have done so far  
43 this year, you can see here. We stand at about  
44 106 total, which is about half where we stood at  
45 this time last year in Fiscal Year '20. So you  
46 can see that we do try to address the full suite  
47 of a fisheries across this entire geographic  
48 area. We tend to do that more strongly in the

1 Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and the South Atlantic,  
2 more so than the Gulf of Mexico. And that's  
3 typically because of the competing needs in those  
4 areas. So we are running at about half of the  
5 normal boarding for HMS that we have done in  
6 prior years.

7 Now some concerns have been, like I  
8 said before, COVID, availability of assets, as  
9 well as the accounting. We've detected nine  
10 significant violations to-date, to which we have  
11 created case packages and rolled those over to  
12 NOAA. That has been about half in commercial and  
13 half in recreational. We've had these detections  
14 everywhere except for the Mid-Atlantic. We  
15 didn't see any so far this fiscal year, but  
16 running through what these case packages have  
17 been, the first one was in August in the  
18 Northeast. And these are reports since the last  
19 HMS Enforcement Report I gave you. So that's why  
20 it crosses the fiscal years.

21 Station Merrimack ran into a situation  
22 where there was lack of permit, possession of  
23 porbeagle without a permit, and it was under-  
24 sized. We have another case out of the same unit  
25 and that was also fishing without a permit. That  
26 was a recreational vessel.

27 Going down to the Gulf of Mexico, we  
28 had a patrol boat that detected on a commercial  
29 HMSer the lack of turtle handling gear, although  
30 that wasn't a direct HMS species violation I  
31 wanted to include it. We actively have those  
32 types of instances often, not necessarily on HMS  
33 vessels, we also have that in the South Atlantic  
34 of some of those snapper/grouper folks.

35 In the Northeast, we've detected  
36 filleting tuna at sea by a commercial vessel.  
37 South Atlantic, our patrol boat detected a Lacey  
38 Act violation, where it was fishing for swordfish  
39 and returning to the United States, so it did not  
40 have permission or a permit from the Bahamas to  
41 do so. I wanted to flag that in prior HMS  
42 meetings. We did receive feedback from the  
43 Advisory Panel that there was concern, especially  
44 in Florida, where you would have U.S. fishermen  
45 going into the Bahamas and coming back into the  
46 U.S. without sufficient permits.

47 We did a pulse operation, and the  
48 detections that we found were not in HMS



1 fisheries, but it was more in snapper/grouper  
2 fisheries. So I wanted to make you aware we do  
3 appreciate the feedback, we do take it into  
4 account, and so sometimes it's not the fishery  
5 which had been flagged, but it does help inform  
6 our operations where we might want to focus. And  
7 that was a multi-agency operation.

8 So in February, in the Gulf of Mexico,  
9 another one of our patrol boats found that there  
10 was a fishing vessel that had 101 sharks where  
11 the fins were removed and it also had, I believe,  
12 93 large coastal sharks above the limit. So that  
13 was in partnership with NOAA OLE. And Tim might  
14 be able to give a little bit more details on  
15 that, but that one was one of ours with larger  
16 volumes of sharks involved.

17 Same region, Station Venice, there was  
18 a fishing vessel commercial that was fishing for  
19 sharks without a permit. The catch on board was  
20 94 blacktips. Out of our South Atlantic, Station  
21 Marathon, there was a failure by a recreational  
22 vessel to have an HMS permit, and they also had  
23 illegal carcass condition on that one. I don't  
24 have information on the species. Now the Station  
25 Venice one, I wanted to flag also that was in  
26 close coordination with OLE.

27 And the last one we had was in April  
28 by our patrol boat. There was a commercial  
29 vessel that was in possession of two Atlantic  
30 sharpnose sharks, failed to have a permit, and it  
31 failed to have the correct hooks. So these are  
32 significant fisheries violations, which is  
33 different than if you just lacked an operator's  
34 permit on your person. So that's how we try to  
35 group them, is it a significant violation or is  
36 it not significant. And I just report to you the  
37 significant violations within the HMS fleet.

38 You're very aware that the Coast Guard  
39 doesn't limit our efforts to solely domestic  
40 enforcement. We're very mindful of any foreign  
41 fishing vessels fishing illegally within our  
42 waters. So the main issue that we have is off of  
43 the Gulf of Mexico, U.S.-Mexico border. We have  
44 the highest numbers of incursions there across  
45 the entire United States, and it's small vessels  
46 from Mexico coming over illegally, intending to  
47 fish for and catch sharks as well as red snapper.  
48 So the way that we view our metrics is, if we

1 detect an incursion, so that means if we have  
2 indications the fishing vessel is currently there  
3 or has been there, so there was gear left in the  
4 water. So that's what detections mean.

5 Interceptions means a Coast Guard  
6 asset is physically on scene and trying to  
7 interdict that vessel to stop that vessel.  
8 Interdictions is when we actually do stop that  
9 vessel, and at that point in time that's when we  
10 work on catch seizure, identifying who is  
11 operating. We try to assess if they're repeat  
12 offenders and we seize -- under normal situations  
13 -- seize the catch as well as the vessel and  
14 repatriate those Mexican nationals back to  
15 Mexico. We then follow up with a case package  
16 and we route that so Mexico can do further  
17 prosecution of their own nationals.

18 In very few instances do we do U.S.  
19 prosecution, and when we do, it's because the  
20 vessels have failed to heave to Coast Guard  
21 direction and sometimes actively try to bump our  
22 vessels. And that's a security issue and we do  
23 prosecute for that. Luckily, that has not been  
24 frequent lately, because we think Mexican  
25 nationals as well as Mexico knows that we will  
26 take that very seriously and that can take U.S.  
27 prison time.

28 So wanted to flag to you that last  
29 year, Fiscal Year '20, was crazy high.  
30 Typically, we average I think 173. That was a  
31 five-year average of detections. Last year, we  
32 had almost double that. Our thoughts are a  
33 couple of factors, one being COVID. We  
34 abbreviated our interdiction procedures and --  
35 abbreviated them. And that was for safety  
36 reasons. And I think once the Mexican nationals  
37 heard about that, there was a more frequent  
38 incursions in U.S. waters.

39 We've gone back to not using the  
40 abbreviated posture, but doing the full suite of  
41 catch seizure, vessel seizure, repatriating in  
42 full case packages. So those numbers have slowed  
43 down dramatically. So you can see here, fiscal  
44 year to-date '21, there's even less than Fiscal  
45 Year '19. So that's a good thing. It was a very  
46 crazy year.

47 Now given that we had so many and we  
48 did abbreviate our procedures, that does

1 influence some information we have regarding the  
2 catch. So typically, what I give you is when, if  
3 there was HMS catch on board, what it was, and  
4 the species level if at all possible. We also  
5 tell you what gear type was involved.

6 We had so many cases going on that  
7 what we did on the water was instead of taking  
8 the catch back to shore, photo documenting it,  
9 laying it out on the dock, taking pictures, and  
10 then putting the catch back on a Coast Guard ship  
11 and dumping it out at sea, which it is wasteful.  
12 We didn't have time based on all those  
13 incursions. So what we did is our best estimate  
14 at sea of what was on those vessels or in the  
15 gear.

16 So in total we can give you -- there  
17 were 40 sharks, 620 pounds and that is an  
18 estimate. So I have kind of relayed back to our  
19 field units the importance of species ID wherever  
20 possible, and also the value of this information  
21 to this advisory body to know the frequency of  
22 these incursions and what the potential impact is  
23 on the HMS species involved. So they understand  
24 that.

25  
26 There was a reason why we went to this and  
27 we're trying to get back to the old way of doing  
28 things.

29 Always species ID is not our greatest  
30 skill set, so we try to go to the training and we  
31 have guides. As you know, sometimes we report  
32 species that is our best guess, but we're not  
33 experts. So as much as possible within safety  
34 parameters, we try to do our best with species  
35 ID, counts, and report back to you. So the large  
36 majority of the catch was red snapper, but these  
37 were the instances where HMS catch was  
38 identified. Typically, it slows down after Lent,  
39 so knock on wood, I'm optimistic about the  
40 remainder of this fiscal year.

41 We're also mindful on the high seas of  
42 potential ending incursions into the U.S. EEZ, as  
43 well as opportunity for possible noncompliance in  
44 accordance with ICCAT. So all of our Coast Guard  
45 districts are mindful of the fishing vessels that  
46 are hovering along the EEZ or in close vicinity.  
47 We use our tools to determine if we feel like  
48 they may be a risk and this year, I plan to

1 report on one that was more actionable.

2 As a reminder, last year, there were  
3 several sightings that we had and we worked it  
4 through the ICCAT process to translate sightings  
5 into at least one IUU vessel listing, as well as  
6 a lot of engagement with ICCAT CPCs on potential  
7 systemic concerns regarding compliance. And  
8 every sighting that Coast Guard has, has that  
9 same opportunity to result in action, even if we  
10 don't have the opportunity to board.

11 This year, we did see a particular  
12 vessel to which we thought there were indications  
13 of potential ICCAT noncompliance. It was on the  
14 high seas, not within the U.S. EEZ. And in close  
15 coordination with NOAA OLE, which Tim is going to  
16 talk about during his presentation, we got a lot  
17 of movement out of it. So there was some  
18 concerns that they neither had the quota or they  
19 didn't have the bycatch allowance to be doing  
20 what they were doing, and we went beyond where  
21 we've been in years past, which was just to  
22 collect what we saw, ask a right of approach  
23 questions, and then relay that to ICCAT.

24 This time we actually went to the flag  
25 state and made our concerns and asked if we could  
26 board. ICCAT does not have a high seas boarding  
27 inspection regime in place. So in order to board  
28 for fisheries purposes, we needed to get the  
29 authorization of the flag state. We didn't get  
30 it, but we tried, which is still a lot of  
31 political movement to even get to that point.  
32 But we did work with the next to landing location  
33 to get information on what actually was on board.  
34 And this was done with very quick movement with  
35 our agency partners and NOAA OLE actually came on  
36 board and helped with the inquiry and was on  
37 scene should we be able to board. So it was  
38 great inter-agency effort.

39 So every sighting actually can go up  
40 to at least nine months of follow-up action  
41 afterwards in analyzing the data, working to  
42 continue eyes-on where that vessel is going, for  
43 instance, its next port call, engaging it with  
44 the flag state, engaging it with ICCAT, and then  
45 working with potential -- the IUU vessel list.  
46 So when you start seeing all the sightings we  
47 might be doing in the future, it's a lot of  
48 moving parts, so it's really good stuff. So it's

1 exciting, exciting times.

2 So where are we going in the future?  
3 I will let you know our intention is to continue  
4 to be mindful that we have a domestic fishery, to  
5 which we need to continue enforcing the  
6 regulations in place. And so we will continue,  
7 our plans are to continue to deem them as high  
8 precedence fisheries. When we look at all the  
9 fisheries, Coast Guard has to decide how many  
10 boardings to do on what, and HMS always rises as  
11 a high precedent fisheries, all components of the  
12 fishery. And that's partially because of the  
13 value of the fisheries, political issues,  
14 bycatch, and protected species. So those are our  
15 intentions, and I work with HMS to figure out  
16 what is the suite size and that helps translate  
17 into how many boardings we need to do.

18 So if you aren't aware, in September  
19 we published, as an agency, a IUU Fishing  
20 Strategic Outlook. In it, it tells you, which  
21 I'm sure everybody here already knows, what IUU  
22 fishing is, why is it good or bad, but really  
23 what it does it says this is a priority of the  
24 Coast Guard and it's a commitment for our next  
25 five years of what we're going to focus on.

26 So some of the aspects of it include  
27 targeted intel, intel queue, and enforcement.  
28 And that's not just with government intel. So  
29 there are a lot of NGOs who collect and analyze  
30 data to help inform where they think  
31 transshipment may be occurring, and also other  
32 information that might go to labor issues. So in  
33 here, the goal is to use government resources, as  
34 well as partnerships that already exist, so that  
35 way we can optimize moving forward.

36 Another line of effort in that  
37 document is countering predatory behavior. In  
38 the past, you've asked like how do you target  
39 where you operate? Like why did you work with  
40 Senegal last year or Uruguay? And so I want to  
41 let you know that is a great question and I think  
42 we're getting better now at having a regional  
43 prioritization that includes input from the  
44 Department of State, NOAA, Coast Guard, and  
45 equities that we're very mindful with Department  
46 of Defense. So that can help us develop targeted  
47 regions of where we operate.

48 And the last line of effort in that

1 document is expanding the multilateral  
2 enforcement cooperation. It's pretty much a team  
3 approach, using the ICCAT-like processes in place  
4 so that we can get a high seas boarding  
5 inspection regime in place. So when we see  
6 something that looks hinky that we can actually  
7 have the boarding authority to go out and do  
8 something right then to discern what catch is on  
9 board and to develop a case from it.

10 So that plan, that outlook, has a lot  
11 of moving parts that we're still working on the  
12 implementation plan. And then once that plan is  
13 in effect, I have to figure out how to balance  
14 that with domestic fisheries, as well as marine-  
15 protected resources in sanctuary protection,  
16 because all of that is within our fisheries  
17 mission set.

18 So I would love more money, I would  
19 love more resource time to be able to do that, I  
20 would love more bodies to be able to implement,  
21 but right now what we've done is we said it's  
22 important and then from that, we're hoping to get  
23 the resources. So I am trying to make sure that  
24 no one facet of the program robs from within the  
25 program. And so that's just kind of hard to do.  
26 So that's what I do most of my job right now.

27 We still continue to work through our  
28 headquarters on the SAFE Act in our agency  
29 working group on IUU fishing. There is a  
30 subgroup that is focusing on the Mexican lancha  
31 issue. So it's very mindful that at-sea  
32 enforcement isn't going to solve the whole  
33 problem. There's a lot of work that needs to be  
34 done.

35 Politically, I'm working with Mexico  
36 for them to step up and prosecute their own  
37 folks. That is looking at all tools the U.S.  
38 government has to address the threat, including  
39 things such as like trade sanctions and negative  
40 certifications. So Coast Guard is a part of  
41 working together within the inter-agencies.

42 I am part of the ICCAT delegation  
43 focusing on compliance and enforcement issues.  
44 We have an intersessional meeting in two weeks  
45 and that has topics ranging anywhere from  
46 transshipment to labor issues, VMS, and so I try  
47 to funnel in at-sea enforcement concerns into  
48 that work group, so it's very active right now.

1                   And finally, we continue to help build  
2 law enforcement capacity and partnerships with  
3 other nations. So I've reported in the past on  
4 our efforts over in Africa. COVID impacted that  
5 this year. We are just about to finish some law  
6 enforcement training. It's not fisheries  
7 specific, but it talks about general law  
8 enforcement skills, as well as boat handling, and  
9 that was with about ten countries in Africa, some  
10 of which are our partners under ICCAT. But it  
11 wasn't specifically a fisheries boarding.

12                   Our thoughts are, we're digging out of  
13 COVID and we might restart up the fisheries  
14 boardings, where we go on board their vessels and  
15 they use their authorities to conduct actual  
16 fisheries inspections. But right now it's just  
17 been shore-side training.

18                   We did just finish an operation off of  
19 South America and that was with three -- actually  
20 four partners, under ICCAT. We have Guyana,  
21 which is a cooperating party under ICCAT, Brazil,  
22 Uruguay, and a Portuguese ship rider. So the  
23 goal there was to use our newest vessel, our  
24 WMSL, it's a national security cutter on its very  
25 first voyage, to go down and partner with  
26 multiple countries. It was actually pretty  
27 ambitious, because on a shakedown cruise to see  
28 if everything works, we went pretty far offshore  
29 with partners and tried as much as possible to  
30 detect any potential IUU fishing.

31                   So there was various goals in mind on  
32 that patrol, but it did show that we have the  
33 ability through our cutters to have the endurance  
34 to go that far off of the U.S. to partner with  
35 other people to help build their capacity to  
36 enforce within their EEZs and share information  
37 across countries and it got a lot of fanfare. So  
38 I think there's a lot of interest in continuing  
39 to do that. So my goal is to apply that regional  
40 prioritization matrix that came out of the SAFE  
41 Act process, to help inform future opportunities.

42                   So this is the cutter that went out  
43 off of the Mid-Atlantic and helped try to  
44 determine if full all-ways were compliant or not  
45 and did a great job. So I wanted to give you my  
46 contact information. In the chat, I gave you a  
47 link that would give you to that strategic  
48 outlook document. And Tim is going to talk more

1 about goal all-ways.

2 I'm happy to take any questions right  
3 now or to roll in after Tim, either way.

4 MR. BROOKS: Yes, you know what, I'm  
5 thinking let's roll them after Tim. Let's have  
6 Tim go and then we'll know exactly how much time  
7 we have for questions.

8 MS. MOORE: Okay. Sounds great.

9 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks, Katie.  
10 Tim, you are up.

11 MR. DONALDSON: Okay. Wow, Katie, how  
12 do I follow that? My name is Tim Donaldson. I'm  
13 an agent who is currently assigned to the  
14 headquarters office in Silver Spring, Maryland.  
15 I'm coming from the field in Jackson -- from  
16 Jacksonville, Florida, and I also serve on the  
17 ICCAT board -- or not board, but working group  
18 with Katie.

19 So I just want to highlight a few  
20 things that the Office of Law Enforcement  
21 partners have been doing. And one of those is  
22 these vessels that Katie was talking about. I'm  
23 not going to go back into very much because she  
24 covered it pretty good. But that was a very good  
25 working relationship between the Office of Law  
26 Enforcement and the Coast Guard. It happened  
27 very quickly and with the Coast Guard's help, we  
28 were able to get an agent out to the boat or  
29 aboard the Coast Guard boat in proximity of the  
30 fishing vessel to help gather information through  
31 an interpreter. So again, a good working  
32 relationship between the Coast Guard and the  
33 Office of Law Enforcement.

34 So still talking about IUU, the  
35 fishing vessel that sent up a maximus. Some  
36 analysis was done of some reports and it  
37 suggested that some unauthorized transshipment  
38 activities with foreign vessels had been taking  
39 place and unfortunately, offloaded customs  
40 documents were requested from Trinidad, Tobago,  
41 but as of yet, we have not been able to get those  
42 documents. So the case is -- in DOJ, Department  
43 of Justice doesn't think there's any viable route  
44 to take for any kind of prosecution. But I just  
45 wanted to point that out, that we are looking at  
46 those kinds of issues.

47 And we're also continuing to build  
48 capacity by doing IUU workshops with other



1 countries. In the hopper are Thailand and  
2 Vietnam. Those will be happening shortly. Work  
3 up is for that already. And hopefully, we can  
4 have a successful virtual training to help spread  
5 the word and help combat IUU on someone else's  
6 shores instead of ours.

7 The last thing I want to touch on --  
8 well, not last thing, another thing that -- a  
9 success story recently happened was a -- although  
10 it doesn't relate to HMS species, eventually it  
11 will, a vessel was intercepted by the Coast Guard  
12 and in relationship with the Coast Guard and the  
13 Florida Fish and Wildlife and NOAA, to make a  
14 long story short, the good story is that the  
15 person was sentenced by the Department of Justice  
16 and that person had to purchase a vessel for the  
17 Bahamian Defense Force and they planned to use  
18 that vessel in future IUU enforcement operations.  
19 A good success story, some of that fish is coming  
20 over from the Bahamas, but there is stuff that's  
21 a success.

22 Last thing I want to touch on is we're  
23 still looking at observer-related issues. It  
24 remains a priority for the Office of Law  
25 Enforcement. It happens -- we have open  
26 investigations, but nothing I can discuss right  
27 now. I just wanted to mention that observers are  
28 a priority for the Office of Law Enforcement.

29 And that's all I had. Really short.

30 MR. BROOKS: Okay, that's great.

31 Thanks, Tim. And Katie, maybe you can come back  
32 on camera and let's see what kinds of questions  
33 or comments the panel members have.

34 Let's go to Fly first and then to Tim  
35 Pickett. So Fly Navarro, you're up.

36 MR. NAVARRO: Good afternoon, and, Tim  
37 and Katie, thank you very much for your  
38 presentation.

39 My question and/or comment is about  
40 here in south Florida, or I should say for the  
41 entire state of Florida, we share an EEZ zone  
42 with the -- with the Bahamas.

43 And I know, Katie, at the beginning of  
44 your presentation, you were mentioning that you  
45 did some intercepts last year after  
46 recommendation from some of the AP members, and  
47 at least for the people here in Florida, there's  
48 a lot ambiguity and vagueness on what can happen

1 as far as where they're allowed to finish.

2 I was recently called probably about  
3 three or four weeks ago about somebody finishing  
4 out of the Keys, maybe outside of the U.S. EEZ  
5 zone that was boarded and had their fish  
6 confiscated.

7 And I was reached out to answer some  
8 questions and I can't seem to find the  
9 appropriate answers for them.

10 And I was wondering if there was any  
11 way we could clarify this issue so that we can  
12 make sure that there's no problem going forward  
13 with any of our fishermen here in Florida  
14 crossing over.

15 As you can tell, as most people know,  
16 some spots it's only 50 miles off the coast.

17 So if you're sword fishing, you could  
18 be literally half a mile on one side and a fish  
19 can drag you over to the other side.

20 And I want to be able to help people  
21 answer their questions properly.

22 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Tim. So --

23 MS. MOORE: Is there an outreach  
24 education goal that you'd like clarification of  
25 legal fishing areas where -- as a U.S. fisherman?  
26 Was that a request?

27 MR. NAVARRO: Yes, ma'am. Well, it's  
28 a little -- it's a little bit of both. I mean,  
29 we hear a lot of conflicting stories.

30 People are running back and forth.  
31 There's no magic line right in the middle of the  
32 ocean.

33 Most people do have GPS, but as you're  
34 chasing dorados and so on and so forth, I know  
35 there was a boat probably after a week after our  
36 springtime HMS meeting last year that was  
37 boarded.

38 And I'm looking through my notes here  
39 and I can't seem to find where his lat and long  
40 is. I did have it somewhere.

41 He was boarded and he had all his  
42 tunas confiscated. He was fishing in a  
43 tournament out of Cape Canaveral and I can give  
44 you the name of the Tournament if that's valuable  
45 to you guys or not.

46 But it was something that people have  
47 called me up about and I'd, again, I'd like to  
48 see something if you have something in writing or

1 somewhere where I can point people.

2 Because most of the people I talk to,  
3 they don't want to break the law. They just want  
4 to go fishing.

5 They're chasing birds. They're going  
6 about their business finding good water to fish  
7 in and then suddenly, they get boarded.

8 So and then -- and then the person  
9 that was supposedly boarded off of, off the Keys,  
10 I believe it was Islamorada, could have been Key  
11 Largo.

12 They were offshore sword fishing, had  
13 harvested a sword fish. I believe they were  
14 fighting a second fish. I could be wrong on that  
15 one.

16 But they were boarded and then their  
17 swordfish was confiscated due to the fact that  
18 they said they were a mile or two across that EEZ  
19 line.

20 MR. BROOKS: Tim, you're saying that  
21 people aren't aware of what the rules are? Or  
22 they just don't understand them? Do you have any  
23 sense of that?

24 MR. NAVARRO: I think it's a little  
25 bit of both. There's a lot of, I mean, I'm going  
26 to be blunt.

27 Communication is not sometimes the  
28 best thing when it comes to some of these rules  
29 and regulations as it goes out.

30 So there's a lot of people that are  
31 unaware of it. And some people aren't familiar  
32 with the actual rule.

33 If they're running around the Gulf  
34 Stream, 26 miles offshore is not very far when  
35 you consider what you're doing off of North  
36 Carolina and New Jersey.

37 You run 26 miles offshore and  
38 suddenly, quote unquote, you're in the Bahamian  
39 EEZ zone.

40 They're catching some dorados, and  
41 suddenly, because they're on the wrong side of a  
42 line, they're a criminal.

43 MR. BROOKS: Okay.

44 MR. NAVARRO: And I'd like some  
45 clarification from LEO and even the board or  
46 anybody that I can point people in the direction,  
47 even if it's just a hyperlink to where these  
48 rules and regulations are.

1                   And I totally understand, I believe,  
2                   Katie, you said you intercepted a boat that had  
3                   some grouper and snapper on it.

4                   That is definitely something that you  
5                   have to anchor up or literally be in Bahamian  
6                   waters, territorial waters, as opposed to the  
7                   economic zone.

8                   MR. BROOKS: Thanks.

9                   MR. DONALDSON: Mr. Pickett, I just  
10                  put something in the chat. If you'll take a look  
11                  at that and if that will meet your needs.

12                  MR. BROOKS: That's actually, just so  
13                  you know, that Fly Navarro talking.

14                  MR. NAVARRO: But thank you for  
15                  calling me Mr. Pickett. I liked him. He's a  
16                  good guy.

17                  MR. DONALDSON: Oh, I'm sorry.

18                  MR. NAVARRO: No, no, it's okay.

19                  MR. DONALDSON: I'm sorry, sir.

20                  MR. NAVARRO: No, no, you did not  
21                  offend me. I liked him. He's a really cool  
22                  dude. He's from here in south Florida as well,  
23                  so I'm good with that.

24                  MR. BROOKS: Tim, did you want to say  
25                  something in the chat?

26                  MR. NAVARRO: And I see the link. He  
27                  did. He put it to all the attendees. I'm going  
28                  to open it up while we're talking here. I'm  
29                  going to try to open it up if my firewall lets  
30                  me.

31                  Continue. Fishermen plead guilty to  
32                  illegal, offers new boat as restitution.

33                  Holy smokes, just look at that  
34                  picture.

35                  MR. BROOKS: Let me let you look at it  
36                  offline, but if you have another question I'll  
37                  bring you back, okay? That works?

38                  MR. NAVARRO: Okay, thank you. I will  
39                  lower my hand as well.

40                  MR. NAVARRO: Now will go to the real  
41                  Tim Pickett.

42                  MR. PICKETT: Thanks. Well, thank you  
43                  for the presentation there and good to see some  
44                  attention's being paid.

45                  So what we discussed in terms of the  
46                  Bahamas stuff and Fly pretty much touched on what  
47                  I was going to mention regarding that.

48                  The one thing I wanted to emphasize,

1 and just like he said, the ambiguity takes place  
2 -- it's all part of the Keys where the bottom  
3 that the daytime sword fishing fleet fishes on.

4 Okay, there's a small portion that  
5 overlaps into the Bahamian waters.

6 And this spread like wildfire. I know  
7 Fly got a bunch of calls, I got a bunch of calls  
8 and stuff like that when that introduction  
9 happened with the guy and the swordfish.

10 He was over the line and I wouldn't  
11 excuse -- you can't ever make ignorance an  
12 excuse, but in this -- in this case, I would say  
13 that it was a wakeup call for a lot of people,  
14 and like Fly said, it's on the chart but maybe a  
15 -- maybe a -- an announcement through the HMS  
16 website or something just showing that little  
17 area.

18 It's around Duck Key, south of Duck  
19 Key there that is over the line, to highlight  
20 that a couple, to the area down there or for the  
21 folks in south Florida.

22 But I think we also need to make a  
23 distinction between an event like that where a  
24 guy is not intending on fishing in the Bahamas  
25 and is over the line and gets caught with a boo  
26 boo, and that's no good thing.

27 And certainly, he should be held  
28 responsible. But that, to me, is a lot more  
29 excusable than something that blatantly and  
30 knowingly breaks the law.

31 There's a different between that guy,  
32 I mean, just from a -- just from a -- I know  
33 brass tacks wise there's no difference, but  
34 there's a major difference between that guy that  
35 was over the line, sword fishing, in and out of  
36 Islamorada during the day, and the guy that ran  
37 to Cay Sal and caught a bunch of bottomfish.

38 Okay? The guy that ran to Cay Sal and  
39 caught a bunch of bottomfish knowingly and  
40 willfully 100 percent broke the law and got  
41 caught.

42 So I think there needs to be a  
43 distinction there. And what -- and what we've  
44 always brought up, and I'm in agreeance with Fly,  
45 we need to clear up the ambiguity of where you  
46 can fish in the keys and where you can't because  
47 it's in Bahamian water.

48 I think some people need that sort of

1 clarification, but we also need to make a  
2 distinction.

3 There are people that run, I mean, not  
4 just over the line like Fly's talking about,  
5 catching a dolphin or whatever, a quarter of a  
6 mile over the line.

7 There's people that are running 50  
8 miles over the line into the channel and going  
9 tuna fishing and coming back in the same day  
10 without checking in.

11 So to me, there a big distinction.  
12 But I think Fly's right, we need to make sure  
13 people know where the line is, which could --  
14 should, I think, intuitively be part of your  
15 responsibility as a boat owner.

16 But I think, especially in that area  
17 down in the keys, because that's a common area  
18 for people to sword fish.

19 And a lot of times, they're  
20 unknowingly over that line. But great  
21 presentation. Glad to see you guys are making  
22 progress and thank you for that.

23 MR. BROOKS: Great, thanks, Tim. Let's  
24 bring in Scott Taylor and then Mike Pierdinock.

25 MR. TAYLOR: So I believe it was  
26 actually last year when we had the discussion  
27 about the yellowfin particularly up there north  
28 of Matanilla shoals and the Bahamian issue.

29 And this issue really is one that is  
30 kind of unique here to south Florida because  
31 really there isn't any other place where we have  
32 this sort of overlap in area.

33 But if you're thinking that the  
34 outreach is working for these people, you are  
35 sorely mistaken for two reasons.

36 I got a phone call as recently as  
37 about, I want to say it was two weeks ago when  
38 Eddie Dwyer ran his tournament out of Cape  
39 Canaveral.

40 Because I had a friend of mine who was  
41 fishing in the tournament, and I basically warned  
42 him about making sure that he stayed out of the  
43 Bahamian EEZ.

44 And he called, wanted to reach out to  
45 me to find out what the -- what the regulations  
46 were as far as boats intruding into that area.

47 The fact of the matter is that area  
48 north of Matanilla shoals is being utilized by

1 these high speed offshore boats, yellowfin  
2 fishing and even blue marlin fishing with  
3 impunity.

4 And it's sort of flies in the face of  
5 all the issues that we have from our sector, but  
6 I disagree with Kenneth's position on the -- with  
7 the technology that we have today.

8 There's virtually not a plotter that  
9 I know or a chart that doesn't clearly show the  
10 EEZ. And it's spelled out in black and white on  
11 the chart.

12 So when people are engaging in that  
13 kind of activity, it's being done clearly with  
14 knowledge and certainly with access that it's  
15 there.

16 And this has been a sore spot for us  
17 for a long time because of the nature of the  
18 closed areas.

19 And if it's good for the goose, it's  
20 sort of good for the gander. But one of the  
21 things that I would suggest is that these tuna  
22 tournaments that are -- that are promoted as the  
23 other side or offshore, they're usually fairly  
24 high profile.

25 It would certainly be easy to reach  
26 out to those tournament operators and make a  
27 quick ear to them about the risk, whatever it was  
28 that happened last year with your interdiction  
29 there.

30 And I believe you did have  
31 interdiction in that tournament. Certainly  
32 didn't seem to act as a deterrent to anybody that  
33 I know of to limit that activity.

34 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Scott. Let's go  
35 to Mike Pierdinock and then to Jeff Oden and then  
36 to Sunny Fordham. Mike?

37 MR. PIERDINOCK: Thank you, Bennett.  
38 Thank you, Bennett. Thank you, Katie.

39 Thank you, Tim. Thank you, Coast  
40 Guard Enforcement, for their continued efforts in  
41 U.S. waters and the high sea.

42 I have two questions. I'll first  
43 start with your details concerning the Mexican  
44 illegal landings.

45 If I have it correct, that was for  
46 sharks and red snapper in your presentation.  
47 Those landings then, are they recorded U.S.  
48 landings or are they Mexican landings?

1           And I ask the question, red snapper  
2 isn't an ICCAT species, but if they're an ICCAT  
3 species, then is there an accounting that we do  
4 with these illegal activities to make sure they  
5 ultimately get recorded, reported, and if they  
6 are ICCAT related sharks, that that is then  
7 recorded?

8           So that's a multiple question. Is it  
9 U.S.? And do they get reported?

10           MS. MOORE: Again, I'll tell you what  
11 we convey over to NOAA. So when we have the  
12 logic cases, we do engage NOAA general counsel  
13 when we move forward with those, when they are  
14 ultimately interdictions.

15           That's when we see the catch, when  
16 they're interdictions. The red snapper as well  
17 as the sharks, we try to give as much catch  
18 information as possible through those case  
19 packages.

20           If there's ever a request from NOAA,  
21 in some of the reports I had worked previously  
22 with Karyl and we funneled that information.

23           So I can't say how NOAA uses it within  
24 any stock assessments. I do know that we also  
25 provide the red snapper information to the Gulf  
26 of Mexico council.

27           And it's based on estimates that we  
28 estimate how many incursions are happening and  
29 then we estimate, or we provide a grand total  
30 estimate if we base it on the average amount of  
31 red snapper that we have per lancha interdiction.

32           So I hope that that -- Coast Guard is  
33 not the expert on fishery statistics, and I'm not  
34 sure how NOAA uses that in their decision making.

35           But we do convey the information and  
36 when asked we also -- we also give it. But I  
37 know that it's always not the most well perceived  
38 because sometimes Coast Guard some calculations  
39 and we're not the fish experts. We're the  
40 fisheries enforcement.

41           (Simultaneous speaking.)

42           MR. BROOKS: Mike, I just want to see  
43 if anyone -- I just want to see if anyone had  
44 anything to add to that.

45           MR. PIERDINOCK: Sorry. Additional  
46 questions concerning that before? Yes, thank  
47 you, Bennett.

48           So I just kind of sit here and scratch



1 my head and hope that for instance that Mexican  
2 vessel didn't come into U.S. waters and catch a  
3 mako, catch the species that then we have issues  
4 with already and we've done tremendous mortality  
5 reduction measures and then now the U.S. has to  
6 record it.

7 But then if they're doing this to  
8 these species, then is there ever any recording  
9 and is there ever any accountability at the ICCAT  
10 level?

11 Red snapper's another issue. There's  
12 been tremendous progress with that species. I  
13 hope there wasn't thousands of pounds that then  
14 were taken from our waters.

15 So that's the one question. Then I'll  
16 get into the next one and I'll be as brief as  
17 possible.

18 The one with the Trinidad and Tobago,  
19 the flag state, that's where the vessels  
20 register, if I understand properly.

21 So what country is this? And wow, I  
22 continue every day to get confused with ICCAT and  
23 so on, accountability.

24 So you go to Trinidad and Tobago  
25 which, it actually may be another country that  
26 has that vessel.

27 I get back to it once again. You  
28 indicated a species allocation exceedance. Who  
29 is accountable?

30 Is that being recorded? Are we  
31 following that and are we following that it ever  
32 gets recorded at ICCAT or if it's an ICCAT  
33 related species?

34 And then what species was there an  
35 allocation exceedance on for that vessel?  
36 Thanks.

37 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Mike.

38 MS. MOORE: Sure, I will -- I will say  
39 that when I provide information on domestic  
40 vessels, I try not to give the fishing vessel  
41 name because those are possible violations that  
42 have to run through the entire adjudication  
43 process.

44 So what I shared about full always is  
45 a potential IUU. It's suspected, but it's not  
46 concerned.

47 So I think that maybe where we are in  
48 it, and because it is a long process. So it was

1 not flagged to Trinidad and Tobago.

2 Trinidad and Tobago were actually  
3 extremely cooperative. This was a vessel flag to  
4 Taiwan, and Taiwan was actually very great, very  
5 responsive, quickly responsive to our request.

6 Wanted all information possible to  
7 continue looking into it forward. So the next  
8 port call was slated for Trinidad.

9 So with international efforts, through  
10 NOAA OLE and international affairs, we reached  
11 out to Trinidad and they stepped up and said,  
12 yeah, we'll inspect and we'll share the results  
13 of that inspection.

14 So we did get the results of the  
15 inspection. A vessel, through the use of an  
16 interpreter when Coast Guard was on scene and we  
17 asked our questions because we aren't allowed to  
18 Board, we received information that gave us  
19 indications that there was a bluefin tuna on  
20 board.

21 But after looking at what Taiwan is  
22 authorized to do, we took that with a grain of  
23 salt and we relied on their inspection shoreside  
24 to really convey what's on board, because it's so  
25 dependent on what is the catch species, what  
26 quota has been issued, and the fishing trip  
27 wasn't over.

28 So Trinidad and Tobago did share the  
29 results of their inspection with the United  
30 States as well as to the flag state, and so that  
31 information, ultimately, our goal is to have that  
32 in front of ICCAT for enforcement to see if there  
33 was a violation of it.

34 Some of the species, it relies on  
35 internal flag state, allocation of buy/catch. So  
36 without having high seas boarding production in  
37 place and boarding there, it is very difficult to  
38 really know if an IUU violation occurred or not.

39 So I want to say, if I stated it was  
40 explicitly IUU definitely, it really has to run  
41 through the entire process, even going to ICCAT  
42 and then going through the PWG and compliance  
43 committee to then list it.

44 Last year with the signings we had, I  
45 took nine months for that full process to happen  
46 and the actual IUU vessel listing to occur.

47 So Taiwan was a great partner, is open  
48 to the results, and we're still working this.

1 Trinidad was exceptional as a port state for  
2 inspection, very transparent.

3 And it is very convoluted because it's  
4 all contingent on flag state, what is their  
5 standing in our ICCAT?

6 Because Taiwan isn't even, it's a  
7 cooperating partner. It's not a contracting  
8 partner.

9 So it gets -- and so the operation we  
10 did out of South America, we're still reviewing  
11 the sightings from that.

12 This is the one that was the most  
13 actionable sighting. So it's a busy time. It's  
14 really busy.

15 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Katie. Randy, do  
16 you want to jump in on this at all? I saw that  
17 your camera came on.

18 MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yeah, I thought I  
19 might, but Katie did a fantastic job of just  
20 walking through all the complexities there.

21 MR. BROOKS: Okay.

22 MR. BLANKINSHIP: The only other thing  
23 that Mike was asking about was related to the  
24 Mexican interdictions and what might happen there  
25 with those species.

26 And my own personal experience with  
27 that, having worked in South Texas in the  
28 Brownsville area, and having seen some of the  
29 confiscated catch from some of those Mexican  
30 lannchas, is that the nature of those fisheries  
31 are much closer to shore than most of the ICCAT  
32 species would occur, but that does not mean that  
33 there's not some mako in there historically.

34 So I don't know about exactly all the  
35 details there, but I think Katie really did a  
36 nice job of walking through all that.

37 MR. BROOKS: Okay. Thanks. Scott,  
38 you have a quick follow-up question for Tim. If  
39 it's really quick, please jump in, and then I  
40 really want to get to Jeff and Sonya and then get  
41 some other comments. Scott?

42 MR. TAYLOR: Just real quick. And I  
43 just wanted to say to Katie, I certainly  
44 appreciate everything that the Coast Guard does.

45 I know that your effort is, your task  
46 is a monumental one and isn't about desire or  
47 lack of effort.

48 But my question is to Tim. In your

1 presentation, Tim, you mentioned something about  
2 working on some observer issues.

3 Would you mind just elaborating on  
4 that to the extent that you can? And how that  
5 really plays into enforcement?

6 MR. BROOKS: You're on mute, Tim.  
7 Tim, you're on mute.

8 MR. DONALDSON: Scott, I'm sorry, I  
9 can't talk more on those cases, but again, that  
10 is a priority for the Office of Law Enforcement,  
11 observers and their safety.

12 So open cases, that's it. Fair  
13 enough?

14 MR. BROOKS: Fair enough. All right,  
15 let's go to Jeff Oden. Jeff?

16 MR. ODEN: Good afternoon. Couple  
17 questions for Katie and perhaps a suggestion for  
18 the kind of tools or this body as well.

19 Katie, could you possibly tell me what  
20 the percentage of interactions between Coast  
21 Guard boardings on commercial versus  
22 recreational?

23 Is there a percentage or any -- can  
24 you give me a figure on that? A rough figure?

25 MS. MOORE: For HMS, specifically, the  
26 relative numbers are --

27 MR. ODEN: Across the board.

28 MS. MOORE: I'll have to get back to  
29 you on that one. I only provided the HMS  
30 boardings here. So I'll look at it and try to  
31 text you during this meeting to the group.

32 MR. ODEN: A second question, proper  
33 identification is, I'm sure, necessary for the  
34 Coast Guard to figure out what in a given day is  
35 necessary for them to interact with.

36 And as I think we all know, anybody  
37 with a -- with a federal permit is supposed to  
38 have 10-inch letters affixed to the vessel, and I  
39 would assume that would be year-end.

40 Is that a proper guess or -- it's my  
41 understanding, I've got a -- if I've got to have  
42 10-inch letters, documentation numbers, or state  
43 affixed numbers to have a commercial permit, a  
44 federal permit, and for identification.

45 That's my understanding, always has  
46 been. Am I correct in that? Can one of the two  
47 of you tell me that?

48 And is there a fine if you don't have

1 and are selling species? Because it definitely  
2 plays into what we see.

3 I see vessels that I know are selling  
4 fish every day get overlooked and we get boarded  
5 right and left. And it certainly matters.

6 Kind of upsetting knowing that we --  
7 others get overlooked when we're in the  
8 crosshairs.

9 MR. BROOKS: Katie or Tim, do you want  
10 to jump in on any of that?

11 MS. MOORE: Well, I'm not positive  
12 that I know the answer to that, but I think it  
13 came up before.

14 The question was, if someone is  
15 operating in what appears to be a commercial ship  
16 then does it appear to have the right vessel  
17 numbering? That was the question on that one, I  
18 think?

19 MR. ODEN: Yeah, it is, and --

20 MS. MOORE: Okay, I think that came up  
21 before and Brad McHale was really good at having  
22 that really handy, so I'd just reach out to him  
23 and see if he has it.

24 I think your question was, is that  
25 person getting fined if they sell but they lack  
26 the numbering size?

27 And I would say that's a case that I  
28 honestly, that's not triggering anything for me.

29 So I think your point may be, if  
30 you're operating in a commercial status, you need  
31 to have the right vessel identification  
32 information, and I think this kind of relates to  
33 what has come up in the past and even at this  
34 meeting.

35 You need to have the right safety  
36 equipment if you're in a commercial capacity. So  
37 I think if that's your point, well received, and  
38 our goal is treat all components of the fishery  
39 equally, and that's why our boarding targets are  
40 looked at for every component of the fishery,  
41 because that's --

42 MR. ODEN: Can I make --

43 MS. MOORE: Yes.

44 MR. ODEN: Can I make one suggestion?  
45 Either the Council representatives listen or  
46 members of this staff.

47 I mentioned yesterday the Paperwork  
48 Reduction Act, and the last thing I want to do is

1 have to do another aggravating photo or add  
2 another thing to my package there when I'm  
3 sending my permits.

4 But it would certainly be nice to have  
5 a photo of every vessel with the numbers on the  
6 side of it along with the package with your  
7 documentation numbers, and all that stuff that  
8 you have that are in with the permit package.

9 And I think every Council should be  
10 requiring that because there are a lot of vessels  
11 getting overlooked that are just slipping under  
12 the radar and it's kind of concerning to us.  
13 Anyway, thank you for your time.

14 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Jeff. I want to  
15 get to Sonya and I also want to note in the chat,  
16 several people have weighed in supporting, I  
17 think it was Mike Pierdinock's comment around  
18 people have good information on their -- on their  
19 vessels and there's kind of no excuse for not  
20 knowing where you are.

21 And there were two people in the chat  
22 who gave a thumbs up to that.

23 I just wanted to note that there was  
24 a comment from Kristen Foss saying that FWC has a  
25 website with that information outlining some of  
26 these regulations as well, so that's another  
27 resources that's out there.

28 I do want to get to Sonya. Brad, I  
29 noticed you turned your camera on. Did you want  
30 to weigh in on anything right now in this  
31 conversation?

32 You're on -- you're on mute, Brad.  
33 Still on mute. Brad, you're on mute. On mute.  
34 All right, I'm going to go to -- let me go to  
35 Sonya, see if you can work on that.

36 Sonya, I'll let you jump in and then  
37 we will go to public comment.

38 MS. FORDHAM: All right, thank you,  
39 and thanks for the presentation. Obviously, the  
40 chronic illegal shark fishing incursion by  
41 Mexican vessels continue to be a real concern.

42 Like Randy, I have the impression, not  
43 as an eyewitness, but from previous reports, that  
44 the shark catch in these cases was mostly coastal  
45 sharks, but if there are any makos, I'd love to  
46 hear about that, if someone can alert me.

47 I'm just recalling that the U.S. did  
48 identify Mexico I guess at least twice, or twice,

1 for these kind of incursions under the High Seas  
2 Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act for  
3 shark issues in 2017, and NOAA reported that  
4 there were some actions taken and they got a  
5 positive certification again in 2019. They're on  
6 the naughty list again.

7 And just looking over the 2019 report  
8 to Congress, it does look like NOAA is  
9 recognizing and expressing frustration that this  
10 is a continuing problem and not to mention -- not  
11 to mention an expensive one, and that they were  
12 going to continue to hold consultations and were  
13 looking specifically for measurable improvements.

14 So I also stumbled upon the idea, and  
15 you'll have to just correct me, either NOAA or  
16 Katie, if this is still correct given COVID.

17 Is the 2021 report to Congress due any  
18 day now? Like June 1?

19 And are there any hints or information  
20 we can get about how Mexico is shaking out? Sort  
21 of how close are we to escalating the response in  
22 terms of sanctions or something else? Thank you.

23 MR. BROOKS: Thank you.

24 MS. MOORE: You say Coast Guard  
25 provides an opinion, and I think you couched it  
26 the right way, that the input is in draft and the  
27 goal is for Mexico to demonstrate progress.

28 So I think you've couched it the right  
29 way, that the United States had been working with  
30 Mexico to try to address the problem, has  
31 identified that it has not yet been resolved.

32 And in the past, just as a reminder,  
33 we did have a port denial of Mexican fishing  
34 vessels because of the Mexican lancha problems.

35 So that is within the toolkit to not  
36 only impact the ability to make port calls, but  
37 there is a bigger toolbox by the United States  
38 government to which we could create impact to  
39 Mexico.

40 So I don't know the date it's supposed  
41 to be released. It is not a Coast Guard product,  
42 but I think you couched it the right way, that  
43 we've been working on it for some time.

44 It's an ongoing issue, and last year  
45 the numbers were just crazy high still. So --

46 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Okay. And just  
47 to correct myself, it was Scott Taylor who  
48 mentioned that comment, not Mike. Sorry about

1 that.

2 All right. I think we should move to  
3 public comment at this point unless, Brad, you  
4 wanted to try to come back in?

5 If not, I just want to thank Tim and  
6 Katie for their presentations and discussions.  
7 It's always obviously an important issue here and  
8 appreciated. Yeah, Brad, go ahead.

9 Okay, well, you can always throw it in  
10 the chat, Brad, if that's helpful. Then we can  
11 fold it in.

12 All right. Well, thanks again, Katie.  
13 I appreciate it very much. At this point, I want  
14 to get to public comment.

15 Jeff Bogan, if you wouldn't mind  
16 lowering your hand just so I know that you've  
17 been covered.

18 And at this point, I want to invite  
19 any member of the public, anyone who's not a  
20 member of the panel who wants to weigh in on  
21 anything that was talked about today or any other  
22 issues that are -- you would like HMS staff to  
23 hear or be thinking about, this would be the  
24 moment to do so.

25 What we ask is to just raise your  
26 virtual hand so we know you want to get into the  
27 mix.

28 And if for some reason you can't do  
29 that, just throw something in the chat so we can  
30 see that you want to be talking.

31 We ask folks to limit their remarks to  
32 three minutes or so just so that there's always  
33 sufficient time for everyone to weigh in, though  
34 that has not been a big issue this meeting.

35 And then just to remind you, this is,  
36 public comment is really an opportunity for the  
37 public to talk about what's on their mind and for  
38 HMS to hear that it's not structured as a back  
39 and forth.

40 If it's a quick clarifying question  
41 that HMS staff can answer, absolutely, they'll be  
42 happy to do that.

43 Just so we understand what we're --  
44 what's helpful to the -- to the HMS folks at this  
45 point.

46 So with that, let's start, and if you  
47 could start with your name and any affiliation so  
48 we know who's talking, that would be great.



1                   So Mariah Pfleger, you're up first.

2                   MS. PFLEGER: Hey, can you hear me?

3                   MR. BROOKS: Yes, I can. Thank you.

4                   MS. PFLEGER: Awesome, thank you. My  
5 name is Mariah Pfleger. I'm from Oceana. First,  
6 I just want to thank everybody for your  
7 presentations.

8                   They're always super helpful and  
9 informative. So thank you. And I'll try and be  
10 quick with my comments.

11                   But I wanted to echo Sonya's concerns  
12 about the SHARE presentation yesterday.  
13 Unfortunately, I couldn't stick around for public  
14 comments then, so, you get me now.

15                   I have quite a big concern with the  
16 framing of the presentation, particularly with  
17 framing outside factors beyond HMS's management  
18 authority as concerns, and kind of successes  
19 versus concerns table you have.

20                   As you guys know, there's lots of  
21 stakeholders involved in natural resources  
22 management, more than just consumptive users, and  
23 I think their opinions and actions probably  
24 shouldn't be framed as concerns in terms of the  
25 management of the fishery.

26                   I also want to echo comments yesterday  
27 about sharing concerns that the agency's  
28 considering the status of stocks somehow separate  
29 from the status of the fishery.

30                   Obviously, these two things, as you  
31 guys know, inherently go hand in hand and you  
32 can't really have healthy fisheries without  
33 healthy stocks.

34                   So moving forward in the SHARE  
35 document, I would like to see those two things  
36 kind of integrated.

37                   On Page 11 of that presentation, you  
38 showed the number of sharks harvested  
39 recreationally versus the number that were  
40 released.

41                   I imagine the point of that graph is  
42 to show that the vast majority of sharks are  
43 released rather than harvested, but it would be  
44 really great if you guys could include something  
45 in the longer document about some kind of an  
46 estimate of post-release mortalities so we know  
47 that recreational fight time can have a super big  
48 impact on some species and the health of the

1 shark at release.

2           Regarding shortfin mako that we've  
3 talked a lot about in this meeting, yesterday it  
4 was said that ICCAT has a range of advice  
5 regarding what to do with the stock.

6           But I just want to clarify that  
7 although ICCAT scientists presented a range of  
8 catch levels associated with probabilities of  
9 rebuilding, the central management advice from  
10 the scientists for that stock is actually a  
11 retention dam. And I think they made that pretty  
12 clear.

13           And then lastly, regarding the same  
14 shark issue, regarding the economics of the  
15 fisheries, I think it would be really interesting  
16 if the longer SHARE document could include some  
17 kind of info about the U.S. consumers' desire to  
18 eat meat, shark meat, if possible.

19           I don't really know if there's a there  
20 there, but I think it would be just really  
21 interest to kind of know that. And that's it.  
22 Thank you.

23           MR. BROOKS: Thanks so much. I have  
24 a couple people who sent chats because they  
25 couldn't find the raise hand, so let's go to  
26 Merry Camhi and then Hannah Medd and then to  
27 Andrea Treece.

28           All right, Merry, why don't you come  
29 in?

30           MS. CAMHI: Hi. Thank you for taking  
31 my comments and I'll try to speak quickly. I'm  
32 Merry Camhi and I'm the director of the New York  
33 Seascape Program, which is the conservation  
34 program at the Wildlife Society's New York  
35 Aquarium, Coney Island.

36           The Wildlife Society works with marine  
37 conservation in 23 countries around the world,  
38 and we promote shark fisheries management almost  
39 any place we work.

40           Currently, here in New York, my  
41 program is conducting telemetry studies to look  
42 at how sharks are using our local waters, both  
43 makos, sand tigers, and a number of other  
44 species.

45           We also operate four zoos and the  
46 aquarium in New York City. In 2018, we opened a  
47 new state of the art exhibit on sharks to  
48 introduce the public to the diversity and the

1 ecology and the wonders of sharks, skates, and  
2 rays right here in our backyard.

3 But we're also a part of a consortium  
4 of U.S. aquariums called the Aquarium  
5 Conservation Partnership, or ACP for short.

6 And ACP is a membership of 25  
7 aquariums in 19 states. In addition to trying to  
8 inspire more than 25 million visitors a year with  
9 the wonders of our ocean, we are also working  
10 together to take conservation action in a variety  
11 of our wildlife and habitats issues.

12 And so for example, ACP recently  
13 submitted a letter to the U.S. ICCAT Advisory  
14 Committee urging the U.S. to support ICCAT  
15 science and to ban retention of sharks and makos  
16 in ICCAT fisheries.

17 And that brings me to my next concern  
18 about the SHARE report also. I have concerns  
19 about the lack of efforts to the conservation  
20 community.

21 It's surprising and disturbing to see  
22 reference to international bodies like ICCAT and  
23 CITES where NOAA has actually been an extremely  
24 active player over the past years as "outside"  
25 forces.

26 In multiple ways, U.S. leadership in  
27 these arenas has really helped level the playing  
28 field of shark fisheries management conservation.

29 For example, the hammerhead and  
30 oceanic whitetip listings at CITES, which the  
31 U.S. led in 2013, helped bring the countries,  
32 other countries, up to U.S. standards of  
33 management and protection for those species.

34 And without CITES, these species would  
35 largely be going unmanaged. And in some  
36 countries they are getting some manner of  
37 protection.

38 So for the record, I and most of my  
39 shark colleagues really have touted the U.S. as a  
40 leader in global shark fisheries management  
41 conservation and we have for decades, and agree  
42 that the U.S. professional and recreational  
43 fishermen are important players in this.

44 As a conservation stakeholder who  
45 really supports sustainable fisheries, WCS will  
46 continue for the U.S. to be a progressive leader  
47 until these populations recover.

48 In some cases, and here I'm talking

1 particularly about the North Atlantic mako, the  
2 U.S. is not leading.

3 In fact, we're more of an impediment  
4 of moving the status of the stock. ICCAT is  
5 clear, the science is clear, that makos are  
6 facing a lot of trouble.

7 And we even see this in our own  
8 research, tracking tagged makos, and the anglers  
9 that we talked to are also very disheartened  
10 about the status of these, of sharks and access  
11 to them over the past decades up here.

12 So particularly, and I'll finish with  
13 this, we are troubled to see that the U.S. is  
14 insisting on an exception to the advice for  
15 protection of banning makos.

16 Although we're impressed that Spain  
17 and Portugal instituted mako bans based on their  
18 studies obligations, the conservation community  
19 is still most definitely not praising the EU on  
20 their position that mako actually went to the  
21 contrary, relentlessly highlighting that the EU  
22 is also an obstacle to the advised ban, and  
23 especially given their role in the ecosystem.

24 So I know I'm running out of time. I  
25 will thank you there and talk to you more in the  
26 future.

27 MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks. Thanks,  
28 Merry. Let's go to Hannah Medd and then we'll go  
29 to Andrea Treece. Hannah?

30 MS. MEDD: Hi, thank you so much. My  
31 name's Hannah Medd and I am a researcher with the  
32 American Shark Conservancy.

33 I'm down here in sunny south Florida.  
34 So thank you for the opportunity to speak.  
35 Obviously, I'll try to keep it brief. I know  
36 it's been a long couple of days for everyone.

37 And thank you, as well, for the great  
38 presentations, information. It's great to keep  
39 updated on everything.

40 So I wanted to comment quickly on some  
41 of the shark issues that were discussed over the  
42 past few days.

43 We're focused -- I just finished up a  
44 panel with the FWC on the issue of depredation at  
45 their latest commissioners meeting.

46 So it's a panel kind of representing  
47 a bunch of different groups, research  
48 conservation and charter boats and a commercial

1 -- a commercial -- I think he was an owner of one  
2 of the fish houses.

3 But as a researcher and conservation  
4 group, was pretty prevalent in the public sector  
5 as well.

6 We do a lot of outreach and education  
7 and we talk to -- we kind of are in the middle of  
8 a lot of different stakeholders.

9 We work with a whole bunch of  
10 different stakeholders, including dive and  
11 fishing commercial and recreational.

12 We do recognize that this is an  
13 important issue for the fishers that make their  
14 money from the commercial harvest or running  
15 these charters.

16 We just want to continue to urge that  
17 any movement forward focus on evidence-based  
18 decisions.

19 It was really good to hear Marcus  
20 Drymon speak up about the research he's managed  
21 to get funded, they're taking over in the Gulf.

22 But we just really want to see a lot  
23 more scientific effort, ideally co-produced with  
24 the industry, into determining the extent,  
25 frequency, and species involved in these  
26 interactions.

27 The statement that, especially down  
28 here in Florida, that there's increased  
29 interactions means that there's too many sharks  
30 and the only solution therefore is to remove  
31 sharks, I think we all know that that's too  
32 simplified and kind of uninformed.

33 So depending on who you talk to,  
34 there's several species named as the culprit in  
35 these interactions and they have different life  
36 history strategies, which we're all aware of as  
37 well.

38 Some don't have stock assessments,  
39 which are crucial to the decision making process.  
40 So I want to reiterate, I think Bob Hueter put  
41 some closing comments in the chat on Wednesday  
42 that many of these species identified by  
43 fisherman, and again, keeping in mind,  
44 misidentification is an issue across the  
45 industries, the time scale for recovery and  
46 rebounding for many species are several decades.

47 So it's imperative to do the  
48 groundwork to identify the species and have

1 accurate stock assessments before assuming that  
2 increasing the take is the -- is the only  
3 solution or answer.

4 And kind of echoing the last two  
5 speakers, comments, like to support the statement  
6 that we do recognize that this division falls  
7 under the Department of Commerce, but the  
8 management of natural resources does require the  
9 integration of all stakeholders' input.

10 And it just seemed that the SHARE  
11 report did reflect a pretty narrow view focusing  
12 on the industry.

13 And so we're really looking forward to  
14 seeing the report as a whole and getting as many  
15 diverse stakeholders involved in that process.

16 And for any chance, obviously, of  
17 sustainability. And just as well, our work here  
18 in Florida is mostly with the recreational  
19 fishery, a lot of catch and release and a lot of  
20 post-release mortality, which -- data which are  
21 missing, and we'd just really like to see that  
22 supported, the collection of that information  
23 supported and some more accuracy in the  
24 recreational reporting overall, we think are  
25 pretty, especially here in Florida, are pretty --  
26 are pretty crucial to moving things forward  
27 sustainably.

28 So thank you for your time.

29 MR. BROOKS: Thank you. Thanks so  
30 much. I've got three more member of the public  
31 who want to weigh in here, Andrea Treece and  
32 Cassandra, no last name, so I don't know what it  
33 is, and then Glenn Delaney.

34 So, Andrea, please go ahead.

35 MS. TREECE: Hi, thanks for -- thanks  
36 for having me. I'm Andrea Treece, I'm a senior  
37 attorney with the Earth Justice Oceans Program.

38 And also wanted to weigh in on the  
39 agency's SHARE presentation from yesterday. We  
40 are concerned, basically, that the thrust of this  
41 program seems to be, the focus seems to be on  
42 increasing shark fishing and mortality, which,  
43 with all respect, seems to be the exact wrong  
44 direction for the agency to be going in.

45 Particularly looking at the 2020  
46 Status of Stocks Report, the majority of stocks  
47 under HMS management are listed as unknown in  
48 status, and there are also a number of species

1 that are overfished and are experiencing  
2 overfishing that are either in need of rebuilding  
3 plans or are in rebuilding plans, and  
4 particularly, the ones in rebuilding plans are in  
5 need of progress checks to determine whether  
6 they're making adequate progress checks to  
7 determine whether they're making adequate  
8 progress towards their building as required under  
9 the Magnuson Act.

10 So given all of those, all the  
11 uncertainty, and all of those sort of science and  
12 management needs that are not being met  
13 currently, just trying to increase fishing on  
14 such sort stocks seems to be the wrong focus.

15 The agency really needs to focus the  
16 limited resources it has on meeting the  
17 conservation management duties under NS1.

18 What that would entail would be  
19 getting a handle on these stocks, how many -- how  
20 many various stocks for the ones that are in  
21 rebuilding plans, how they're making out with  
22 progress.

23 For the ones that are not yet, that  
24 need rebuilding plans but aren't in them,  
25 developing those plans.

26 And if anything, we think that the  
27 agency should consider prohibiting fishing for  
28 stocks that are listed as unknown until it can  
29 get a handle on what the status of those stocks  
30 are, what their dynamics are, and what they can  
31 sustain.

32 So just in sum, really urge the agency  
33 to change the direction that it seems to be going  
34 in and its focus of this effort to really ensure  
35 that it is meeting its primary duties to conserve  
36 these stocks and manage them sustainably.

37 MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Thanks, Andrea.  
38 I'll get the name right next time. Let's go over  
39 to Cassandra.

40 MS. SCOTT: Hi, there. I just want to  
41 say thank you all. My name is Cassandra Scott.  
42 I am just a diver down here in south Florida, but  
43 I just want to say thank you all for going  
44 through all these long days of meetings and all  
45 your presentations.

46 And they're very important topics, and  
47 especially the one that has been talked about the  
48 past couple commenters, the sharks.

1                   And we're seeing a lot of that, issues  
2 with that down here. A lot of the fisheries are  
3 complaining that there is more sharks and I know  
4 it's been creating a lot of noise and a lot of  
5 urgency to do something about it.

6                   And I know it's a really complex  
7 issue. I would just love to say that I'd love to  
8 see more research to get more data before any  
9 options of reducing the numbers of sharks, before  
10 that were to happen.

11                   And I just really support moving  
12 forward in conservation efforts that you guys  
13 have really put into place and I know there's --  
14 I'm not the only one.

15                   I know there's a lot more people down  
16 here who are divers and really want to see the  
17 conservation efforts moving forward and keeping  
18 our oceans nice and healthy.

19                   And I know that we've also seen lots  
20 of sharks with bullet holes in them, and that's  
21 also a growing concern because it seems to be  
22 throughout the years just increasing a lot more  
23 than we ever think.

24                   So I just want to say I'd love to see  
25 a lot more research to get more data going on  
26 before something like that were to be thought  
27 about. But thank you.

28                   MR. BROOKS: Thank so much, Cassandra.  
29 Last up, I think we've got Glenn Delaney.

30                   GLENN DELANEY: Can you hear me?

31                   MR. BROOKS: Yes, we can, Glenn.

32                   GLENN DELANEY: Good. Glenn Delaney,  
33 Bluewater Fishermen's Association. With respect  
34 to the Mexican incursions into U.S. waters, it's  
35 been quite a frustrating and long-standing  
36 problem.

37                   We're not making any progress and  
38 consultations as were mentioned under the High  
39 Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act,  
40 have really yielded no result.

41                   They just keep dragging us along and  
42 it's kind of a rope-a-dope situation and the  
43 situation gets worse.

44                   We have in that same statute, we have  
45 the authority to take much more aggressive  
46 measures if the U.S. would just simply move  
47 forward with certifying, giving Mexico a negative  
48 certification under that statute, which would



1 authorize, yes, it would authorize the denial of  
2 port privileges, but I don't see that as being an  
3 effective response.

4 What we've seen that's effective with  
5 Mexico is when we deny them access to the U.S.  
6 seafood market.

7 We can go back to the use of this  
8 statute for addressing the vaquita problem, also  
9 the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which involved,  
10 we just very recently saw using what we call the  
11 609, Section 609 Authority, against Mexico for  
12 their failure to use turtle excluder devices in  
13 their shrimp fisheries that are comparable to  
14 that of the U.S. and whacked them with a trade  
15 sanction, and boy, did we get a response from  
16 Mexico.

17 They were falling all over themselves  
18 to fix the problem and make sure they have TEDs  
19 operating in the shrimp fisheries.

20 The High Seas Driftnet Fishing  
21 Moratorium Protection Act, Section 1826(b)3 and  
22 4, for that matter, allows us to prohibit imports  
23 of fish and fish products from nations that we  
24 issue a negative certification to.

25 And NOAA has resisted year after year  
26 moving forward and implementing that authority.  
27 Again, Mexico responds to loss of access to our  
28 seafood market.

29 Trade sanctions work. We've  
30 demonstrated that with Mexico. We need to move  
31 forward with that.

32 And I hope the Coast Guard will  
33 support them. At sea interdictions are not  
34 getting the job done.

35 As good a job as the Coast Guard tries  
36 to do, they're overwhelmed with the problem.

37 And that's enough on that. But  
38 secondly I just, I'll very quickly put on my U.S.  
39 ICCAT commissioner hat and once again encourage  
40 folks that are concerned about the U.S. stance on  
41 North Atlantic shortfin mako at ICCAT to please  
42 go take the time to read more carefully, if you  
43 haven't read it.

44 Read it, and the U.S. proposal this  
45 year, number PA4-007, is posted on the ICCAT  
46 website under the Panel 4 Meeting page and all  
47 the documents have been filed or listed there,  
48 including the U.S. proposal, Section 3, EC,

1 meaning each ICCAT member will take steps to  
2 immediately reduce its annual catch of North  
3 Atlantic shortfin mako by at least 85 percent  
4 from the average of the 2013-2015 catch levels,  
5 beginning next year.

6 The U.S. has already achieved an 85  
7 percent reduction, I might not. Section 4,  
8 unless and until the catch reductions are  
9 achieved at 85 percent reduction, ICCAT nations  
10 shall prohibit retaining on board or landing, in  
11 full or in part, mako caught in association with  
12 ICCAT fisheries.

13 Now, the next section, 5, seems to be  
14 what people are getting hung up on, but it says  
15 that those nations that achieve and maintain the  
16 85 percent reduction, only then are they allowed  
17 to invoke two exceptions.

18 One is that if the shark is dead at  
19 haul back to the vessel, you can retain it, or if  
20 it is at least the minimum sizes for males and  
21 females and are more relevant to the recreational  
22 fisher.

23 But the nation has had to already had  
24 achieved an 85 percent reduction in mortality,  
25 which is not what a simple, no retention measure  
26 would achieve.

27 The U.S. proposal exceeds what a no  
28 retention alone achieves in terms of mortality  
29 reduction.

30 Read the SCRS science and understand  
31 this, because this proposal and the U.S. stance  
32 continues to be mischaracterized.

33 It's unfortunate because we should all  
34 be working together to try to convince the EU and  
35 Canada and other fishing nations to get on board  
36 with the approach taken by the U.S., which is far  
37 more effective than the other proposals issued by  
38 other nations on the table this year.

39 Thank you very much.

40 MR. COOPER: Sorry, Bennett, we can't  
41 hear you. Still.

42 MR. BROOKS: Sorry, I need to take  
43 myself off of mute. We have one more public  
44 commenter, Steven Trbovich, if we can take him  
45 off of mute. There we go. Thanks.

46 MR. TRBOVICH: All right, thank you,  
47 Bennett. You actually won the award for  
48 pronouncing that right, first time out of the

1 box.

2 I would just like to echo, Ken Ahmed  
3 already covered some of the comments I had  
4 covering the SHARE presentation yesterday.

5 I was a little concerned that it  
6 seemed to be primarily focused around this doom  
7 and gloom. There's not enough participation in  
8 this fishery. I think -- I know -- I realize  
9 that, as people have noted, the agency is, NOAA  
10 is under the Department of Commerce.

11 You do have a mandate to run the  
12 fisheries at their -- get the maximum sustainable  
13 yield out of fisheries, but there is a point  
14 where you do have to wonder, like, how much are  
15 you going to push this fishery that is apparently  
16 not making enough of a profit to encourage  
17 participation, especially given that, as Dr.  
18 Hueter commented, there is a lot of history  
19 behind this fishery and in particular, one of the  
20 things that hooked it back in the 80s was indeed  
21 NOAA making a push to promote shark fisheries to  
22 take as a quote unquote underutilized resources.

23 So I would just like to echo what some  
24 other commenters said. Please use the science on  
25 this. Make sure you have good stock assessments  
26 before making any management decisions.

27 We really don't want to get to that  
28 period where some people have commented, part of  
29 the reason we're having some degradation  
30 complaints is most of the people who are in  
31 fisheries these days have not been in there, were  
32 not in there in the days before that fishery  
33 essentially collapsed.

34 So what's looking like an explosion of  
35 sharks now is just actually getting back to  
36 normal.

37 And really, some of these comments  
38 that have been made about, we need to control  
39 these populations by increasing the fishery's  
40 take, that not how apex predator management  
41 works.

42 That's never been something that works  
43 out well. So I would just caution you to go with  
44 the science and kind of take some of these  
45 depredation comments with a grain of salt. And  
46 that concludes my comments.

47 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Steven.  
48 Appreciate it. So I think that is all we have

1 for public comments. So thanks to all of you who  
2 have hung in there for over several days here and  
3 shared your thoughts with us.

4 So at this point, I think we want to  
5 wrap up a couple things that I just want to note  
6 before we close for the afternoon.

7 One, there are a few next steps that  
8 I've captured over the last three days, not a  
9 particularly long list.

10 But from the first day, a strong sort  
11 of ask from agency staff for folks to look at the  
12 environment impact statement associated with A13,  
13 that there's a lot of important context and  
14 background information and rationale there that  
15 wasn't part of the presentation.

16 And so having folks take a look at  
17 that and weigh in on that, so that can inform any  
18 comments submitted was called as a next step.

19 Yesterday, there was an ask for the  
20 agency to consider looking at the turtle  
21 certification process and whether that could  
22 either be changed from three years to five years,  
23 and/or whether something like that could be done  
24 online.

25 Today, there were a couple of specific  
26 next steps. One was just to, once the Deep Water  
27 Horizon Oceanic Fish Restoration Project Report  
28 is released, I think it's in the next few days or  
29 weeks to get that out to the AP to provide any  
30 links that lay out the rules for that sort of  
31 Bahamian/Keys zone that seems to be a source of  
32 confusion for some, to get that out.

33 And then there was a request to Katie  
34 Moore here early this afternoon to, if possible,  
35 provide information on the percentage of  
36 interactions, commercial versus recreation, that  
37 was broadly not just HMS.

38 Those are the sort of very specific  
39 steps that I had. Just looking ahead, this is  
40 the last day of the Advisory Panel meeting.

41 Because we haven't been together  
42 enough this week, we have an extra credit day  
43 tomorrow.

44 We have the HMS recreational  
45 roundtable, which will focus on the large pelagic  
46 survey, and then more broadly an HMS listening  
47 session on recreational fisheries.

48 That meeting will start at 9:00. I

1 ask people, again, to start joining about 8:45 or  
2 so just so we can get you all in the mix and deal  
3 with any technological issues there are, making  
4 sure that we're able to hear you all and you can  
5 hear us.

6 In the morning, it will be a number of  
7 presentations on the -- on the LPS redesign  
8 approach.

9 In the morning we'll then have, after  
10 the presentations, we'll have some time for  
11 clarifying questions in the morning.

12 We'll really focus on what is this  
13 redesign, the LPS redesign, making sure folks  
14 understand that, what the survey is, opportunity  
15 to go back and forth with questions. That's  
16 really the morning.

17 We'll then break again for lunch from  
18 11:30 to 1:00, and then when we come back in the  
19 afternoon, we'll have kind of, we'll have two  
20 distinct sessions.

21 The first will again focus on the LPS,  
22 and that's where we'll really be looking to  
23 people to share their perspectives.

24 More questions, but that's where we'll  
25 be looking to people to weigh in with any  
26 comments they have, any perspectives, and then at  
27 2:00, we'll break for a broader open HMS  
28 listening session on recreational rec fishing  
29 issues.

30 So that's the game plan. We'll finish  
31 up tomorrow afternoon by 3:30 or so. I'll just  
32 note that is not an AP meeting.

33 It is a workshop. So everyone, AP  
34 members or a member of the public, everyone comes  
35 together sort of in equal standing with that and  
36 gets to weigh in as much or little throughout  
37 that process.

38 So that's the game plan. I think I  
39 will pause and see if Randy or Pete have anything  
40 to say before we just close up here, and just add  
41 my thanks to AP members, HMS staff, everyone's  
42 who sort of really focused and done a lot of work  
43 over the last three days.

44 MR. BLANKINSHIP: So, thanks, Bennett.  
45 I want to thank everyone for the very good  
46 discussion over the last three days.

47 This was, once again, the first  
48 virtual meeting that came close to being the same

1 length as our, kind of our normal AP meetings in  
2 the spring that are over three days.

3 And thanks for bearing with us and  
4 pushing through along with us as we do this.  
5 Looking forward to the discussion tomorrow with  
6 the LPS workshop and the recreational roundtable.

7 I do want to say that the wrap up  
8 presentation for our HMS advisory panel that we  
9 are -- that we usually do, we will do again, but  
10 this time it will be posted on the meeting  
11 website when it's ready, so you all can be on the  
12 lookout for that to be posted in the coming few  
13 weeks.

14 And I also noted that there was a  
15 comment in the chat from Sonya about the  
16 publication of the report to Congress.

17 And I don't know the answer to when it  
18 comes out, but we'll try to find that and get  
19 back with you, Sonya. That's it from me.

20 MR. COOPER: And I'll just echo, yeah,  
21 thanks to the AP members and members of the  
22 public for pulling through, the folks behind the  
23 scenes, Matt Van Kleunen, Delisse Ortiz, Heather  
24 Baertlein, Nic Alvarado, for making this thing  
25 run smooth.

26 And you, Bennett, for guiding us  
27 through. A lot of topics, three days. You did a  
28 great job.

29 We will do this again in September,  
30 probably the week of Labor Day. But we will be  
31 in contact with you before then, let you know for  
32 sure about dates and how we're going to do it.

33 I'm guessing it will be probably like  
34 this, but maybe we will get closer to this. I  
35 think we'll be closer. But thanks, again,  
36 everybody.

37 MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Steve, and I will  
38 note, sorry, Katie threw into the chat just at  
39 the last minute here, an answer to Jeff's  
40 question.

41 In FY21 so far in the Atlantic, Gulf  
42 of Mexico, and Caribbean, there has been 67  
43 percent of fishery boardings and have been on  
44 commercial, 2 percent on charter/headboat, and 30  
45 percent on recreational. Thank you, Katie, for  
46 getting that answer out so quickly.

47 All right, well, thanks, everyone. We  
48 will let you go to your day. We hope to see many

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if not all of you tomorrow. And again, thanks  
for all the good, focused conversation.  
(Whereupon, the meeting in the  
above-entitled matter was concluded at 2:38 p.m.)

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This is to certify that the foregoing transcript


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Before: US DOC/NOAA

Date: 05-27-21

Place: teleconference

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under  
my direction; further, that said transcript is a  
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Court Reporter

**NEAL R. GROSS**

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